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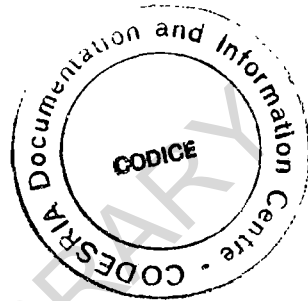
**The history of bida emirate in the 20th
century : a study in colonialism and the
transformation of social classes 1900-1960**

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THE HISTORY OF BIDA EMIRATE IN THE 20th CENTURY:
A STUDY IN COLONIALISM AND THE TRANSFORMATION
OF SOCIAL CLASSES. 1900 - 1960



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THE HISTORY OF BIDA EMIRATE IN THE 20th CENTURY:
A STUDY IN COLONIALISM AND THE TRANSFORMATION
OF SOCIAL CLASSES: 1900 - 1960

By

Reuben B'rama ZIRI

A thesis submitted to the Postgraduate School, Ahmadu
Bello University, Zaria, in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (History)

Department of History
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Ahmadu Bello University
Zaria

1991

(c) No part of this work may be used for any other
purposes, directly or indirectly, except for purely
academic or research purposes.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is a record of my own research efforts. It has been composed by me and has never before been submitted for any earlier application for a higher degree in any other University. All quotations and materials consulted have been distinguished and acknowledged by footnotes and quotation marks.

R.B. Ziri

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D E D I C A T I O N

This thesis is dedicated to:

my father,

Rt. Reverend Amos Kenci Ziri,

and

my mother,

Mrs. Elizabeth Fati Ziri.

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CERTIFICATION

This Thesis entitled
THE HISTORY OF BIDA EMIRATE IN THE 20th CENTURY:
A STUDY IN COLONIALISM AND THE TRANSFORMATION
OF SOCIAL CLASSES

by

Reuben B'rama ZIRI

meets the requirements governing the award of the degree
of MASTER OF ARTS (History)
of Ahmadu Bello University, and is approved for its
contribution to knowledge and literary presentation.

Supervisor

Date _____

Co-Supervisor

Date _____

Head of Department

Date _____

Dean Postgraduate School

Date _____

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Secretariat in Bida, and to Mallam Usman Musa Yerima, the Lukpma-Nupe, who I finally interviewed.

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Though these individuals may have had strong influence on this thesis, the final conclusions nevertheless remain mine. Therefore, for whatever

mistakes or shortcomings in judgement that would have been explicitly or implicitly made, I bear sole responsibility.

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I will finally want to have on record the acknowledgement of Dr. Ahmed Mohammed Modibbo who, as the current Head of Department of History, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, is responsible for the final arrangement for examination. And to several others, whose contribution has been of great significance in researching and writing this thesis, but who cannot be severally acknowledged here, I express my greatest gratitude.

A B S T R A C T

This thesis is concerned with the impact of colonialism on social classes in the Bida Emirate. It also deals with the relevance of colonialism for the emergence of new class phenomenon between 1900 and 1960.

To comprehend the nature of transformation these classes went through under colonial rule, we have had to understand their nature, at least by the eve of the conquest. This has also been found necessary in view of the fact that the existence of classes in precolonial African societies is being denied in some schools of African studies. In others, the concept of class is generally not seen as one that is capable of theoretical explanation, nor as an object of historical analysis. Thus, apart from attempting to justify, by empirical means the existence of classes as a feature of the precolonial Bida society, a review of some of the ideological and theoretical positions has been undertaken in this thesis.

In discussing the relevance of colonial domination for the transformation of social classes, the process of colonial conquest itself cannot be ignored. More so that it was the relationship between political power and economic interests and the culmination of the two that served as one of the strongest causes for the imposition of colonial rule. This was clearly manifested in the rivalry between the Bida ruling classes and the British commercial interests in the run off to the conquest.

reality. This did not only further expose the class nature of the precolonial Bida society, but the nature the colonial domination would take in the Bida Emirate was greatly influenced by this reality.

While conscious attempts were made to revive the precolonial aristocracy and arrogate to it a mediatory role in the course of colonial exploitation, a new socio-economic environment was nevertheless being enhanced, with the tendency towards the emergence of new capitalist relations of production.

It is this historical significance of colonialism with its relevance to social classes that this thesis attempts to articulate.

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A B B R E V I A T I O N S

N.A.	Native Authority
FUNAS	Federated Union of Native Authority Staff
C.M.S.	Church Missionary Society
U.M.S.	United Missionary Society
W.A.F.F.	West African Frontier Force
W.A.S.B.	West African Service Brigade
N.E.P.U	Northern Elements Progressive Union
N.N.C.	Northern Nigerian Congress
N.P.C.	Northern Peoples' Congress
N.C.N.C.	National Congress of Nigeria and the Cameroons
J.H.S.N.	Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria
J.A.H.	Journal of African History
Bid. Div.	Bida Division
PREM. OFF.	Premier's Office
N A K	National Archives Kaduna
S N P	Secretariat of the Northern Provinces
MINPROF	Minna Provincial Files
ZAR PROF	Zaria Province

A GLOSSARY OF NON-ENGLISH TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Goyi: First used in reference to the "Fulani" nobility of Bida but, by the close of the nineteenth century, seemed to have evolved into a concept with wider application, covering the aristocracy in general, without distinction of race.

Magi-goyi: Used in reference to the retinue of the aristocracy. Literally meaning "nephew of a nobleman", it was originally used in reference to people of servile maternity, but of noble paternity and thus mainly remaining at the bottom as hangers-on.

Eqba (Ajele): Agent, also called Tuci, meaning messenger in Nupe.

Isofa or Sofa: Pawn

Etsu: Emir or Chief

Ledu (pl. Leduzi): Penal settlements - the name is descriptive, deriving from the location of the settlements referred to on the Niger (called Edu in Nupe).

Shaba (Hausa - Yerima): Heir apparent

Mayaki: Commander in Chief

Zitsu: Village Head

Gago: Village Head, literally meaning receiver of stranger.

Yikunudzuru: Title of Chief of Yeti, in the Kusopa (kolanuts producing area of Labozi), was in the nineteenth century the most senior Kusopa Chief.

Kuta: Title of the Kede Chief of Muregi.

Ewon: Pond, i.e. fishing pond.

Ganiqat: Intrigues

Kpotun: A royal title.

Makun: A royal title.

Ninwoye: Title held by women.

Saqi: Most senior title held by women.

Soninya: Title held by women of the nobility.

Man (pl. manzi): Scholars, Ulama.

Rowni-tsu: Title or office conferred by the Etsu, as his prerogative.

Tici (pl. ticizi): Titles.

Ena (pl. enazi): Guilds.

Ena-kun: Guild of military commanders.

Ena-Ndejizi: Guild of town elders or civil title holders whose head is the Ndeji.

Ena-manzi: Guild of scholars.

Ena-wuzizi: Guild of slave title holders.

Epa (pl. Epazi): Thick sections of a forested area.

Konu (pl. Konuzi): War captives.

Wuzi: Slave

Dokodza: Title of Head of the Guild of blacksmiths.

Tswaci: Blacksmith.

Tswataqi: Small blacksmiths' workshop.

Kimiyi: Our locality.

Efako: Communal family unit.

Buca: Individual or personal farm, as opposed to the communal family farm.

Gandu: Tithe on land, limited mainly to food or cultivated crops.

Enya-kin: Tithe on sylvan products.

Tsawon-Kuta: Title of a servant of the Kuta.

Edu: Tax.

Edu-ko: General tax, literally big tax.

Edu-qi: Literally meaning small tax, it refers to additional or extra tax.

Alkali: Judge.

Gboya: The ancestral "Gunu" cult in Nupe.

Ndako-gboya: A masquerade of "gboya" cult.

Anasara: European.

Eso (pl. esozi): Farm estates (and not fiefs) owned by senior members of the Bida nobility and tilled by slave labour resident on the estates.

Keremi: Forced labour.

Majin-Dodo: Also called Majin-Kuti (Dodo, a Hausa word meaning Kuti in Nupe) is the leader of the cult.

Bataci: Marsh dwellers.

Rwafi: A military title, held as an hereditary title by descendants of Handi Boshi, the Hausa general of Dendo.

Manko: Great scholar (used for Dendo).

Kodagba (pl. kodagbazi): Big traders or merchants.

Shinya (pl. shinyazi) : Petty traders, mainly women.

Kintso (pl. kintsozi): Land owners or autochtous
population.

Beit-el-Mal: Native Authority treasury.

Sarakiri: Titled nobility.

Kurdirin Guzuri (Hausa): Levy on subjects in preparation
for war.

Kurdirin Sabka (Hausa): Levy on subjects, on return of the
army from war.

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P R E F A C E

British colonial conquest and domination in the Bida Emirate came as a climax in a rather long process which involved the interaction and clash between two economic formations: one characterised by highly advanced and complex capitalist relations and the other pre-capitalist, semi-feudal, with elements of communalistic peasant production. The result had been the submergence of the less complex formation and its structures. In its place, the material conditions favourable to the emergence of a new form of social relations began to take root. Such are the objective circumstances which underlie the transformation of social classes in the Bida Emirate throughout the period of colonial domination. Phenomenally, the basis had also been laid for the formation of classes peculiar to an emerging capitalist production.

Neither imperial/colonial historiography nor the Africanist-Nationalist counter ideology seem to adequately articulate colonialism and its impact from this context. The conventional approach, dominant in these historiographical categories, implicitly or explicitly deny the class nature of the pre-colonial African society and by extension their composition under colonial domination. Our study of colonialism and social classes in the Bida Emirate has to be undertaken from an

understanding of this shortcoming, with an attempt made to redress it.

Since this study takes off from the understanding that classes were a feature of the pre-colonial Bida society, an attempt has been made at re-assessment of the various schools on colonialism. This is aimed at assessing how far they have addressed the phenomenon of social classes in articulating pre-colonial society, hence the relevance of colonialism for social classes. This has been the focus of our Chapter One in which has also been laid a theoretical framework for the methodology adopted in this study. In doing this, one has found the materialist approach quite appealing as an analytical tool.

Chapter Two concentrates on the structure of social classes in the Bida Emirate by the close of the nineteenth century. To articulate the nature of these classes, however, we have to analyse them in retrospect. This is because of the transient nature which these classes manifested by the close of the nineteenth century. That is, for the fact that these classes had not evolved definite forms, a characteristic that seems to have been implied as a basis for denying the existence of classes.

The focus of Chapter Three is on the conquest. This covers mainly the period between 1897 to 1901 and the relevance of the development within this short period for social classes. Under this chapter has also been attempted an explanation for the peculiar nature of

colonial domination and its political economy in the Bida Emirate. This is analysed against a background of the immediate consequences of the conquest for the economy, the classes and their response. This is also of relevance to the nature of class collaboration between the British and the pre-colonial ruling class in the course of colonial domination.

Chapter Four proceeds by examining the establishment of colonial rule and the imposition of the colonial political economy. This covers an exposition of the form of colonial state apparatus, its institutions and their relevance for the changes, in the form of social relations.

Chapter Five deals with the emerging structure of social classes under colonial domination, most especially from around the 1930s. This had been a quite deceptive and fast-evolving development, with its apprehension empirically, hardly possible.

The conclusion goes beyond merely taking stock and making some general observations. In addition, the class manifestation of the nationalist agitation or the transition towards independence is briefly highlighted. This serves as a testimony to the existence of classes under colonial domination and to the fact that the classes were not affected as if without distinction, in the same way under the colonial political economy.

A note on the sources

In the course of this study, we have used both secondary and primary materials.

The secondary materials include published works and edited articles, theses, and dissertations. Most of these are however of general relevance, dealing with the whole of the Nigerian area or Northern Nigeria. Most of them are therefore of little specific relevance to the Bida Emirate. Where reference is made to the Bida area in such cases, it is as one and part in a series of more general examples. They are therefore of limited relevance with regards to a study of the historical peculiarities of the Bida Emirate.

There are however some few exceptions worth mentioning here. There is, for instance, the book by John E. Flint, Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria. This dwells a lot on aspects of British conquest and to some detail on Nupe, in this regard. There is then Michael Manson's The Foundation of the Bida Kingdom which is mainly on the rise of the Dendo dynasty and the foundation of the Bida-centered kingdom, as the title indicates. The book by S.F. Nadel, A Black Byzantium, is an anthropological study of the Nupe society and is of relevance to both the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries.

Of the three books, Nadel's stands in a class of its own. It is, besides serving as a secondary source, in the category of the anthropological and ethnographic surveys made by colonial administrators. Its material having been

collected in the 1930s, it coincides with such other reports on Nupe whose collection appears to have been initiated by the close of the 1920s. Thus, in these reports, it is common to come across references made to Nadel's work as a complementary source. It will suffice to cite such instances as the report on "Nupe Leduzi" (the king's hangmen), derived directly from Nadel's article on the old Nupe penal settlements and used C.W. Cole's 1949 report on land tenure system in the Bida Emirate.

However, there is one trait common in most or even all of these studies. This is the objective comprehension of the class nature of the Bida society, a phenomenon which provides the central focus of this thesis. Over this, the differences that exist between studies which fall within the category of imperial/colonial historiography on the one hand, and a broad spectrum of the Africanist historiography on the other, is mainly ideological.

The second category of materials used in this study is made up of primary sources. These involve documented and oral accounts.

The documented accounts or materials that have been used are mainly those available in the SNP, MINPROF and BID. Div. series in the National Archives, Kaduna. They cover the annual, quarterly and half-yearly reports, district assessment reports and notebooks, etc., official circulars, memoranda, letters, gazetteers, etc. The annual reports, for example, cover general administrative

issues such as judicial, revenue, taxation and expenditure, trade and economic, departmental and issues relating to slavery, pawning, forced labour and the peasantry.

These reports had been compiled by administrative officers. On the nineteenth century, however, we have such records compiled by European travellers, merchants and missionary accounts. Records and accounts kept by missionaries and their representatives in the Bida Emirate are also available on the colonial period. What they report covers their own activities and other political, economic and social affairs which were of particular or general importance to their activities.

Under the circumstances these official records and accounts would have been written with an underlying intent to rationalise, justify and even moralise on issues bordering on their activities. Their judgements have mostly been informed by imperial ideology. Nevertheless, these records provide valuable material source for the historical study of the Bida Emirate. But, to harness this, we have had to handle them critically, contextualising the material they provide against the background of the motive behind colonial expansion and the circumstances which inspired the peculiarities of the Bida Emirate. This applies as much to records kept by missionaries and others.

Of the oral accounts, they have been collected through interviews and discussions. In collecting this information, neither questionnaires nor any specific

format was drawn as a guide. The interviews were of the most informal nature and were mainly addressed to specific issues which arose in the course of the research. In fact, I had extended discussions much beyond the few I have had to acknowledge for the purpose of documentation. The latter however serves as a representation of the data collected in the whole process.

One important observation that should be made, however, is the fact that the official accounts seem to have had great influence on much of the available oral information. This is especially so with political history. Worse still are court histories and traditions dominant in Bida. This was manifested quite clearly when I met the Lukpma-Nupe, Mallam Usman Musa Yerima (Bida, 10th April, 1989). The old Lukpma had a copy of Nadel's A Black Byzantium by his side, from which he cross-checked some of his stories.

I have drawn some plausible conclusions from this. Given the relationship of collaboration which existed between the British and the Bida aristocracy, there is the likelihood that the official accounts, being mainly documentation of traditions and eye-witness accounts, would have been based mainly on Bida court history. Logically, therefore, there is implied tendency to view and interpret the society from the point of view of the aristocracy which, in a way, they sought to legitimise.

This limitation became quite clear by the time I had discussed with a cross-section of informants outside

Bida. Accounts from Kuci-Woro, Mokwa and Kpaki, for instance, reveal this quite clearly. And this is to cite just these few examples. This shows how frustrating a study like this could be. Yet, given the time and resources available and the magnitude of negligence, only little could have been done about this situation under this research.

Locating and defining the Bida Emirate

With the Royal Niger Company invasion of 1897 and the colonial conquest which followed shortly after, the Bida aristocracy lost possession of her hitherto non-Nupe territories south of the Niger. In addition, the Patigi Emirate was created in 1897 as part of the attempt to restrict the Bida Emirate to its Nupe heartland, north of the Niger. And, within the first decade of colonial rule, Bida's boundary had been fixed at an imaginary line, middle of the Niger stream and extended from a point between Baro and Katcha, upstream to a short distance above Gbajibo, north of Jebba. North of the Niger, the Bida Emirate would cover the area generally described by Nadel as the Trans-Kaduna and the Cis-Kaduna area of Nupe.

In spite of this, we have used "Emirate" to define the area of Bida covered by this study. This has been in preference to such other alternatives like "Division". However, this is not all together a choice made in the abstract. It is, among others, for reasons of convenience. To use Division would require an extension

of the area covered in this research to include Agaie and Lapai Emirates, both of which had been transferred to Bida, in 1933 and 1941 respectively. The transfer of the Lapai Emirate moreover lasted only from June 10 1948 to December of the same year. Although the three Emirates had developed in close relationship in the course of the nineteenth century, they lacked historical cohesion. With reference especially to the source materials that have been collected towards enhancing this study, one would have been faced with such a diverse area from which to articulate the object of investigation. This could make effective handling and management more difficult. Moreover, such an exercise would only have produced identical and overlapping historical indicators. All these at the expense of a more detailed and incisive discussion of the phenomenon of social classes and their development under colonial domination. In essence, the focus on Bida and the observations derived from the exercise are equally of relevance to the other Emirates.

Yet, another issue is most likely to arise over the choice of Emirate. This is more likely to be based on the argument that the Emirate, as it existed in the nineteenth century, had ceased to be of significance by the very fact of colonial conquest and the political reorganisation consequent on it, especially since the aristocracy had been subordinated.

But such an argument would be of form rather than of content. For the conquest of Bida, the political reorganisation and the subordination of the aristocracy

which colonial domination implies in principle did not proceed in the same logic to eradicate the phenomenon of social classes. Moreover, an argument which centres on the form of the Emirate could amount to an attempt in idealising the nineteenth century Bida Emirate.

For even by the close of the nineteenth century, by what definite geo-political boundary can we identify the domain covered by the Bida Emirate as to warrant idealisation? Not in western Nupe, within the area bordering on the territory into which Kontagora and Wushishi extended their influences. The Zugurma area, to the north-west of Bida, is another example. And even in Mokwa, which is located before Zugurma, Bida did not make much success of stationing a resident Egba (Ajele) up till the time of colonial conquest. Even less so is the case in much of the territories south of the Niger. But it is in this same circumstance that the small Emirates of Lafiagi and Shonga, to the south of the Niger, had merely maintained their independence of Bida only by grace of diplomatic protocol guiding the international relationship between Emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate. For more than once, successive rulers of Bida had treated these Emirates as mere satellites that they were. This is however outside the scope of this thesis. The Agaie Emirate too had hardly been free from this sort of relationship with Bida.

The area to which Bida was reduced after the conquest was divided into twelve administrative units called Districts. This was done for administrative

convenience and for other political reasons which are extensively analysed and contextualised in this thesis. We are nevertheless supported in our use of the term Emirate to define and qualify the geo-polity. This is for the fact that peasant subjects under this domain continued to be compelled to various forms of material obligations. Tithes in kind, for instance, continued to be paid, under whatever guise. And with the exclusion of the Kuta (the District Head of Kede), District Heads were appointed from among the nobility in Bida and posted mainly at the instance of the Etsu. So also is the traditional practice by which all these chiefs congregate in Bida at important festivals to pay homage to the Etsu. This in itself is viewed as a sign of allegiance and is of very symbolic importance. This is one practice that has survived (up till date), the series of administrative reforms and the creation of Local Governments notwithstanding.

CHAPTER ONE

COLONIALISM AND SOCIAL CLASSES: METHODOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

1.1 Introduction

The phenomenon of contemporary colonialism and social class are issues that have attracted intense intellectual debate. For the contemporary colonialism of the age of imperialism, i.e., of "monopolist capitalist associations, cartels, syndicates and trusts", (1) the controversy ranges from issues relating to the forces that inspired the expansion to its impact on the societies that were dominated in the process. The debate over the concept of social class - on whether it is applicable to African societies - is as diverse and controversial. It centres on what exactly constitutes a social class, its existence as a genuine theoretical category and relevance for empirical understanding. Despite the volumes that have been written in contribution to the debate on colonialism and social class, however, some unresolved issues make further discussion on the same subject a viable exercise.

With regards to the area covered by the Bida Emirate at least, studies dealing specifically with colonialism

(1) V.I. Lenin, Imperialism The Highest Stage of Capitalism (Moscow: Progress, 1983), pp.115-121.

and social class are scanty. (2) Much of what is available on Bida under colonial rule can be found in the numerous studies on the colonial experience in other areas of Nigeria (3), the Bida Emirate being often cited as an example to buttress a general argument. Such studies therefore have a weakness: they lack precision and detail since they cover a much wider scope. The shortcomings of such general works to specific cases of colonial experience may also be appreciated in the fact, as pointed out by Temu and Swai, that:

the societies colonized were not on the same level of development. What is more, even in the same society not all its constituents were affected equally by the onslaught of colonial rule. (4)

What is more, the colonial authorities themselves did appreciate the significance of the peculiarities to the effectiveness of their administration. This must have informed the policy pronouncement in the 1918 "draft revision of political memorandum" which states that:

The policy of Indirect Rule can follow no set forms common to all communities. It is of its essence that social and political organisations of each locality shall form the framework of the

(2) The anthropological study by S.F. Nadel, A Black Byzantium: The Kingdom of the Nupe in Northern Nigeria (London, 1963) and the study by M. Mason, The Foundation of the Bida Kingdom (Zaria, 1981), are not very explicit on the issue of social classes and do not cover the colonial period to any significant scale. Yet, the two remain the only "widely known" studies on the Bida Emirate.

(3) Two examples of such studies are: J.E. Flint, Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria (London, 1966) and R.A. Adeleye, Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria (London, 1971).

(4) Arnold Temu and Bonaventure Swai, Historians and Africanist History: A Critique (London, 1981), p.65.

structure. Not only must there be wide differences between the Native Administrations of highly developed, partially developed and primitive communities, but in each of these broad classes no one Native Administration will be the replica of any other(5)

It is this that provides a basis for our research into the impact of colonialism on social classes in the Bida Emirate.

In this chapter, an attempt will be made to review existing theoretical approaches to the concepts of "colonialism" and "social class". This will be done in a way that would test the theoretical methods in these perspectives and to show of how much use they could be as analytical tools for a systematic study and understanding of colonialism and its relevance for social classes in the Bida Emirate in particular. In doing this, we shall try to avoid a situation in which the study would not be able to transcend its sources, thereby ending up in citing random examples, assembling facts and reacting to them autonomously, as if they constitute unrelated entities, this being a lapse for which Swai accuses Nigerian historiography.(6)

Discussion in this chapter is conducted under three broad classifications. The first deals with colonial historiography. The second, which covers colonialism and social class in Africanist studies, is further sub-

(5) NAK SNP 17 12450 Vol.I "Draft Revision of Political Memo IX (1918), Native Administration".

(6) B. Swai, "Towards an Explanation of the Underdevelopment of Zuru History", paper presented to the third workshop on the history of Zuru Emirate, University of Sokoto, 21-22 December, 1987.

divided into two: the Nationalist/Africanist perspective, and the underdevelopment and Dependency perspective. The third involves the Materialist school. Considering the vast literature on colonialism and its impact on Africa, reference can only be made to a few of the works. This is for reasons of convenience and does not imply that those to which reference cannot be made are irrelevant to the subject of discussion. Nor would this imply that they are of lower quality with respect to our subject.

1.2 Colonialism and social class in colonial historiography

The conception of African history dominant to this school is directed at justifying colonial expansion and occupation. It is often argued that colonialism was inspired by the commitment of Europe to civilising the rest of the world, especially the African continent, and that the concern for human freedom, to enforce the abolition of the slave trade and to ensure the establishment of "civilised" trade in commodities, among others, had led Europe, despite the odds and costs involved, to undertake the colonising mission.⁽⁷⁾ Emphasizing the "difficulty" which British colonial enterprise in West Africa entailed, Allan McPhee states, in a tradition that is typical of colonial historiography, that:

At first sight, no more unpropitious part of the world could have been chosen for commerce and

⁽⁷⁾ A. McPhee, The Economic Revolution in British West Africa (London, 1971), p.104.

administration. The region was almost entirely bereft of natural or artificial means of communication ... Wealth was not easily acquired there, and trade itself was maintained only by stern endeavour ... (8)

On the relationship between the Africans themselves, there is an attempt to create an image of perpetual chaos and inter-tribal strife. It is common to find such description of the people themselves as simply a "mass of enslaved unfortunates and rapacious slave raiders". (9)

The defence of colonialism in colonial historiography would not stop at such crude and simplistic moral arguments, coming especially at the inception of colonial rule. Colonial ideology would face challenges from the counter ideology of Africanist historiography which itself "was born in the aftermath of the Second World War". (10) In response to the counter-factualisation that was dominant to this "revolution" in Africanist historiography, colonial historians emphasized the "modernizing" influence of colonialism. (11)

Arguing in a way that is suggestively typical of this colonial response, McPhee attempts to present colonial domination and its impact as a smooth and logical process by attributing to it some form of

(8) *ibid*, p. 3.

(9) Quoted in R.W. Shenton, "Studies in the Development of Capitalism in Northern Nigeria", Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1981, p.53.

(10) Temu and Swai, *op cit*, p.8.

(11) A typical example of this can be found in the study by R. Heussler, The British in Northern Nigeria (London, 1968), p.12.

morality. To him, the tendency of British colonialism in West Africa and the "development" it inspired is manifested in

the progress towards a world-wide division of labour, whereby the United States grows the cotton which England manufactures and West Africa wears ... (12)

This does not however explain the process by which West Africa arrived at being the consumer of the end product. And if this explanation obscures the process by which West Africa was turned into a consumer of British manufacture, attempting to reverse the argument will explain nothing better either. This is because such an exercise will not go beyond showing that the role West Africa played in this equation and the benefits derived contradict the picture of reciprocity painted in McPhee's argument. What this has done to pre-colonial social formations and how, both remain very much obscured.

The reality is that British or European commerce with the Bida Emirate before colonial conquest was founded on the surpluses generated under conditions of the existing social relations of production. Thus, contrary to the assumption that the pre-colonial African society, without exception, was made up of an inarticulate mass, in the Bida Emirate of the close of the nineteenth century, ownership of the means of production and the appropriation of the surpluses produced in the various spheres of economic activity was largely (though not exclusively) consolidated in the

(12) McPhee, op cit, p.1.

hands of the aristocracy. And this is attested to in the immediate consequences of the 1897 Niger Company invasion of Bida. It has, for instance, been reported of the invasion, which seems more of an attempt to break the power of the aristocracy, that:

When Major Burdon took charge of Bida in about 1901 the whole province was in a state of the greatest disorder and disintegration. The pagan west of the kingdom had all thrown off their allegiance, and would acknowledge no authority of either Emir or Resident ... Farms were being deserted by slaves and such was the state of unrest that cultivation ... "had almost ceased"... (13)

When, in the process of establishing colonial political authority, the British had to revive the authority of the Bida aristocracy, therefore, it was more in response to this socio-economic reality than for any moral reasons. The aristocracy, caught in-between its subjects and the British, had to give in to the subordinate role arrogated to it. This has been saliently implied when, in assessing the effectiveness of the new colonial administrative apparatus, Resident Goldsmith stated, in a 1907 annual report on the Nupe Province, that:

The general feeling of Emir and Native Chiefs towards the British Administration is one of loyalty and gratitude. Eight years ago the authority of the Central Native Administration was hardly recognised outside the walls of Bida, and the tendency was in many districts to set up independent states and defy all orders issuing from the Emir of Bida. But owing to the support given to the Emir by the British Administration, his position and authority over his subordinate

(13) NAK BIDA DIV 3/1, B.655 "Nupe History From 1897".

Chiefs have been secured, and consequently, he and his sarakuna have every reason to be genuinely grateful for the return of their administrative advantages. (14)

The superficial definition of colonialism provided in colonial historiography is in negation of an understanding of colonialism as a historical phenomenon, hence its relevance for a change in social relations and the classes typical of them in the colonised societies. Instead, Africans are seen as a collectivity of individuals, of tribal groups or natives. (15) This may be taken to mean that the existence of objectively determinable forms of social relations did not exist as a feature of pre-colonial African societies. In the place of the objective relations which existed between and within social classes which, according to Lenin, are "in most cases fixed and formulated in law", (16) colonial historiography emphasizes violence and war as permanent features of social, political and economic relations in pre-colonial African societies.

In a whole study on The Foundation of the Bida Kingdom in the Nineteenth Century, however, Mason admits having been "attracted by the question of class exploitation". (17) Whatever his theoretical conception of

(14) NAK, SNF.7. 1865/1908. "Annual Report Nupe Province, 1907" by Resident Goldsmith.

(15) See Temu and Swai, op cit, p.21.

(16) V.I. Lenin, "A Great Beginning", Collected Works Vol.29, March-August 1919 (Moscow: Progress, 1974), p.421.

(17) Michael Mason, The Foundation of the Bida Kingdom, p.1.

social classes, it is hard to believe that exploitation can exist independent of classes or as an inarticulate and unsystematic phenomenon. We may, on the basis of this, suggest, therefore, that whether it was in war between the various "tribal" sub-groups, against other "tribal" groups or "raids", they would have been organised and carried out by definite socio-economic groups (classes) to serve definite and objective interests. These wars or "raids" were not just carried out aimlessly, to satisfy the "obsession of the African man towards violence", but had their form and content rooted in the societies in which they occurred. It is just as Bukharin would state, in an attempt to locate the violence that characterises imperialist expansion in the nature of the growth of finance capital:

Every policy of the ruling class ("pure" policy, military policy, economic policy) has a perfectly definite functional significance. Growing out of the soil of a given system of production, it serves to reproduce given relations of production either simply or on an enlarged scale. The policy of feudal rulers strengthens and widens feudal production relations ... (18)

This is not meant to find any justification for, or to romanticise on, the exploitative machineries of the pre-colonial Bida aristocracy. It is only being suggested that the real essence and content of pre-colonial war (like any other war) could be understood better from the context of the classes which perpetrated it. Moreover, war was only one means by which the material interests of

(18) N. Bukharin, Imperialism and World Economy (London, 1987), p.114.

the aristocracy in pre-colonial Bida was pursued. For instance, Etsu Masaba (1859-1873),

intent on building up an enormous dynastic power, divided the whole of Beni and Kusopa country, town for town, among his sons and daughters and other followers as personal fiefs. There was no place in the kingdom, the Nupe say, which had not its private "owner" ... [Then] Etsu Umaru [1873-1882], who succeeded him, adopted the opposite policy in order to whip the support of the native tribes ... He abolished all private fiefs in Beni and re-established the integrity of the Beni confederacy in the form of a royal domain. (19)

Masaba and Umaru may have adopted different forms of administration. Both were, however, systematic and without physical violence as a permanent feature. This, we may observe, was dictated by circumstances, since violence or war as an instrument for political control, was only a means to an end.

The circumstances which allowed for the adoption of the forms of administration used by Masaba and Umaru seem to have been altered towards the close of the nineteenth century. Thus, in the reign of Maliki (1882-1895) armed bands were dispatched "accompanying the fief-holders on tax collecting expeditions from fief to fief". (20) And when, under Etsu Abubakar, systematic collection of royal revenue continued to be problematic with consequences for official impoverishment, he resorted, in alternative, to raiding for "slaves for the market" (21) as a means of boosting state revenue and not unlikely, to cultivate the

(19) Nadel, op cit, p.118.

(20) *ibid*, p.119.

(21) *ibid*.

numerous royal estates. This does not however simply constitute an act of indiscriminate "violence" between peoples independent of the classes, in the manner in which colonial historiography would want to portray it.

We may therefore suggest that violence was perpetrated by the aristocracy as an organised means of coercion. The men who fought these wars and carried out the raids as "ordinary" soldiers, did it in manifestation of the specific duties assigned to them within the context of the army as an apparatus of the state. Their location within the existing social relations puts them in the same position vis-a-vis the aristocracy, as the slaves who tilled the royal estates and other sections of the lower classes, and the peasants whose surplus labour was appropriated in the form of taxes, tithes, etc. The differences in form apart, they all belong, in different aspects, to one complex system of social relations, however primitive. For such a system, whose organisation for production would warrant its classification among those, "based on what could be termed intensive by African standards", (22) it would be inadequate to view it as classless. So also would the application of concepts such as natives - a concept divulged of any economic essence.

(22) J.E. Flint, Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria (London, 1966), pp.14-16.

1.3 Colonialism and social class in Africanist studies

Intellectual response to the ideological position dominant to colonial historiography on Africa by people of African origin has been traced back to about 1850. (23) The earliest attempts did not however constitute any distinct departure from imperial colonial historiography, as they showed appreciation for the Western "civilisation" and "actively demanded European support [for Africa] and tutelage". (24) The free competition - capitalist policy of limited commercial penetration however gave way to greater imperialist pressure, with its tendency towards complete political annexation of weaker economies and conquest. This gave birth to a nationalist and anti-colonial response which sought several avenues to counter the claims in colonial historiography.

The response to colonial historiography in Africanist studies has been limited to counter ideology and counter factualisation. (25) By implication thus, classes are denied as a feature of pre-colonial African societies and as a relevant aspect of the colonial society. The impact of colonialism and the struggle against it is therefore seen as that between a dominating power and an inarticulate or "an amorphous mass" (26) of

(23) L. Kapteijns, "African Historiography Written by Africans 1955-1973: The Nigerian Case", Ph.D. thesis, University of Amsterdam, 1977, p.7.

(24) *ibid.*

(25) Temu and Swai, *op cit*, pp.18-23.

(26) *ibid*, p.5

people. However, the hightening crisis of nationhood and development(27) which engulfs independent Africa would make a review of the dominant positions held in Africanist studies, with regard to colonialism and social classes, a viable enterprise.

The term "Africanist studies" is being used here in a broad sense to cover a wide range of studies which, much as they differ, share common traits in terms of the methodology in the approach to issues relating to colonialism and social classes. These studies shall be identified in the discussion below under two categories: the Nationalist/Africanist and the Underdevelopment and dependency perspectives.

1.3.1 The Nationalist/Africanist perspective

To agree on what it [colonialism] is not: neither evangelization, nor a philanthropic enterprise, nor a desire to push back the frontiers of ignorance, disease, and tyranny, nor a project undertaken for the greater glory of God, nor an attempt to extend the rule of law ... the decisive actors here are the adventurer and the private, the wholesale grocer and the ship owner ... (28)

The main preoccupation in nationalist perspective, either by politicians of African origin or Africans in diaspora, was in providing a counter ideology in direct response to

(27) *ibid*, p.7 cite the "events in the Congo in 1960s during which the world witnessed the killing of Patrice Lumumba, the so-called political instabilities ...", etc., as testimony to this crisis.

(28) Aime Cesaire, Discourse on Colonialism (New York and London, 1972), p.10.

imperial colonial ideology. Evidences were therefore sought in pre-colonial African societies and in the form and nature of colonial conquest and domination, while facts were also being established in an attempt to reverse the claims in colonial historiography. In the process, however, neither the pre-colonial societies nor colonialism are accorded any objective existence, nor are the facts seen as being capable of any theoretical explanation. The conclusions reached are as simplistic as those dominant to colonial historiography - beyond whose limits, by being responsive, the nationalist perspective could not transcend. Hence, as with colonial historiography, the approach within the nationalist perspective is not relevant as an instrument for a theoretical apprehension of the class nature of pre-colonial African societies, nor for the relevance of the colonial experience to these classes.

In response to the "chaotic and derogatory" image of pre-colonial African societies created in colonial historiography, the nationalist school romanticises on their social relations. Pre-colonial African societies are thereby denied their materiality and proclaimed as being classless. Class and class struggle are therefore denied as a feature of social relations in African societies, not only in the context of the pre-colonial period but even under colonial domination and after. It is on this basis that Tom Mboya is quoted as having stated, in a fashion typical of a liberal African nationalist, that:

The sharp class divisions that once existed in Europe have no place in African socialism and no parallel in African society. No class problems arose in traditional African society and none exist today among Africans. (29)

It may be suggested that while this represents an attempt to romanticise on the pre-colonial past, it is also an attempt at obscuring the objective position of the emerging African elite to which the protagonists of this idea belong. It was for this class that the nationalists seem to provide ideological direction and leadership. This category of Africanists use its romantic ideology as a means, in an attempt to divest African societies under colonial rule of their objective class composition and aspirations. This school also has in its ranks notable nationalist politicians like Leopold Senghor and Julius Nyerere. The former has been quoted as having argued, in his defence of "African communalism", for example that

precolonial African history would reveal that Negro-African society is collectivist, or more exactly communal ... We would conclude that our duty is to renew it by helping it to regain its spiritual dimension. (30)

In the place of class analysis, divisions in African societies are presented from the perspective of "tribes", "religion" and other micro loyalties. Such conclusions are drawn from empirical observation in which actors in African political and social conflicts and process are

(29) S. Katz, Marxism, Africa and Social Class: A Critique of Relevant Theories (Montreal, 1980), p.10.

(30) J. Lonsdale, "The Emergence of African Nation" in T.O. Ranger (ed), Emerging Themes of African History (Nairobi, 1968), P.203.

seen to be inspired into action more by ethnic and other subjective interests than by class contradiction and interests. Conflicts are therefore removed from the underlying relations of production, while relations between various factions to a conflict are often drawn in terms of the diverse nature of socio-cultural groups or identities.

The nationalist school sees the impact of colonialism in terms of its violence and disruptiveness. Thus, the capitalist production relations which emerged over the pre-capitalist production relations in the course of colonial domination is cited as evidence of the disruptive tendency and role of colonialism. Nationalists like Senghor suggest that this development should be reversed. In its place, he advocates a revival of what he terms "African communism".

1.3.2 Professional Africanist historiography

Almost interlocking with the nationalist school, was the emergence of professional African historians of the Africanist historiographical revolution which, according to Temu and Swai, "was born in the aftermath of the Second World War". (31) In the place of the blanket condemnation which was dominant to early nationalist ideology, there was an attempt to rationalise, using concepts such as "modernization", "continuity of African

(31) Temu and Swai, op cit, p.18.

institutions", "change", etc. Thus, to Ade Ajayi, himself an Africanist of this category, by

attributing all evil things in Africa to colonial rule, the nationalist who belongs to the earlier category, leaves no initiative to the African in the colonial period. (32)

The methodology adopted by these professional Africanist historians however remains the same as in the early nationalist school - responsive, counter-factualisation and "its main intent is an ideological alternative to colonial historiography". (33) Spurred by the realities of the colonial experience to search in the African past for redress, as has been attributed to the work of Basil Davidson by Christopher Fyfe, (34) this category of scholars more often romanticise on the African past, denying African societies and colonialism objective existence. This school emphasizes all that was the wonder of pre-colonial Africa: its culture, trade and commerce, architecture, etc., and of the contribution of Africans to the making of their own history and that of the world. (35)

(32) J.F.A. Ajayi, "The Continuity of African Institutions Under Colonialism", in Ranger (ed), op cit, p.191.

(33) Temu and Swai, op cit, p.18.

(34) C. Fyfe, "Introduction", C. Fyfe (ed), African Studies since 1945: A Tribute to Basil Davidson (London: 1976), p.1. He states that "from the embittered African present he (Davidson) turned to the neglected African past".

(35) Temu and Swai, op cit, p.22.

1.3.2.1 The idea of continuity and change of African institutions under colonial rule

The professional Africanist historian, with a disposition towards the ideology of change and continuity of African institutions under colonial rule, does not accord much importance to classes and the social relations peculiar to them in the discussion of pre-colonial society. Moreover, institutions are given abstract and subjective definition without being located in the form and level of development of classes and the social relations peculiar to them. That is why pre-capitalist institutions whose existence makes meaning only in the context of pre-capitalist social relations, are seen to have continued to exist under social relations which were progressively being inspired towards capitalist production. Ade Ajayi, citing attempts to buttress this line of argument by comparing the Jihad and colonial conquest as changes, and to trace the continuity of institutions through them, states:

In relation to wars and conflicts of people, the rise and fall of empires, linguistic, cultural and religious change and the cultivation of new ideas and ways of life, new economic orientations, and so on, in relation to all these, colonialism must be seen not as a complete departure from the African past, but as one episode in the continuous flow of African History. (36)

He takes this argument even further, pointing out that "old offices have assumed new functions, new offices have been created and given traditional titles". (37)

(36) A. Ajayi, "The Continuity of African Institutions Under Colonialism", op cit, p.194.

(37) *ibid*, p.198.

Basil Davidson, who argues that the resistance against colonial conquest served as a catalyst for "change and development among Africans" in an attempt to locate the continuity of African institutions, suggests that "in some countries, feudalism started gaining in strength much more rapidly than before". (38)

While the former argument seems to have been rested on the existence of titles in themselves, as evidence for the continuity of institutions, the latter hardly represents the reality of the situation in Bida. With the Jihad and the establishment of the emirate in Bida, some titles actually survived or were adopted from pre-Jihad Nupe. (39) But such titles make meaning only in relation to the specific status occupied by their holders in the hierarchy of authority and the power they exercised. Associated to each title were offices with specific administrative responsibilities, with specific economic benefits accruing to each. All these were manifested within a form of socio-economic conditions that had continued to change since the Jihad. An example of this could be found in the growing proportion of land as royal property and the development of some form of feudal relations between the peasantry and the aristocracy on a larger scale, under the emirate.

(38) A.B. Davidson, "African Resistance and Rebellion against the Imposition of Colonial Rule" in Ranger (ed), *ibid*, p.178.

(39) NAK SNP 17, 25355, "Notes on Nupe" by Mallam Aliyu Bida and P.G. Harris.

With colonial conquest and domination, the tendency was towards the eradication or suppression of the hitherto feudal relations and its structures, for example the Egba (or Ajele) system, which sustained them. In their place, capitalist relations, with a tendency towards commoditisation of production took its root. How then do we locate the continuity of African institutions or the strengthening of pre-colonial social relations in the context that it is being proclaimed in the Africanist school?

Having projected the idea of continuity of African institutions, the Africanist school attributes to the institutions an initiative in what may be suggested is an attempt to present the conditions for the realisation of the survival of these institutions. By attributing this to Africans, this school attempts to forge a relation between pre-colonial society, the resistance against the colonialists. By tracing its origin in pre-colonial African society, they hope to obscure its class content and aspirations, which however became manifest after political power was handed to it at independence. Moreover, classes do not feature as an aspect of this analysis. Instead, the agents to which the initiatives are attributed are reduced to "elements", with whom, according to Ajayi, "colonial regimes tended usually to ally".(40) At a wider level, pre-colonial African society is perceived as being communalistic, tribal, ethnic, etc.

(40) Ajayi, op cit, p.195.

And the impact of colonialism, with relation to the transformation of special groups is therefore limited to them. Relying on this empirical approach and observation as a basis for assessing the resistance, continuity and African initiative, Davidson supposes that:

In the course of resistance to colonialism, tribes which up to that time had lived more or less in isolation gradually began to comprehend the identity of their interests. Nationalities and large ethnic units formed more rapidly; the features of National self-consciousness were crystallising. Tribal unions were being created; ... All these and many other processes were inseparably linked with the resistance against the imposition of colonial rule ... (41)

But this idea of continuity and change and of African initiative, even at the empirical level, hardly explains the reality of the colonial experience in Bida, whether in the course of the conquest and resistance or the role arrogated to what survived of the aristocracy under colonial domination.

With the invasion of Bida by the Royal Niger Company constabulary in 1897, the transient political authority of the aristocracy was broken. Most predictably pushed in desperation to revive it and ensure its source of material existence, "the Emirs and their Fulani office holders proceeded to ravage the old Nupe district right up to the banks of the River Niger". (42) This was necessitated by a situation in which, taking an advantage of the defeat of the aristocracy in the hands of a

(41) B. Davidson, op cit, p.178.

(42) NAK, MINPROF, 278/1909 "Historical Notes Niger Province".

stronger external force, its subjects embarked on political dissension. Thus, contrary to the supposition that tribal unity was inspired, a section of the Kyede aligned with the British against the Bida aristocracy. While by 1902, there had been revolts in Mokwa, Bokani, Raba, Yeti, Bete and Sakpe, led by Haruna (brother to Yaiya, Kuta of Muregi), together with the Gwenshi of Epa, all in the districts west of the Kaduna river. This move was made in an attempt to throw off their allegiance to Bida and to refuse to pay all taxes.(43) In fact, reactions in all other districts of the emirate were similar. Neither in 1897 nor in 1900 did the aristocracy in Bida, under the Emir, succeed in its efforts to mobilise the mass of the population for resistance. Moreover, this dissension cannot be seen at the level of micro identities (which is what the accounts seem to portray), since the relations of exploitation were not simply polarised along ethnic lines, the nature of their leadership notwithstanding. Among the Kyede, for example, there had been a long-standing struggle between its dominant economic and political class and the Bida aristocracy over the share of the former in the trade on the Niger. This had led to war between the two in 1881-1882, a war in which Kyede siege on the commercial river port of Egga was broken only on the intervention of the British and other European merchants on the side of the Bida aristocracy.(44)

(43) *ibid.*

(44) Mason, *op cit*, p.110.

The class dimension which the resistance to colonial conquest took in the Bida Emirate is further attested to in the fact that the collapse in political authority came to the slaves as an opportunity for desertion. The mass desertion had involved thousands of slaves who "escaped across the Niger"(45) but most probably in other directions too.(46) Of the thousands of slaves and not unlikely Tsofazi (pawns) who fled Bida in the wake of invasion and conquest, first in 1897 and then in 1900, it may be suggested that it could not have been for the same reasons for which the Etsu Abubakar (1895-1901), with a band of followers fled Bida in 1901. This is however not to deny other forms of population movement and demographic changes which could be attributed to the

(45) NAK SNP 17, 15849. "Early History of Anti-Slavery legislation, 1900-1931". It is stated precisely that: "at least 30,000 (slaves) escaped across the Niger from the Bida province" by 1901. This figure could be suspected as an exaggeration by the British in an attempt to justify the invasion and conquest - for which slavery was used as an excuse. Yet, it provides a potent insight into this institution, given that Bida economy by the close of the nineteenth century was a slave economy. This is acknowledged, for instance, in M. Mason, "Captive and Client Labour and the Economy of the Bida Emirate 1857-1901", J.A.H., XIV, 3, 1973, pp.457-459. Besides, the fact that the collapse in production (in the numerous royal estates especially) was attributed mainly to slave desertion and the indication that Yagba slave weavers were a major source of labour in the numerous textiles of Bida, etc., makes such a figure, even if an exaggeration, quite in place.

(46) NAK, SNP 17, 15849. "Early History of Anti-Slavery legislation, 1900-1931". Records of slaves who were freed by redemption in the course of the first two decades of colonial rule, as scanty as they may be, on the exact extent of slavery, provide evidence of the presence of Gbari, Dakarkari, Kanuku, etc. slaves in Bida. NAK SNP 7 1520/1907, "Report on Nupe Province for 1906".

invasion and conquest. Such changes are not unique to the circumstance under review. Moreover, our concern here is with the class content of the resistance.

With the futility of resistance, what survived of the pre-colonial aristocracy in Bida after the conquest had to harmonise its class interests with the interests of the colonialists, in other words, the interests of finance capital. This was done at the instance of the colonial power which had to save the aristocracy from class extinction. But this was not without some changes, at least in the size and form of the aristocracy. Hence, one of the reasons given for the abolition of the Egba (Ajele) system, with its retinue of resident and non-resident feudal agents, was to "abolish two out of the three absentee landlords". (47) This suppression of the condition under which the appropriation of mostly peasant surpluses was effected, combined with the decline of slavery to cause severe poverty among the classes whose material affluence had hitherto depended on the surpluses produced by servile and free labour. Hence, a 1905 account:

the poverty of most of the big Ranks, especially in Bida, is a matter of serious concern. This poverty is largely due to the continuous desertion of their farm slaves ... (48)

(47) NAK Land Tenure Report 1949, p.46 by C.W. Cole. It is implied that the Ajeles, resident in the capital, and their subordinates who resided on the fiefs, may have made up the two groups referred to here.

(48) NAK SNP 7, 462/1905. "Acting Resident Nupe to Political Assistant, Lokoja" 1905 (Correspondence).

Given these circumstances under which the aristocracy would operate under colonial domination, it is difficult to attribute to it an initiative independent of finance capital. This is not however meant to subscribe to the idea that colonialism signified the end of the social existence of the aristocracy as a class. It may be suggested that the role of the aristocracy was collaborative, one which was objectively determined by the interests of finance capital, coupled with the circumstances under which the conquest and colonial domination were effected. The colonialists who arrogated this role to the aristocracy did it from the experience of the Niger Company occupation between 1897 and 1899 and after 1900, when a favourable environment which finance capital needed for its exploitation was being threatened by political dissension.

1.3.3 The ideology of modernisation: a critique(*)

Having criticised the nationalist ideological response for what seems to have been perceived as the extremism of its approach to the assesement of colonialism, there had been an attempt in Africanist historiography (of the Africanist historiographic revolution) to rationalise on the impact of colonialism.

(*) In using the concept "ideology" here, we are fully aware that it does not mean or imply the same thing as "theory", and should not therefore be mistaken as such. Moreover, we are in this particular case concerned with "modernisation" in the specific context in which it has been implied or used in "professional Africanist historiography" and not as an abstract and general body of thought - which a theory is.

Basing its assessment on the form of some physical attributes of colonial domination, a modernising tendency is associated with the colonising process. The introduction of "Western education, Western social, religious and political ideas", the construction of rail roads, ports, introduction of cash crop production, etc., (49) are cited as some of the manifestations of this tendency and influence. It is further argued, as if to absolve colonialism and finance capital of any responsibility, that "social and political change" was often suppressed, not as a result of the very nature of the realisation of the motives behind contemporary colonialism, but due to the "conservative" nature of the "elements" with which "colonial regimes tended usually to ally". (50)

But, taking these claims even at the level of appearance, they hardly represent the reality of Bida's experience. Contrary to the argument that colonial education would lead to the inculcation of scientific ideas, it is shown in a 1918 departmental report as a testimony to the irrelevance of colonial education, that:

The syllabus in Government schools does not qualify a boy, who may have been more than six years in the school, for a career in the clerical service of the Government or the Trading firms with the result that, except for the few to whom openings are available in the Native Administration, a boy on leaving school has to revert to some such occupation as farming in which

(49) A. Ajayi, "The Continuity of African Institutions under Colonialism", *op cit*, pp.193-194.

(50) *ibid*, p.195.

the education he has received proves of little practical value. (51)

It was emphasized (by the colonial administration) that colonial education, under the Native Authority system in Northern Nigeria, was to teach the "native" to stand by himself. Under this policy, education was limited to the very basic instruction, that is to say, reading, writing, and basic arithmetic, meant to train hands for the basic administrative responsibility in the Native Authority. And, considering the role of the aristocracy as mediator in the colonising process, even this was effected from the top, as a means of entrenching the aristocracy. Even the provision of this education strictly to the members of the aristocracy was done in such a way as to avoid its proliferation. This restriction, in execution of which there was consideration for a separate scheme for "pagan" education, had, in 1907, drawn strong reaction from Walter Ronald Miller (of the Church Missionary Society and the Secretary, Hausa Mission).

I think it will be a cause of great shame to the protectorate if, having rejected this proposal, "On Teaching of Mallams the Roman Character to read and write and Education of sons of Emirs in Northern Nigeria", ... another feasible and satisfactory scheme is not immediately adopted and carried out. (52)

The essence of colonial education can therefore be best located in the motives behind colonial expansion. Nor is this peculiar to education, as all aspects of

(51) NAK, MINPROF 4080/1918 "Nupe Province Annual Report No. II, 1918".

(52) NAK, SNP 15/1, Acc No. 128, Dr. Walter R. Miller of C.M.S. to Mr. Wallace, 1907.

colonial rule constituted an interrelated whole, geared towards the realisation of the interests of finance capital. It is in this context that the tendency behind colonial education, state apparatus, economy and infrastructure may be better apprehended.

This is however not to deny the spread of education or the benefits of some of the infrastructures which owed their existence to colonialism. But these attributes are a product of the contradictions inherent in the process itself. For example, the educated African elite which contested for political power and other privileges with the colonial authority in the course of the nationalist struggle, was mostly a product of colonial education (whether government or missionary) and owed its elevation to colonial political economy. But this constituted an objective development and in no way can the emergence of this anti-colonial force be attributed to the motive behind colonial education or economy.

1.3.4 The influence of bourgeois social sciences and anthropology

Operating in the same methodological tradition as is dominant to bourgeois social science, Africanist historiography has been subject to the same problematic as colonial historiography in articulating colonialism and social classes. In the attempt to confront colonial historiography in its distortion of African history, the same empiricist method as in bourgeois imperial historiography has been adopted. (53) Temu and Swai, for

(53) Temu and Swai, op cit, p.61.

instance, have observed, with regards to this, that "postcolonial Africanist historiography" may continue in the belief that its methodology differs from that used in colonial historiography only so long as

in this belief it has been forgotten that colonial historiography and professional metropolitan history share the same empiricist method, and that imperial history branched off from metropolitan history in conformity with the empiricist parcelization of knowledge. (54)

Using this as an instrument in the articulation of social phenomena, social classes have been analysed from a descriptive and empirical point, based on income and indices of prestige.

In colonial historiography, the history of Africa is written mainly as "a history of Europeans in Africa". (55) Africans are only mentioned in relation to European activities. In response, Africanist historiography on its part tends to write the history of Africa from the perspective of the dominant class, in other words, from the perspective of the "Emirs, Sultans, Obas, leading politicians", (56) etc., as if to equate them to Africans without distinction of classes. In doing this, the usefulness of the concept of class as a theoretical category is therefore denied. Where applied, it is seen from a static, quantitative and undialectical perspective as to obscure its historical existence. Thus, writing on

(54) *ibid*, pp. 61-62.

(55) B. Davidson, Africa in Modern History (England, 1975), pp. 21-22.

(56) Swai, Sokoto, 1987, p.1 (quoting from Ake).

the kingdom of Nupe in Nigeria in what seems a typical exhibition of bourgeois metropolitan scholarship, Nadel categorizes the features of a class into two:

The first is that of firmly established and comparatively permanent differences in actual conduct - differences in standard of living, in habitual behaviour, occupation and moral values. The second aspect is that of the social agency which attaches to these differences of conduct the index "inferior" or "superior" and makes them reflect different grades on a common scale of values. (57)

He stresses further that:

The essence of class (as of any group), lies in the consciousness of group membership; the consciousness of class is the consciousness of this "common scale of values". (58)

In this manner, the nineteenth century Bida Emirate is viewed in terms of the "Fulani" and Nupe nobility, their followers and hangers-on, that is to say, traders, mallams, warriors, drummers, etc., kintsozi (owners of the land), the Beni, Kusopa, (59) etc. In other words, the pre-colonial Bida society is seen in terms of "conquerors" and the conquered respectively. Nadel also seeks to explain the basis for the levying of taxes along this line. Hence, the taxes and other forms of exploitation are not seen as being rooted in a historically determined relation of production involving all groups irrespective of micro identities.

Nor is the position of kings and chiefs in African kingdoms and the elite which emerged under colonialism

(57) Nadel, A Black Byzantium, op cit, p.128.

(58) ibid.

(59) Ibid, p.119 also makes this form of classification.

seen as being derived from an objective historical background. Rather, it seems to be assumed that kings and chiefs in pre-colonial Africa derived their positions from the honour and loyalty bestowed on them by members of their communities. Moreover, the honour and loyalty is not viewed as being of any economic relevance to the leaders. Relations between these leaders and the led or the rulers and the ruled as the case may be, is idealized and presented as cordial and orderly, even where there are empirical evidences of material extortion. In fact, there are attempts to trivialize the economic essence of this relationship. Writing on a form of irregularly levied additional tax called eduqi (small tax) which was charged on peasants in pre-colonial Bida, Nadel argues, for instance, that though there

was no limitation to this additional tax (eduqi) which most often have exploited the peasants ruthlessly, yet I have also seen close personal attachment between villages and their lord still existing to-day, bearing witness to the existence of more friendly ties between feudal lord and tenants. (60)

Generalizing on sub-Saharan Africa Lloyd Fallers even supposes that "goods and services pass upwards in the form of taxes or tribute and back down again in the form of hospitality and gifts". (61) It should be observed that the comparativeness between this methodology and the basis from which ideas of "African socialism", communism, etc. must have been derived, makes the relationship

(60) *ibid*, p.118.

(61) L.A. Fallers, INEQUALITY: Social Stratification Reconsidered (Chicago, 1973), p.4.

between bourgeois imperial social science and Africanist historiography very obvious. Thus, Africanist historiography adopts the same methodological approach with imperial historiography without first appreciating the organic linkage between imperial and colonial historiography. In consequence, therefore, Africanist historiography differs from colonial historiography at the level of conclusions. In both colonial and Africanist historiography, facts about African society are not seen as manifestation of an objective historical process but as bits of unconnected and independent events used in their analysis as instruments for ideological justification.

1.4 The Underdevelopment and Dependency perspective

It may not be easy to attempt to identify with the Underdevelopment and dependency school, a distinctive and systematic methodological and conceptual approach to colonialism. While there may exist within this school instances of appeal to the materialist approach as an analytical tool, as may be suggested of Walter Rodney's, (62) there is also a dominant tendency towards this form of responsive ideological approach that is dominant within the Nationalist/Africanist school. J. Ihonvbere and Toyin Falola, for example, are of the supposition that not even the sentimental reactions and polemics of militant pan-African and nationalists like

(62) W. Rodney, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa (Enugu, 1982).

Aime Cesaire is harsh enough to adequately quantify the negative consequences of colonial domination. (63)

The response to colonialism in the underdevelopment and dependency school seems to have been inspired by the disappointments with independence not having enhanced a self-sustained development. This is what Rodney seems to have attested to when he stated that:

This book derives from a concern with the contemporary African situation. It delves into the past only because otherwise it would be impossible to understand how the present came into being and what the trends are for the near future. (64)

Rodney proceeds to criticize the idea of African initiative as suggested in Africanist historiography, arguing that the opportunities which led the Africanist into this conclusion "were simply responses (albeit vigorous ones) to the options laid open by the colonialists". (65) The circumstances under which the colonialists laid open these options are however not analysed.

While the class feature of African societies may not be outrightly denied in some or even most of the studies that can be associated with the Underdevelopment and dependency school, the analysis may most often not

(63) J. Ihonvbere and T. Falola, "Introduction" to T. Falola (ed), Britain and Nigeria: Exploitation or Development? (London: 1987), p.3.

(64) Rodney, op cit, p.7.

(65) *ibid*, p.243. The options left open to Africans, according to Rodney, involved the options to move "boldly into the labour market, into cash crop farming, into commerce in some instances, into the educational field and into the churches".

project the existence of social classes as an important feature of the historical process in Africa. Similar to the approach in the Nationalist/Africanist school, this school romanticises on African pre-colonial societies. In what seems an attempt to show the virtues of pre-colonial African political institutions, Frantz Fanon states, for instance, that:

Self-criticism has been much talked about of late, but few people realize that it is an African institution. Whether in the djemas [village assemblies] of Northern Africa or in the meetings of Western Africa, traditions demand that the quarrels which occur in a village should be settled in public. It is communal self-criticism, of course, and with a note of humour, because everybody is relaxed ... (66)

Fanon seems to imply by this that pre-colonial African societies were communalistic, an observation that does not adequately comprehend the situation in the Bida Emirate by the close of the nineteenth century.

Among peasant communities in pre-colonial Bida, for whom the family served as the basic unit of production, leadership, whether at the family or community level, was vested in the elders. But it was not the same for the relationship which existed between such communities and the aristocracy. Moreover, such institutions played definite roles in peasant organisation for production, apart from the settling of quarrels. In fact, the villages or communities (and even towns) that were under the Bida Emirate by the close of the nineteenth century

(66) F. Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth (England, 1983), p.37.

were grouped "into smaller and larger countries ... administered as fiefs through feudal lords or egba". (67)

Rodney, who admits the existence of servile labour as an aspect of the production relation in some pre-colonial African societies, however seems to divest this relationship of its economic content. Describing the situation in some parts of Africa (other than North Africa), therefore, he argues that:

communal societies were introduced to the concept of owning alien human beings when they made captives in war. At first, these captives were in a very disadvantaged position, comparable to that of slaves, but very rapidly captives or their offsprings became ordinary members of the society, because there was no scope for the perpetual exploitation of man by man in the context that was neither feudal nor capitalist. (68)

To him also, it is on account of the colonial experience that "previous African development was blunted, halted and turned back" (69) by means of dispossessing the Africans of their political power, without which they could neither defend their interests nor impose their will.

But this would mean that social relations in pre-colonial African societies are discussed as if to suggest that power and authority were not possessed by specific classes which exercised them to further and protect their material interests. At least, the relationship that existed between the aristocracy and its subjects was

(67) Nadel, op cit, pp.116-118.

(68) Rodney, op cit, pp.45-46.

(69) *ibid*, pp.244-245.

characterised by exploitation. Having overlooked the pre-colonial African society's class features and their accompanying contradictions, the underdevelopment and dependency school becomes incapable of adequately comprehending the class dimension of the colonising process. Rather than identify with colonialism the evolution of peculiar form of social relations of production and the social classes inherent in it, the relationship is seen simply in terms of the coloniser and the colonised. This, however, obscures the role of the classes that mediated between the coloniser and the colonised (in the Nigerian case at least), and the access these classes had to, or their share of, the surplus of labour. In Bida Emirate up till 1909, for instance, the Etsu received annually "about fifty per cent (50%) of the 'native' collected revenue for his maintenance". The district heads were allowed to retain fifteen per cent (15%) each of the taxes they collected and the sub-district heads (Etsu Nyamkpa) or head of village group unit, ten per cent. (70) Although with the creation of the Beit-el-mal (Native Authority treasury) in 1910, they were reduced to salaried officials, there are other ways by which their role as officials of the colonial state would continue to guarantee their access to the surplus of labour. (71) This will be discussed in detail in subsequent chapters.

(70) NAK, MINPROF 225/1912 "Historical Notes Bida Division".

(71) As late as 1945, for instance, the Etsu (Muhammadu Ndayako) in Bida still found it necessary to give an

In discussing the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised, the tendency within the Underdevelopment and dependency school has been to view the use of violence as a permanent feature, as if it was used as an end in itself. Fanon, for instance, seems to view violence as a permanent and inalienable feature of colonial domination. He seems to imply too that it was the only option left to the coloniser and arguing in explanation that this was because the colonial state lacked the institutional apparatus to operate a systematic and non-violent exploitation. (72) He describes the spectacle of violence and the form it took thus:

The colonial world is a world cut into two. The dividing line, the frontiers are shown by barracks and police stations. In the colonies it is the policeman and the soldier who are the official, instituted go-betweens, ... the policeman and the soldier, by their immediate presence and their frequent and direct action maintain contact with the native and advise him by means of rifle butts and napalm not to budge. (73)

It must be indicated that the settler colonial system provided the basis and framework from which Fanon drew this conclusion. But this should not be the same of a situation in which colonial domination was perpetrated through a local dominant class, as in the case of the Bida aristocracy.

official instruction to the effect that "fiefholding was to cease in his Emirate as from 14th December" 1945. NAK Bida Div, B 1396 "Annual Report 1945" by R.S. Warner (DO i/c).

(72) Fanon, op cit, p.29.

(73) *ibid.*

With an aristocracy to which was arrogated some judicial powers, police responsibility, some control over the prisons, etc., the nature of colonial domination and exploitation was more systematic. The exercise of violence, though a feature of this domination (through the medium of the aristocracy) was, in a more abstract sense, manifested in the nature of the colonial state policy and implemented in symbiotic relationship. That is, after the physical aggression which characterised the initial conquest, institutional means were evolved and constituted in the Native Authority system as a strong instrument for the realisation of colonial policies. This process may be attested to in a 1918 report on the West African Service Brigade (WASB) in which, according to Mr. Mathews, an assistant Divisional Officer attached to Bards:

There was some trouble at first in making the ranks and file understand that they were subject to civil law and that the civil population was not subject to military domination. But matters improved considerably after a few examples had been made. (74)

It should be recalled that, in its analysis of colonial domination, the Underdevelopment and dependency school has often overlooked the relevance of colonialism for social classes in the materialist sense. Hence, the struggle against colonial domination is seen as being waged by colonised Africans as an amorphous mass of people against the colonising powers. The centre-

(74) NAK MINPROF 4080/1918 "Nupe Province Annual Report No. II, 1918".

periphery and dependency ideologies which are employed in explaining the nature of the relationship which has evolved between the former colonies and the imperialist powers is rooted in the same empiricist methodological approach to the apprehension of colonial domination and its relevance for social classes. The independent states and their emergent elite, to whom power was handed at independence, are denied of any existence independent of the "metropolitan bourgeoisie". The state itself is seen as a continuation of the colonial state and its institutions and officials simply as agents of imperialism. Bjorn Beckman, by implication, subscribes to this in an attempt to identify "the real ruling class". According to him:

the real ruling class is the bourgeoisie of the metropolitan countries. It is not the indigenous businessmen and bureaucrats who merely masquerade as a national "bourgeoisie". They are allowed to play this role by their foreign paymasters. (75)

Segun Osoba seems to have acknowledged such a position in an attempt to locate the basis for the persistence of this dependence and its consequent underdevelopment. He suggests that it is "because the ultimate political and economic decision makers among our national bourgeoisie are ignorant of it or of how precisely it works". (76) Just as is common to the assessment of African societies

(75) B. Beckman, "State and Capitalist Development in Nigeria", Review of African Political Economy No.23, January-April, 1982, p.39.

(76) S. Osoba, "The Deepening Crisis of the Nigerian National Bourgeoisie", Review of African Political Economy, No.13, May-August, 1978, pp.63-64.

under colonialism, in both Nationalist/Africanist and the modernisation ideologies, the underdevelopment and dependency perspective has an intrinsic theoretical defect with relevance to the articulation of the class features and contradictions inherent in the neo-colonial societies. This, by implication, extends to conception of the relationship between these societies and the imperialist powers. And in the same manner, the struggle against colonialism is projected as one by an inarticulate mass of people, without acknowledging the convergence of the objectively contradictory class interests which were behind the nationalist struggle against imperialism. On this perception, one of Segun Osoba's suggested solutions to the dependency "problem" is succinct. According to him, it is

the revolutionary option [although this] is a very difficult and dangerous option. It involves the systematic and arduous task of mobilising the masses of the people by the bourgeoisie in an anti-imperialist struggle against foreign monopoly capital ... (77)

Our disagreement with the underdevelopment and dependency perspective is not so much over such concepts as "underdevelopment, dependency, metropolis or periphery" or even revolution as used by Osoba, as with the empiricist approach to the explanation of the inherent relationship between the imperialists and peripheral bourgeoisie. The disagreement also derives from the subjectivity and the consciousness attributed to this relationship. This approach fails to locate

(77) *ibid*, p.67.

dependency and the nature of the relationship inherent in it, within the objective expansion and consolidation of capitalism on a world scale. On what basis, for instance, would the bourgeoisie in Nigeria mobilise the masses "in an anti-imperialist struggle" when its survival and its fortunes hang on the survival of imperialism? In fact, in the struggle against imperialism, the interests of the bourgeoisie (whether national or comprador) stand in objective opposition to that of the subordinate classes. This development and its inherent contradictions are not a product of the period after independence, but can be traced right to the establishment of colonial domination. It can be suggested that in the course of its expansion and domination, imperialism seems to have evolved a network, the operation of which is manifested in the neo-colonial state and its institutions. It is not a system from which the neo-colonial state and the bourgeoisie who control it have a choice of fighting or pulling out, or one without which imperialism can do.

We may observe therefore that the idea of the peripheral bourgeoisie not being the real ruling class is empiricist and hardly capable of theoretical explanation.

1.4.1 Underdevelopment and dependency perspective on Marx's theory of colonialism: a review of its critique(78)

Guided by an empiricist methodology in the attempt to locate the relevance of colonialism to the post-

(78) This is based mainly on what Ihonvbere and Falola offer as a critique of Marx's theory of colonialism in their introduction, p.11.

independent development crisis, what is implied in the underdevelopment and dependency perspective more oftenly contrasts with the basis on which Marx's theory of colonialism is derived. Having assessed this theory out of context, its content is criticised as being "Eurocentric and largely apologetic"(79) of colonialism.

Karl Marx has suggested that British colonialism in India would end the age-old stagnation of the Asiatic mode of production. That by annihilating the old structures on which this system was sustained, objective basis on which would emerge new capitalist relation would be laid. (80) In response, however, Falola and Ihonvbere argue that:

This largely apologetic position neglects the truth that England was a very conscious tool in bringing about a revolution which distorted and relegated these formations to the periphery of the world capitalistic system through unbridled exploitation and failure to introduce viable institutions. (81)

But, in this exercise, a consciousness has been attributed to British colonialism, negating the historicity of contemporary colonialism as an objective development emanating from the nature of capitalist development. Moreover, in arriving at this conclusion, Marx did not appear to have drawn a time table for the development of capitalism in India. Nor can the

(79) *ibid*, p.11.

(80) U. Melotti, Marx and the Third World (London, 1977), p.114.

(81) Ihonvbere and Falola, *op cit*, p.11.

development of capitalist relations consequent on the basis from which Marx derived his conclusion be denied.

With the emergence of monopoly capitalism and, consequently, imperialism, capitalism has become a degenerating and decaying system. It would not therefore be expected at the level of pursuing its objective condition for profits, through colonial domination, to establish regenerative or "viable institutions". What is expected are such institutions of the classical form as would have spurred the type of development which led to the emergence of capitalist industrialisation in Europe. But this is what is attested to in Ihonvbere and Falola's position, that the British in the course of their colonial domination of Nigeria had, instead, "introduced institutions, amenities and relations which consolidated extraction of economic surpluses, effective domination, incorporation and exploitation". (82)

This, however, merely stops at the form of colonial domination and the activities that characterised it. It does not go beyond this appearance, to apprehend how, in the process of implementing the policies, new social relations were enhanced, contrary to and independent of whatever conscious intentions the British would have had. It is these results which constitute the content of colonial domination that form the basis of new social relations and classes, and the transformation of old ones. In Northern Nigeria, for example, colonial policies

(82). *ibid*, p.9.

were directed at creating an environment which would forestall the proletarianisation of the peasantry. It has been emphasized that such policies were meant, to a large extent, to:

prevent inflated scales of wages and will eventually secure a type of labourer who remains a farmer and producer and respectable member of society and who does not go to the dogs as a professional labourer. (83)

The introduction of forced labour would seem to have had its significance in this policy. In spite of this, however, the imposition of capitalist production and with it commoditisation, laid the basis for the commoditisation of labour as well - hence the objective condition for the emergence of a class of wage labourers. But this again has to be seen in the context of the objective circumstances created by finance capital in relation to local situation and not in the classical sense in which capitalist relations emerged in Britain.

This analysis is not an attempt at justifying whatever virtues or merits would have been attributed to British colonialism. Nor is it an attempt at rationalising between the claims in the various schools of Africanist studies. It is hoped that by identifying the basis on which Marx's theory of colonialism is being criticised by Ihonvbere and Falola, the methodology adopted in the underdevelopment and dependency school and its weaknesses as a theoretical instrument for apprehending the colonial phenomenon and social classes

(83) NAK SNP 5/1 Acc. No. 249 "Political Memoranda", 1926.

would have been further exposed. It can be suggested from this discussion that, with this approach, appearance and not cognition is more often emphasized as the main object of historical analysis, rather than being seen as manifestation of an objective process.

1.5 Colonialism and social class in materialist perspective

1.5.1 Colonialism

By the time of the British conquest, at the close of the nineteenth century, the changes (socio-economic and political) which had started from c.1825, about the time when Muhammadu Dendo made his appearance on the Nupe political scene, were still taking form. Side by side with the more or less communal ownership of land and the mostly family-centred production which predominated in pre-Jihad society, was developing a growing tendency towards appropriation of land as royal property. Such land was "divided up amongst the warriors and office holders of the Fulani invaders". (84) Inherent in this was the evolution of more or less feudal relations with a mixture of slave production in the emirate. One European explorer, Harford-Battersby, who was in Bida in 1892, gives a vivid account of this:

several of the Ndeji's retinue came to salute us, but most of our friends are on the farms. These farms, belonging to all the great men, occupy all

(84) NAK MINPROF 392/1908 "Memoranda by Sir Percy Girouard on Land Tenure and Land Revenue Assessment in Northern Nigeria".

that at least the rudiments of capitalist production was required as a prerequisite for the exploitation by finance capital which was the driving force behind imperialist expansion. The fact that finance capital by its nature is violent put aside, at the time of the conquest, the societies that it sought to colonise were pre-capitalist. Colonisation therefore represented a contact and clash between opposing systems and the dominant classes inherent in them. This could hardly be expected to be smooth and peaceful since the dominant classes, whose economic fortune derived from the existing social relations, would logically resist.

The violence, destruction and plunder which characterised colonial conquest and domination therefore occurred simultaneously with the setting into motion of the objective material condition in which would be manifested the "dialectics of Marx's theory of colonialism". (87) That is, colonialism inspired the breaking up of and, in the case of the Bida Emirate, apprehending the continuing evolution of pre-colonial formations. And in the process, the conditions favourable to the emergence of new (capitalist) social relations were laid.

It should be observed that when assessed in the context of contemporary colonialism and imperialism, Marx's theory may appear more of a prognosis. This is because, though the development started in his time (by

(87) Melotti, op cit, p.118.

c.1880s, according to V.I. Lenin), its real nature was only fully manifested after him. Hence the study by Lenin, for example, and others of the materialist disposition(88) serve to complement Marx's attempt at conceptualising on contemporary colonialism. Lenin quotes Cecil Rhodes who he describes as a "millionaire, a king of finance", in testimony to his (Lenin's) conception of the motive force behind imperialism:

my cherished idea is a solution for the social problem, i.e., in order to save the 40,000,000 inhabitants of the United Kingdom from a bloody civil war, we colonial statesmen must acquire new markets for the goods produced in the factories and mines. The empire, as I have always said, is a bread and butter question. If you want to avoid civil war, you must become imperialist. (89).

In the pursuit of this, weaker and less developed economies were integrated into a growing world capitalist system. These economies became linked to the centres of imperialist economy in a dialectical relationship in which the continuing growth of finance capital in the centres have meant poverty for the weaker economies. Bukharin suggests "an international division of labour" to project the condition in which the economic motive of finance capital is being realised. He explains further that this division of labour is "between national economies", between various countries, a division of labour which oversteps the boundaries of the national

(88) Bukharin's study (Imperialism and World Economy) is also another example of the application of the materialist study in the study of imperialism.

(89) V.I. Lenin, On Imperialism and Imperialists (Moscow: Progress, 1973), p.75.

economy". (90) Whether the position of the emergent dominant classes within the weaker economies and the institutions under their control in relation to the centres could be described as that of dependency, in a way that it is being perceived within the underdevelopment and dependency school, remains controversial. So also is the idea of reciprocal existence and relationship of mutual benefit.

1.5.2 Social classes in materialist perspective

Classes are large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation (in most cases fixed and formulated in law) to the means of production, by their role in the social organization of labour, and consequently by the dimension of the share of social wealth of which they dispose and the mode of acquiring it. Classes are groups of people one of which can appropriate the labour of another owing to the different places they occupy in definite system of social production. (91)

This definition by Lenin is an embodiment of the materialist basis of conceptualising social classes, the existence of which is associated with particular historical phase of the development of society's means of subsistence.

In the course of producing his basic material subsistence, that is to say, food, shelter and clothing,

(90) Bukharin, op cit, p.18.

(91) V.I. Lenin, "A Great Beginning", Collected Works Vol.29, March-August 1919 (Moscow: Progress, 1974), p.421.

man is drawn into an objective interaction with nature, with definite relationships evolving in society thereby. At a stage in the advancement of society, private ownership of the means of production evolved with social classes as its feature. The emergence of classes led to the splitting of society into two broad, antagonistic socio-economic groups, into "freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word oppressor and oppressed".(92) Each historical phase of the development of social relations is characterised by a definite "mode of production". And every mode of production since the evolution of the slave mode of production splits society into classes peculiar to its nature.(93)

The antagonism which is a feature of the relations between the propertied and the property-less and is rooted in the very contradictions inherent in the mode of production, manifests itself in the class struggle which serves as the motive force behind the historical process. This happens as the contending classes carry out a continuous struggle "that each time ended either in a revolutionary re-constitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes".(94) This

(92) K. Marx and F. Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party (Moscow: Progress, 1977), pp.35-36.

(93) S.M. Lipset, "Social Class" in International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences Vol.16, London, p.298, states that "the slave-holding breeds the slave holder and the slave; feudal mode, feudal land lord and the serfs; capitalist, the capitalists and the proletarians".

(94) Marx and Engels, 1977, op cit, p.36.

penetrates all aspects of the social existence of a society, that is, the economic, political and spiritual aspects, thus affecting the whole system's social relations.

In the course of engaging in productive activity within a definite form of social relations, the interests of members of a given society converge or conflict relative to the position each member occupies in the ownership of the means of production and appropriation of surplus. Thus, just as the interest of labour to get more pay would stand in direct opposition to the interests of capital in the hands of the capitalist to increase its profits, so would the interests of the property-less and the propertied in all class societies. The society in pre-colonial and colonial Bida cannot be exempted from this general phenomenon. It is at the height of this objective development for every social formation that the society witnesses the aggregation of these interests and their articulation into two distinctively broad antagonistic groups. It seems that it is only at this stage, when class antagonism would have evolved into open political confrontation, that empiricists would submit to the reality of the existence of social classes and antagonism between them. But even at such a stage, the situation may not present itself clearly enough for its essence and content to be grasped from the form it takes and from what the actors may admit they are doing.

1.6 Conclusion

The relevance of the materialist methodology for the articulation of the class nature of the pre-colonial Bida society, that is to say, the area covered by the Bida Emirate by the close of the nineteenth century, cannot be overemphasized. This is however not to conclude that the materialist methodology can be applied on the basis of a general categorisation of social relations in terms of concepts such as slave or feudal modes of production. Such difficulty as may arise in comprehending the definite stage of the development of social relations in pre-colonial Bida may neither make such concepts as "tributary mode of production" an adequately viable alternative. Samir Amin, one of the scholars who seem to rely on this as an alternative, does so because he doubts "if any progress can be made if we insist on defining one hundred, two hundred, five hundred modes of production". (95) But the issue does not appear as that of identifying the totality of the prevalent social relations with any specific mode of production as to that of identifying an economic structure in which could be traced the criterion for the stratification of an individual. (96)

Moreover, the methodology adopted within the materialist perspective is that of applying the general laws of human development, as an instrument for the study

(95) S. Amin, Class and Nations, Historically and in the Current Crisis (London, 1980), p.12.

(96) Lipset, op cit, p.298.

of society. Thus, even as Marx uses Britain in his study, it is done as a means of providing empirical example. He acknowledges that even in Europe where

the process of primitive accumulation is more or less accomplished, (here) the capitalist regime has either directly conquered production, or, where economic conditions are less developed, it at least indirectly controls those strata of society which though belonging to the antiquated mode of production, continue to exist side by side with it in gradual decay ... (97)

CHAPTER TWO

THE ECONOMY, SOCIETY AND SOCIAL CLASSES IN THE BIDA EMIRATE BY THE CLOSE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

2.1 Introduction

The economic potentials with which the Nupeland was endowed had attracted to it, long before the nineteenth century, some importance in regional commerce, with social and political consequences. This, for instance, had brought to Nupeland traders from the north - from Hausaland and Bornu and even Arab traders further north, from the central and northern Sahara. (1)

Besides the trade with the north, there was an equally important river-borne trade with the south and also with Yorubaland to the south-west. The presence in some of the riverine settlements of the sacred chain, an important insignia of authority that is associated with the legendary Tsoede in Nupe traditions, is a testimony to this relationship. Moreover, the settlements where the identical chains are found are to said to have served as penal settlements (called Leduzi) up till the beginning of the nineteenth century. Another proof of this relationship is the existence in Tada and Jebba of sacred

(1) M. Adamu, The Hausa Factor in West African History (Zaria, 1978), p.50.

bronze figures and brass bells respectively. (2) On the origin of the chains, Nadel has suggested that they are:

a "typical" slave chain of European origin and must have been brought [into the] country by Portuguese who established close contact and an extended slave trade with Benin by the 15th century. (3)

Adequately linked to the north and south by a network of trade routes, Nupeland assumed a position of middleman between traders from the north and south. (4) This position was entrenched for two main reasons. First, the middle Niger was navigable to European steamers only at the peak of its flooding season, which was once yearly. Nupeland therefore served as a trade terminus to European traders whose penetration of the interior increased with the rise in commodity trade in the course of the nineteenth century. Secondly, the amphibious Kede, who served as major courriers (of goods) on the Niger, exploited their position to acquire a substantial share in the trade on the Niger, especially in European

(2) Nadel, op cit, pp.74-75, seems to suggest that the bronze figures and brass bells associated with Tsoede (the legendary founder of Nupe) in Nupe traditions would have been most likely of Benin origin.

(3) NAK, Acc. 13, "Mokwa District Note Book" (1933). Notes from Nadel's article "The KING'S HANGMEN" (Nupe Leduzi).

(4) Adamu, op cit, p.50, has indicated, for instance, that in exchange for imports from Hausaland which "included horses, natron, salt, leather goods, textiles, paper and many fancy goods of oriental origin, Nupe embroidered gowns, slaves and some European goods which originally came from the coast probably constituted the main export to Hausa markets [from Nupeland]".

imports. The rest was controlled by other dominant political and economic groups within Nupe.

The economic expansion which resulted in consequence of this, with relevance to the expansion of production in Nupe in the course of the nineteenth century, was rooted in the trade. There arose over this trade a struggle for control among factions of the dominant classes in Nupe. The rise in European commodity trade and an increasing direct commercial contact with Nupe from around the mid-nineteenth century served as a catalyst to this combination of developments.

This chapter seeks to explain the emergence and consolidation of the dominant classes and those under them in the context of this development. This was manifested in the nineteenth century Jihad (or political reform) in Nupe and the emergence of the Bida Emirate.

2.2 Economy, society and social classes in historical perspective

2.2.1 Beginning of the 19th century

By the close of the eighteenth century, the need for expansion in productive activity in Nupe faced stiff competition from the Atlantic slave trade which, as Michael Mason would acknowledge, was then at its peak.⁽⁵⁾ It competed with the practice whereby slaves were beginning to be settled "within the state on lands

(5) M. Mason, The Foundation of the Bida Kingdom, op cit, p.21 (footnote 53) puts the annual average of slave exports from Nupe between 1760-1800 at "around 325".

controlled by the rulers"(6) to boost local production. Besides, the Atlantic was not the only outlet for slaves from Nupe, as slaves also formed an important item of the trade with the Hausaland. This continued, though most probably at a declining rate, right into the 19th century, even after the fall in the Atlantic slave traffic. Laird and Oilfield were in Rabba between 1832 and 1834 when it was still a powerful seat of power and an important commercial centre in Nupe and had this to say of the trade in slaves:

The slaves are disposed of to the Arabs, and some are sold at towns on the banks of the Niger, and eventually reach the sea-side, where they are shipped on board Spanish slave [ships]. (7)

Even later in 1857, when John Glover sailed up the Niger, he still found evidence of this trade, citing though "in a few cases", (8) the involvement of British traders themselves.

Involved in the boost of production, in addition to agriculture, was handicraft production, that is to say, glass and brass work, iron smelting, blacksmithing, cloth weaving, etc. This development was complemented by immigrant groups of craftsmen(9) who must have been

(6) *ibid*, p.17, indicates that Etsu Jiya (c.1760-1785) settled war captives in towns.

(7) M. Laird and R.A.K. Oldfield, Narrative of an Expedition into the Interior of Africa by the River Niger in the Steam Vessels Quorra and Alburka in 1832, 1833 and 1834 Vol.II (London, 1926), p.88.

(8) See J.H. Glover, The Voyage of the Dayspring in 1857 (London, 1926), p.36.

(9) Mason, The Foundation of the Bida Kingdom, p.9, has cited the "blacksmiths such as the Katsinawa seeking new sources of iron ore [in Nupe]" as an example of these

attracted by the economic potentials of the area and the opportunities provided by the development of a complex network of trade routes. The significance of this for the goods produced in Nupe was manifested in the products which, in the nineteenth century, showed an admixture of diverse technologies. (10)

Also associated with this economic expansion was the growth of towns, the pre-occupation of whose inhabitants was mainly commerce. The location of these towns along some of the important trading routes is in itself indicative of how much they owed their existence to trade. Again, the traditions of origin of some of these towns emphasize the role of immigrant groups. Some of the best known are: the nineteenth century trading port of Egga and the then town of Bokane. The latter, located inland in western Nupe, derived its name, according to traditions, from its founder, a Hausa man from Kano. Kutigi and Enagi traditions associate their founding to settlers from Bornu, from whom the whole area around the two towns derives its name: Benu. These two towns, with

immigrant groups. We may however add the Yagba captives who were assigned to weaving in Bida textiles.

(10) This is the view of Mason, *ibid*, p.56, on the large Nupe trading canoes and of the "fast Nupe canoes called Yan bara" which he says "seem to have been derived from the Kakanda abara" (for the latter, see especially footnote 47, p.68). Nma Ndaziko (oral interview, Dokodza, Bida, 18th July, 1989) also said that Nupe-made hoes like lawuyaqi which seems an adulteration of the Hausa hawya (hoe) and daka, both made in Nupe, were meant mainly for export to Hausa and Yagba markets. The names and the fact that they were almost exclusively meant for export to these areas may have been of relevance to the origin of the models.

another, Dabba, were all located on a major trade route which "served as the main cattle and trade route between the north and south".(11)

It can be suggested that the pre-occupation of the inhabitants of such towns was trade, just as Kulfo, of Clapperton's time - c.18126.(12) The same is implied of Kutigi in her traditions, which, relating the activities of the legendary founders, claims that:

When these people arrived at Kutigi they cleared the ground and pitched their camp and soon the people of Kutigi started to trade with the new comers bringing grains in exchange for the goods of the Beri Beri. The people of Kutigi then informed Etsu Maazu at Jima that strangers had arrived. The Etsu sent Gabi Seyedi to enquire whether the strangers intended to live in the land of Nupe or not ... Gabi returned to Maazu with a horse as gift from the Mene [their leader]. Maazu accepted the horse and sent return presents and henceforth the Beri Beri and Maazu traded together.(13)

These changes in Nupe had brought with them heightened political complications. For instance, political power in the Kaduna-centred Nupe kingdom(14)

(11) NAK MINPROF 45/1922 "Nupe Province Assessment Report on Egbako District" by S.W. Walker. See also Mason, op cit, p.10.

(12) The town of Kulfo, at the time of Clapperton's visit to Nupe, according to Mason (ibid, p.59), was "a purely commercial centre. Its leading citizens were all connected with trade".

(13) From an account by Mallam Ndagi Kutigi (NAK Acc.11, "Kutigi District Note Book, 1948). This incident could have been during Maazu's first reign (probably from Jima), moreso that another account, collected by Goldsmith and Briscoe (NAK MINPROF 279/1909, "Niger Province Historical Notes") puts his second reign after his return from exile in Yauri, which was from Gbara, as the 16th etsu. And Mason, op cit, pp.16-17, acknowledges that he lived till 1790/91.

(14) This description derives from the geographical location of the Tsoedian Nupe kingdom up till the

was, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, concentrated in the hands of a military aristocracy whose pre-occupation was in the taking of slaves for sale. Side by side with this, however, slaves were already being settled into villages for the purpose of cultivating for the rulers as was the practice by Etsu Jiya (c.1770-1785). These potentially contradictory and irreconcilable tendencies did not however seem to have been a major cause crisis within this aristocracy. In fact, the traffic in slaves, at least to the Hausaland in the north, had continued up till the time of conquest. (15)

It must be noted, however, that by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the oligarchy in the Kaduna-centred kingdom had been split into warring factions, each struggling for political power. Logically, this was as a means towards guaranteeing economic control. This may not be surprising if only to adopt Flint's

beginning of the 19th century, along the lower Kaduna river basin, around its confluence with the Niger river. Its capitals, for instance, shifted between Nupeko (located within the vicinity of the confluence), Gbara and Jima were all within this location. By the close of the 18th century, however, a second centre was established with capital in Zugurma. The new centre was established by Etsu Kolo who, haven been defeated in a power struggle within the Tsoedian dynasty after the death of Etsu Mu'azu (in c 1780s), left Gbara to his rival, Jimada. Hence, the Kaduna centre is used in distinction of the old centre from the Zugurma centre. For similar classification, see M. Mason, Foundation of the Bida Kingdom, Zaria, 1981, pp.13-18.

(15) In an account of his visit to Bida in 1891, Harford Battersby in "Journal of Harford-Battersby, February-March 1891, CHURCH MISSIONARY INTELLIGENCER 1891 (Bida), p.652, reports having seen an average of "200 poor creatures [slaves being] ... put up for sale every night".

explanation that "trade and politics had always been intimately connected in the regions around the Niger River".(16)

We have already discussed the economic fortunes which the Kaduna-centred Nupe kingdom derived from its local economic potentials and from its strategic location on the criss-cross of a trading network, linking the north and the south. We may also re-emphasize that, rather than serve as an integrating force to the Nupe polity, this development became a major cause for a centrifugal political development. For instance, besides the flourishing centres of political and economic activities (such as Gbara, Egga, Rabba, etc.) which were located within the Niger and Kaduna basins, other centres with competing potentials had sprung up inland, to the north. The emergence of such centres of commercial activity as Kutigi, Labozi, and Zugurma, to mention some of the best known, is a testimony to this emergent phenomenon. Consequently, the development encouraged the polarisation of the conflict into two broad spheres of economic interest. One was rooted in the Kaduna centre with the control over the Niger trade to the south, while the other, dislodged from the Kaduna centre, leaned towards the "overland" trade with Hausaland and the north.(17)

(16) Flint, Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria, op cit, p.9.

(17) Tracing this development in the first half of the nineteenth century with the deposition of Etsu Jibrilu (who reigned in the first half of the 18th century and died in exile at Kutigi) to explain this long-drawn

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the conflict had led to the emergence of a new seat of political power in Zugurma - inland to the north-west (or western Nupe generally). It was established by a faction which was dislodged from the Kaduna-centred capital of Gbara.(18) The Zugurma-based (western) kingdom was soon witness to the rise of two sub-factions. One was led by Aliaza Nyikako(19) who had reigned in the 1780s before his deposition and exile in Zugurma. The other was led by Abdurrahman, a reformer and Nupe whose "following", to borrow from Mason, "seems to have mainly been located in Central Nupe, - between Zugurma and the Kaduna".(20) This proliferation of factions and the struggle between them threw the whole of the Nupe kingdom into confusion, with consequences in their mutual weakening.

The appearance of Mallam Muhammadu Dendo on the Nupe political scene in the course of the third decade of the nineteenth century had its relevance in this crisis. It

conflict, Mason, op cit, pp.18-19 avers: "So the struggle which resulted in the deposition of Jibrilu should be seen as a contest between two opposing economic interests - one representing the canoe-borne trade on the Niger with the Atlantic as the centre, and the second catering to the donkey-borne overland trade with Hausaland which was connected with the world of the Central Sudan and ultimately the Mediterranean."

(18) The Zugurma kingdom was founded by Etsu Kolo who, succeeding his father Maazu, ruled at the beginning of the nineteenth century in Gbara before he "was driven from the throne". See Mason, *ibid*, p.177 (Appendix 4).

(19) Mason, *ibid*, p.25, describes Nyikako as an usurper who "derived at least part of his material support from the proceeds of slave raiding in Zugurma".

(20) *ibid*, p.25.

was therefore not an accident, nor was it independent of existing political development. It must be pointed out that Dendo and his political significance symbolises a trend which is to be understood in the context of a general historical development within Nupe by the beginning of the nineteenth century.

2.2.2 The reform movement and the roots of a new aristocracy c.1825-1857

There has often been an exaggeration of the role of the "Fulani" in the interpretation of the nineteenth century reform movement in Nupe. This, however, was a group which, according to Nadel, constituted "numerically an insignificant minority" (21) in Nupe. Mallam Muhammadu Dendo, around whose personality this evolved, belonged to the same category as other northern traders. He belonged to the category of the itinerant mallams and medicine vendors to whom trade and the propagation of Islam, with its consequent cultural impact, constituted an inseparable activity. (22) On his arrival in Nupe, he "roamed about the country-side as a professional herbalist and a soothsayer". (23) It was in the course of this that he was incorporated by Majiya. In the tradition recorded by Aliyu Bida and P.G. Harris,

Mallam Dendo was actually summoned by Majiya to pray for his victory and having had some practice in fighting during the Jihad in his own country

(21) Nadel, op cit, p.71.

(22) Adamu, op cit, p.15.

(23) NAK SNP 17, 25355 "Notes on Nupe" by Mallam Aliyu Bida and P.G. Harris.

[i.e. Sokoto] he helped Majiya who drove Jimada away. (24)

Whatever the myth associated with Dendo's role, the alliance with the west-centred faction, centred around Zugurma, bear some relevance to the nature of the conflict since the split in the Kaduna centre. The location of Zugurma and its proximity to Yauri put it within the sphere of the economic influence of Hausaland and within a sub-regional economic arc which, according to Mason, had "threatened the domination of the Kaduna-centred kingdom". (25) By the time Dendo died in Rabba in about 1833, he had been able to wield a lot of political influence. This is a manifestation of the triumph of the northern-inclined economic interest groups in the struggle over the control of the Niger highway and commerce generally in Nupe. Its control was of such strategic political and economic importance that the survival and prosperity of any ruling group in Nupe in the nineteenth century would have to depend on its effective control. And for most of the emirates of the Sokoto caliphate to the north, steady access to the trade from the coast would be determined by the political atmosphere in Nupe. Besides, it would also have to depend on at least a friendly regime in Nupe.

This was however not a result of a struggle waged by the reformers in Nupe as an exclusively distinct group. Even by the time Dendo died, no such group led by him

(24) *ibid.*

(25) Mason, *op cit*, p.16.

could be said to have constituted an independent political and military force located within Nupe, with which to contest for political power. This explains why Majiya (then in Rabba) succeeded in expelling Dendo from his capital after being allies. Dendo fled, first to Ragada, thence to Kintako and afterwards to Lafiyagi. "There he found Mallams Musa and Babba who had also been driven to Ilorin by Majiya". (26) At Ilorin, it took the backing of not just a fellow Jihadist, Abdussalami whose father had emerged as ruler in Ilorin, but a faction of the Nupe etsuzi, led by Idirisu, son of Jimada (who had been killed in Ragada in 1810) to fight Majiya.

Majiya was defeated and, after fleeing Rabba, he settled in Zugurma. But the situation did not yet warrant Dendo to usurp direct political power. Hence Idirisu was enthroned as Etsu. It however returned to Majiya in Zugurma when Idirisu fell out of the alliance.

But then, it is difficult to conclude, if subjected to objective assessment, that a leader of any of the factions of the Nupe Etsuzi would have simply become or ceased to be an etsu based on Dendo's recognition. Nor could such abstract recognition without the physical capacity to enforce it be of any significance in determining whether a leader of a faction exercised or ceased to exercise and command real power. Such would be of no consequence in so far as a ruler possessed the instruments (administrative and military, for instance)

(26) NAK SNP 17, 25355 "Notes on Nupe" by Mallam Aliyu Bida and P.G. Harris.

for the manifestation of his authority over a given area. This would involve the ability of the ruler to command allegiance from the subjects, whether by systematic means or through open coercion. Apart from Abdurrahman Tsatsa (the Nupe reformer) whose political influence, it is indicated, had become insignificant by 1826, (27) neither the Majiya nor the Idirisu factions could be said to have been really neutralised, at least by this time. And for Abdurrahman, he was a reformer whose appearance in Nupe political history of that period could be associated with the same circumstances which surrounded the appearance of Dendo, the issue of race being of no significance.

Before the emergence of the Bida Emirate, there existed in Nupe a semi-independent confederacy of chiefdoms and towns or political units. Within these units existed a form of loose alliance between the smaller and weaker ones and the stronger ones. (28) With the conflict and factionalisation which characterised the Nupe kingdom by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the factions which lost out in the struggle for power were forced out of the Kaduna centre. Each of the factions settled in an area where it more or less succeeded in asserting its authority and winning the

(27) Mason, op cit, p.29.

(28) The existence of such small units as units of identify in Nupe is attested to in the Nupe conception of kinmiyi (meaning our land or our country) which is used in reference to the smaller and more immediate territorial unit than to the wider geo-tribal area. Interview with Mallam Usuman Musa Yerima, Lukma nya Nupe, Bida, 10th April, 1989.

allegiance of the people and access to trade. A typical example can be found in S.W. Walker's account on Egbako area:

The greater part of the District followed Ma'ajia in the civil war which was proceeding when the Fulani arrived, though a few towns claim to have paid [their tributes] to Idirisa at Gbara. No doubt each town followed the chief that was nearest and most powerful for the time being. The fact that the Nupe capitals and Nupe Etsuzi were so numerous seems to indicate that, long before the Ma'ajia-Jimada civil war, ... no one family or place retained the supremacy for any length of time. (29)

In Nupe, Dendo and his group lacked the form of terrain from which the rival factions of the Nupe etsuzi fought and sustained their contest for supremacy. And, considering the fact that the reform in Nupe was not characterised by mass uprising, as

in most of the Hausa states [where] the Muslim revolts were fundamentally a matter of local insurrectionaries struggling against the reactionary governments ... (30)

Dendo and his followers were given to vacillating erratically between one faction and the other, in alliance, taking advantage of the existing political situation. It can be suggested, therefore, that the alliances were not determined by racial considerations. The significance of religion as a determining factor in these alliances, if anything, would have been very remote. It is more likely that the basis had been the same for which even the warring factions of the Nupe

(29) NAK MINPROF 45/1922 "Assessment Report Egbako District".

(30) Mason, op cit, p.25.

etsuzi, there were hardly any lasting or permanent alliances.(31) The most consistent basis had been political and economic interests, with Islam probably serving as a latent ideological instrument. Aliyu Bida and P.G. Harris wrote on one of such alliances involving the sons of Dendo:

After a short time Mallam Dendo died at Rabba and all his family went to Majiya and asked him to act to them as their father and he accepted their request.(32)

When, three years after Dendo's death, Majiya died at Zugurma, his son Chado succeeded him.(33) By then, however, the Dendo party either felt strong enough to go it alone or was convinced that Chado had become weak enough to be displaced, or that Chado had simply become politically insignificant. In any case, relations between Dendo's party and Chado degenerated and, after a conflict had erupted, Chado's leadership was denounced and the title of Etsu was conferred on Usuman Zaki from their base in Rabba.

To appreciate how remote racial and religious considerations had been as determinant political factors, we may take yet a closer look at the developments

(31) According to Mallam Usuman Musa Yerima (op cit), even when Mallam Dendo was forced to flee Nupe to Ilorin, Usuman Zaki and others of Dendo's children remained with Majiya in Rabba. And that on Dendo's instructions, Usuman Zaki's horse was given to Majiya to effect his escape from the invading army from Ilorin.

(32) NAK SNP 17, 25355, op cit.

(33) Mason, op cit, p.138, gives the date of Chado's rule in Zugurma as around 1841 and that he succeeded Majiya. What therefore happened between 1836 when Majiya was supposed to have died and 1841 is obscured here.

following the move by the reformers to usurp power directly.

The new Rabba regime was, no sooner than it was declared, witness to intense political in-fighting which resulted in a fratricidal struggle. In its wake, a new wave of civil wars swept through Nupe, resulting in the collapse of Rabba and the flight into exile of the major figures in the movement.

... Masaba wanted to be the SHIABA or YERIMA, a title given to the next in succession to the Etsu but Usuman Zaki gave this title to Muhammadu Gborigi, the son of Majigi the first son of Mallam Dendo because he was older than Masaba although he was the grandson ... (34)

Meanwhile, Usuman Zaki and Masaba were the only surviving sons of Dendo by his first wife Adama and the second (Nupe wife) Fatsuma respectively. The move by Usuman Zaki and his nephews would have therefore meant nothing to Masaba other than an attempt to alienate him from power. And this was a ploy which Masaba was prepared to foil. His suspicion was confirmed when, after the death of Muhammadu Gborigi, the title of Shiaba was conferred on yet another son of Majigi, a younger brother to Gborigi by name Umaru. Masaba openly revolted against Usuman Zaki and was hence driven out of Rabba.

But, in the course of the struggle, Masaba had rallied the support of two Nupe etsuzi: Majiya and Idirisu. The attempt to dislodge the Rabba regime was crushed and the allies dispersed. Majiya took refuge in

(34) NAK, SNP 17, 25355, op cit.

his Zugurma, Idirisu in the Kaduna area, (35) and Masaba across the Niger in Lade where he remained from c.1835-1845. (36) While Masaba spread his influence south of the Niger from his Lade capital and intrigued to get the regimes in the emirates of Lafiyagi and Shonga destroyed and absorbed their territories, (37) he seemed to have left the Rabba regime to his two allies north of the Niger, Majiya and Idirisu. In fact, he did extend an invitation to them after the fall of Usuman Zaki to join him in Lade, though it did not materialise. (38) The Rabba faction had met its doom when, after a major revolt from Zugurma, Chado, Majiya's son and successor, took advantage of it, with a siege on Rabba. Usuman Zaki managed to escape, fleeing to Agaie with his capital, Rabba, ruined and some of his followers, including his commander Mayaki Umaru, joining Masaba in Lade.

Things however became more complicated as a revolt, led by Mayaki Umaru against Masaba, broke out in Lade:

The rebels were joined by Umaru Majigi, whose client the Mayaki seems to have been years before, as well as by other members of the Rabba regime, all of whom seem to have felt some animus towards Masaba. Once more Nupe was plunged into civil war,

(35) See Mason, op cit, p.33, and E.G.M. Dupigny, "GAZETTEER OF NUPE PROVINCE", A.H.M. Kirk Green (ed), Gazetteers of the Northern Province of Nigeria Vol.III (The Central Kingdoms), London, 1972, p.12.

(36) R. East, Labarun Hausawa da Makwabtansu, Zaria, 1933, Vol.1, p.62.

(37) Mason, op cit, p.35, also acknowledges that: "Within a few years of his having been banished to Lade the rebel from Rabba was the uncontested ruler over most of Nupe as well as parts of Yorubaland south of the river [Niger]".

(38) East, op cit, p.62.

a war in which the sides cannot be distinguished on the basis of ethnic membership or religious ideology. (39)

Masaba himself fled into exile in Ilorin, leaving the Mayaki in control. Usuman Zaki and Umaru Majigi, who were not spared either, had their own turn with the Mayaki and fled to Gwandu. It took an alliance of Nupe etsuzi with the Dendo party to crush Umaru in Bida where Umaru Majigi had taken refuge with Etsu Mu'azu Isa in 1857. This marked the emergence of Bida as the capital of the emergent Emirate. Umaru Majigi who emerged as the leader of the Bida group by 1857 however conceded power to Usuman Zaki who was restored as Etsu and Masaba appointed Shaba.

2.2.3 Political and economic consolidation 1857-1895

On Usuman's death [in 1859], Masaba became the Etsu, and Umaru Majigi, Yerima, and, on the former's death [in 1873], the latter succeeded him. But since none of the sons of Mustafa, Mamudu, Ibrahim and Abdu Gboya(40) was strong enough to be made the Yerima that office went to Maliki the son of Usuman Zaki.(41)

Henceforth, the emergent Dendo dynasty evolved three ruling houses centred around its first three etsuzi, i.e. the Usuman Zaki, Masaba and Umaru Majigi houses. In

(39) Mason, op cit, p.39.

(40) These were the other four of the seven sons of Dendo. The rest were: Usuman Zaki, Masaba (first and second Etsu respectively) and Majigi, the grand-father to Umaru dan Majigi who would succeed Masaba as etsu. Dendo also had a daughter named Gogo Abiba. Mallam Usuman Musa Yerima. Also NAK SNP 17, 25355 "Notes on Nupe" by Mallam Aliyu Bida and P.G. Harris.

(41) *ibid*.

addition to this was an arrangement according to which ascension to the highest office of etsu would be conducted in strict rotation among the three houses. With these, the internal conflict which had hitherto afflicted the fledgling dynasty was marginalised. Such an atmosphere provided the respite needed to achieve political and economic consolidation.

But even though its control over land and access to the surplus labour (free and servile) continued to spread over a wide geo-political area, the consolidation of this remained unstable up till the end of the century. Resistance from its Nupe and non-Nupe subjects continued up to the time of the Royal Niger Company's invasion of 1897. This necessitated persistent raids by the agents of the aristocracy and gave the Egba (Ajele) system its military character.

In Bida itself, after Mayaki Umaru was crushed, the Dendo dynasty had to contend with the presence of Mu'azu Isa who wielded equal powers with the former. (42) Mu'azu Isa had taken refuge in Bida (then called Bini town), together with Umaru Majigi, when they both fled from Mayaki Umaru. In fact, a Fatigi tradition indicates that

(42) NAK MINPROF 237/1914 "Assessment Report on Sakpe District, Bida Division". Mu'azu Isa's stay in Bida could have only been for a brief period however if, according to Mason, The Foundation of the Bida Kingdom, pp.79-80, his seat of power by 1866 when the Kpanti war started was Gbara. That he stayed in Gbara has also been acknowledged in oral accounts on Bida - Mallam Muhammadu Man-Katcha, Tutijiba, Bida, interviewed on 17th July, 1989.

some areas within Nupe continued to pay tributes "secretly" to Mu'azu and his successor, Idirisu Gana. (43)

Besides this, another Nupe area into which the Bida aristocracy did not succeed in making any significant political in-road throughout the nineteenth century was western Nupe, with Mokwa and Zugurma as the principal centres. Oral accounts collected in Mokwa indicate that the manifestation of the resistance from the west was not only defensive but also offensive, thereby constituting a threat to the survival of the Bida aristocracy throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. When, in around 1866, Etsu Babba (leading one of the factions of the Nupe etsuzi in the west), had prepared a campaign against Bida, Masaba had to solicit the help of Mu'azu Isa, then in Gbara. (44) The argument that Masaba did this, not so much out of fear of the threat which the west posed to Bida as to a mere attempt to divide and rule, is not convincing enough. This is because Masaba also made an alliance with Abubakar Nagwamatse, Sarkin Kontagora "and gave him all the Ebe country" (45) and also part of Zugurma, hoping that his predictable activities

(43) J.C. Sciorfino, "History of the Nupe Kings and the Founding of Patigi" in J.A. Burdon (ed), Northern Nigeria (London, 1909), collection of documents on the "History of the Niger-Benue Confluence in the 19th century", Arewa House, Kaduna. Mason, The Foundation of the Bida Kingdom, p.79, makes mention of "the Nupes of Gbara and the other villages ruled by Mu'azu Isa".

(44) This incident has been identified by Mason, *ibid*, p.79, as one of the events leading to the Kpanti war of 1866.

(45) NAK MINPROF 45/1922, "Assessment Report Egbako District".

in this area would constitute a detractive military pressure on the Ebe and Zugurma. This is suggestively supposed to be a practical and responsive approach towards reducing the threat from the west.

The Bida aristocracy however had greater control over the area lying between Mokwa and the Kaduna river and that between the rivers Kaduna and Gbako, extending to the east of Gbako. Within these two areas, but more precisely in the latter, conquest had largely been completed by 1860, allowing for a more absolute political control and economic domination. Hence, among the Bini, "petty indigénous chiefs were submerged and their traditional units carved up into arbitrary fiefs under alien fief holders".(46) Among Nupe villages, community leadership had hitherto been reserved mostly as a prerogative of the founding families.(47) This was being reversed and in some cases loyalists of the emergent aristocracy were indiscriminately appointed to the office of Zitsu (village head or chief) from within. Others yet, would be appointed from among newcomers, whose immigration would have been mostly incident on the wars and other socio-political changes that accompanied the emergence of the Bida aristocracy. An account of a case in Doko provides a typical example:

(46) NAK, C.W. Cole, "Report on Land Tenure in the Northern Province 1949", p.49.

(47) This explanation has been given by Rev. Peter Audu Kolo of the United Missionary Church of Africa (UMCA), Mokwa, interviewed on the 22nd and 23rd July, 1989.

Tsado [9th etsu Dazi by the time Bida was founded as a new capital] was the last village Head from the ruling class. Makolo, appointed by Etsu Masaba when he was at Bida, was the son of a man named Salihu from the hamlet of Bako. His successor, Yisako, was the son of another man named Makolo whose son Jiri, ... says that he does not know from where his father came. The next village Head, Jiya ..., is a pretender. Thus, it will be seen that the last five village Heads are all pretenders. (48)

In the area west of the river Kaduna, up to Labozi and Yeti (north of Labozi), the administrative control imposed by the aristocracy did not go beyond the appointment of Egbazi (Ajelai). Even the creation of fiefs here seems to have been done less indiscriminately. In fact, it is acknowledged that "to a certain extent the Fulani used what they found of an administrative system", (49) in this area at least. This involved paying due consideration to, and using existing family and tribal ties in the course of their wars of expedition. (50)

2.2.3.1 Expansion and consolidation south of the Niger

Access to, and control over, the Niger waterway was central to the political struggle in Nupe throughout the nineteenth century. Moreover, the southern, mainly non-Nupe area, served as one of the major sources for slaves on which the economy of the emergent Emirate depended to

(48) NAK Bida Div., Acc.12. "Jima District Note Book", 1932.

(49) NAK MINPROF: 45/1922, "Assessment Report Egbako District", 1922. Also MINPROF: 279/1909, "Niger Province Historical Notes".

(50) NAK, MINPROF: 45/1922, op cit.

a great extent. Efforts to extend Bida's hegemony over her southern neighbours therefore seems to have featured simultaneously with the struggle waged by Dendo's successors for political supremacy in Nupe. Most affected by the activities of the emergent aristocracy in the south were the Kupa, Igbomina and the Igbirra, with the exception of Okene. (51) Bida's political influence was also very much felt in the Kabba area among the Yagba, Aworo, Owe, Gbebbe, Bunu, etc.

As early as the 1830s when the title of Etsu was conferred on Usuman Zaki in Rabba, he gave the Nupe and Igbomina area of Tsaragi to his fiefs and appointed Egbazi (Ajelai) over them. (52) And, by 1857, Bida's political hegemony had extended to Yagba. (53) Earlier on, between 1835 and 1845, when Masaba stayed in Lade, he had sent his son, Olukpo, into Aworo country and enforced on the people the payment of tributes. The tributes were paid in cowries and slaves, but mainly in slaves as from the 1860s. (54) Thus, in Aworo, the incidence of slavery and slave-raiding was such as to warrant the observation

(51) See Mason, The Foundation of the Bida Kingdom, p. 77 and also Y.A. Ibrahim, "The Search for Leadership in a Nigerian Community: the Igbira Tao, c.1865-1954", unpublished M.A. thesis, A.B.U., Zaria, 1968, pp. 59-68.

(52) See K.V. Elphinstone, "GAZETTEER OF ILORIN PROVINCE, 1921" in A.H.M. Kirk-Greene (ed), Gazetteer of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria (London, 1972), p. 27.

(53) A. Obaloto, "West Yagba Under British Rule", unpublished B.A. History research essay, A.B.U., Zaria, 1973, p. 16.

(54) NAK, SNF 7, 2749/1910 "Historical Notes on Kabba Tribe" (Notes on Aworo-Kabba Province).

by one of our sources that "in 1918 there was not a single adult over 30 (male or female) who had not been a slave in Bida". (55)

Beyond this, however, the Bida aristocracy did not succeed in establishing absolute political hegemony in the south, of the form that was established in the Nupe heartland. Hence Bida's presence in the south was so characterised by persistent coercion of the type which Mason would qualify as "banditry" that it raises the issue as to whether they were perpetrated as a means to an end or an end in themselves. To resolve this, we may have to look into the basis for such form of political relationship. This, the evidence indicating the frequency with which the raids were carried out up till the close of the nineteenth century, cannot provide.

It must be suggested that the armed coercion carried out by the Bida army, but more frequently by armed bands belonging to individual fiefholders, was necessitated by specific political circumstances. A comparison of the level of the development of socio-economic relations within the Nupe heartland and among these southern subjects will help in explaining the basis for the military activities of the aristocracy in perpetrating her hegemony.

Societies in Nupe, even before the beginning of the nineteenth century, had evolved highly stratified social groups, based on slave production and the appropriation

(55) NAK, B655. Bida Div, "Nupe History From 1897".

of peasant produce through taxes and tributes. (56) In Nupe, there existed, even before the reforms, a form of social relations within small political units and between them and the larger and stronger ones. Among the Bini, for instance, the units (or towns, as the case may be), co-existed in a form of confederacy. (57) Thus, in the course of its ascendance, as manifested in the reform movement and the conquests, the emerging aristocracy merely articulated what already existed of the social structures and relations. Of the territory under the influence of the Yikunudzuru of Yeti, extending "from Dagida near Kontagora boundary to Egbajibo on the Niger", (58) S.W. Walker writes:

When the Fulani came, Yeti still kept its predominant position - until the whole country was devastated. To a certain extent, the Fulani used what they found of an administrative system. The Chief Ajele of the District controlled the tax-collection over a large area from Yeti ... they managed to graft much of their system on to what they found; and many villages acknowledging the

(56) Villages such as Sakpe, Gonagi, Gata, Kobogi, Ezhigi, Guzan, Gaje and Tama, for example, had paid tributes to the Isaji faction led by Etsu Jimada and later his successor, Idirisu, after the split in the Kaduna centre, at the beginning of the nineteenth century (NAK, MINPROF: 237/1914, "Assessment Report on Sakpe District").

For the people of Yeti, also in western Nupe, tributes were paid to different kings, usually the closest and most powerful (a most likely situation up to the mid-nineteenth century). NAK, MINPROF: 45/1922, "Assessment Report on Egbako District".

(57) Nadel, op cit, p.25, gives the names of the twelve towns that formed the Bini confederacy as: Bida, Tafie, Esa, Doko, Towagi, Egbe, Gaba, Nupeko, Eda, Panjuru, Ewu and Yesa.

(58) NAK, MINPROF: 45/1922, "Assessment Report on Egbako District".

same tribal head, would be left out as fiefs to Filani slaves, servants or chiefs ... (59)

Among the Yagba, for example, and presumably among the Bunu, Aworo, Owe, etc. too, societies were politically segmented with "the institution of family titles serving as the only semblance of authority". (60) Lacking in the form and level of development of social relations and classes which had evolved within the Nupe heartland, Bida's hegemony in the south had had to be backed up by persistent military presence. This situation predominated in the whole of the territory south of the river Niger, up to the time of conquest. (61)

While this happened, however, they were not simply raids carried out by Nupes against non-Nupes, but were actually perpetrated by the aristocracy in Bida. In this regard, the territory south of the Niger was not exceptional, as the same treatment was meted out to some areas within Nupe. One likely explanation for this is the uncertainty of authority which characterised Bida's political presence in these territories. (62) And this in itself could be attributed to the fledgling nature of the Bida aristocracy, a stage which it was yet to transcend by the time it began to be threatened by European penetration. Moreover, the situation was a manifestation

(59) *ibid.*

(60) Obaloto, *op cit*, p.1, and NAK B 655, Bida Div., "Nupe History from 1897".

(61) NAK, MINPROF: 45/1922, *op cit.*

(62) See Mason, *op cit*, p.77.

of the underlying features and characteristics of the emergent state and the dominant classes whose material interests it was meant to serve and promote. Hence the raids constituted only one means by which the interests of the Bida aristocracy and the dominant classes was being manifested.

The coercive means itself, left at the disposition of the individual fief holders who exercised it at their own discretion, was vested in a state apparatus whose form of operation it manifested. Lenin's view may be adopted as a means of conceptualising this:

It (the state) has always been a certain apparatus which stood outside society and consisted of a group of people engaged solely or almost solely, or mainly in ruling. People are divided into the ruled, and into specialists in ruling, those who rise above society and are called rulers, statesmen. This apparatus, this group of people who rule others, always possesses certain means of coercion, of physical force, irrespective of whether this violence over people is expressed in the primitive club, or in the epoch of slavery ... (63)

Moreover, the exercise of the instrument of coercion was defined in the ideology and law governing the administration of the emirate (as an Islamic state).

Mason writes:

As a Muslim state, Nupe's obligation to wage war on her non-Muslim neighbours were clearly prescribed. As one Muslim author writes, "once the unbeliever in the dar-al-harb (i.e. the pagan land) had been invited to adopt Islam and refused to accept one of the alternatives (i.e. Islam or

(63) V.I. Lenin, "The State", a lecture delivered at the Sverdlov University, July 11, 1919, in Marx, Engels and Lenin, On Historical Materialism (Moscow: Progress, 1984), p.635.

the poll-tax) the Jihadists were allowed to kill anyone of them (or enslave them as was common to Bida). (64)

2.2.3.2 The Nupe riverine district

This area, covering a narrow strip of land and the wider marshy plains of the Niger and Kaduna rivers, was inhabited by the Kede and Bataci groups. (65) Up to the end of the eighteenth century at least, centres of political power in Nupe were located within this District. (66) The political development in the nineteenth century however led to the collapse of the Kaduna-centred kingdom and the shift in the centres of political power inland, and finally to Bida as the capital of the emerging Emirate, from 1857.

(64) M. Mason, "Population Density and 'Slave Raiding - The Case of the Middle Belt of Nigeria" in J.D. Fage, J.R. Gray and R.A. Oliver (eds), Journal of African History, X, 4, 1969, pp.553-554. See also Nadel, Nupe Religion (London, 1954).

(65) The Kede and Bataci are occupational and trade groups and do not therefore constitute distinct cultural entities, sub-tribes or even tribes outside Nupe.

It is acknowledged in NAK, SNP 17, 24354, "Kede District, Bida Division", that: "Kedia means a man who lives in the river and fishes with nets. It also means a polar. Bataci are those who live in land and fish in pools or small tributaries of the Niger. They seldom fish in the Niger itself. The Ledu are keepers of prisoners ..."

Meanwhile, the term Bataci could literally translate as "marsh dweller".

(66) The capitals of the Nupe etsuzi at various times in the course of the eighteenth century were: Gbara, Jima, Mokwa and Rabba. Later, in the nineteenth century (at least by the 1840s), it became "the Fulani at Rabba, the Majiya Dynasty at Jangi and the Jimada (Dynasty) at Gbara" - NAK, Bida Div. Acc.8, "Kede District Note Book, 1933".

The evacuation of the Kaduna centre provided a favourable emergence of a dominant socio-economic group among the Kede. This group developed independent of the Bida aristocracy with its economic power rooted in the control it exercised over the means of production within this riverine area.

There have been conflicting claims as regards the position of the Kede aristocracy and its subordinate classes in relation to Bida by the close of the nineteenth century. The 1897 treaty of Ketsoegi, (67) for instance, declared the territory under the Kede chiefs independent of Bida. This was followed by an agreement reached in Bida between the colonial authorities and the Kuta (the Kede chief based in Muregi) in which the Kuta was committed to what was termed a voluntary "return to our allegiance and former position as Bida subjects". (68) This seems however to have been an attempt to ascribe to the Kede aristocracy the status of having been Bida subjects. We may also suggest that this provided justification for the efforts to reactivate the Emirate, neutralize and marginalize the hitherto contending groups within Nupe, and hence to legitimize the supremacy of the Etsu within the administrative unit, indiscriminately carved out under the Native Administration system. To do

(67) The 1897 treaty signed in Ketsoegi (on the Niger, near Dokomba), involved the Royal Niger Company, the Kede chief, Yaiya, and Makun Muhammadu who stood in for Etsu Abubakar who had fled Bida after the invasion.

(68) NAK, SNP 7, 3989/1908, "Emir of Bida and Yaiya - Kuta of Muregi: Correspondence regarding settlement of disputes between".

this, the colonial authority had to distort the circumstances surrounding the emergence of the Kede aristocracy with relevance to its economic base and how the manifestation of its economic interests and independence stood in variance to the struggle by the Bida aristocracy for class hegemony in Nupe.

The influence which the Kuta and his subordinate chiefs wielded over the Niger waterway "from Idah to Bussa" was reduced to the strip between Gerinya and Gbajibo under the pressure of Bida's increasing political and military influence along the middle Niger from the mid-1850s. (69) Meanwhile, the Kuta's influence over the latter area survived the pressure from Bida till the end of the century. (70) According to Nadel,

The Kyedya [Kedel], hostile to the Fulani invaders, boasting their ancient lordship over the water, regarding themselves still in the days of the British rule as equal to the kings of Bida, siezed the organization of the "Ledu" and in their small "state within the state" this jurisdiction over the "king's Highway" was still working thirty or forty years ago [i.e. by the close of the nineteenth century]. (71)

The economic power of the Kede chiefs, or the aristocracy, as the case may be, was rooted in the monopoly of canoe transportation on the Niger and Kaduna

(69) NAK, MINPROF: 71/1920, "Kede District Assessment Report". According to Mason, The Foundation of the Bida Kingdom, op cit, p.90, "The Kedes, it seems, or at least their chiefs, got control of the trade in salt imported on British ships after the Kakanda monopoly had come under fire in 1862."

(70) NAK. Bida Div. Acc.8, "Bida Division Annual Report 1944-45".

(71) Notes on Nadel's article "The king's Hangmen", in NAK, Bida Div. Acc.8, Kede District Note Book, 1933.

rivers. In addition to this was the near absolute custody of the right over fishing in the Niger and Kaduna, and the direct ownership of the numerous fishing ponds (ewan in Nupe) which are left behind in the marshy plains when the rivers recede after the annual floods. It can be suggested that the European commercial penetration into the interior on the Niger to Nupe from the mid-nineteenth century was of an additional economic and political advantage to the Kede, especially the chiefs. It has been observed, for instance, that by 1858, the financial benefit which accrued to the Kede canoe owners amounted to an annual average of "8,800" dollars, for "7,000 beasts of burden" which crossed at Rabba alone. (72) Besides, the Kede chiefs shared in a substantial amount of the trade with the Europeans, at least till well into the 1870s, especially after the Kakanda monopoly had been broken. (73)

The possession of a state apparatus and a strong economic base was used as an instrument by the Kede aristocracy to mobilise for war, either independently in pursuit and defence of her economic interests, or in alliance with any of the contending factions. (74) Meanwhile, the nature of their control over canoe transportation on such a strategic highway did not make military aggression by Bida a viable possibility. The

(72) See Mason, The Foundation of the Bida Kingdom, op cit, p.66.

(73) *ibid*, p.90.

(74) NAK, Bida Div. Acc.8, op cit.

relative ease with which the Kede blockaded and held siege to Egga (an important Niger trading post) during the ganioqa war (1881/82) testifies to this. The step taken by the Kede during this war, according to John Flint,

was to sieze every canoe between Rabba and Egga, thus cutting off the Emir from his sole source of arms and armunition ... By the early months of 1882, the Kede were in absolute control of the river banks and the Emir was impotent in his capital at Bida. (75)

This insurgency with the siege of Egga was broken only after the European merchants, using a British steamer (Fulah) with its guns, had rallied to the aid of Bida. (76)

There is no indication however that the ganioqa war was followed by any serious political subjugation of the Kaduna District. The Kede aristocracy, which was more or less a merchant group up to the end of the century, was not alienated from the ownership of canoes and the slaves and servants who manned them. It also maintained its ownership of the fish ponds and the right to charge tolls on fishing in the Niger and Kaduna rivers. There is also no indication that an Egga (Ajele) was ever appointed from Bida to lord it over what survived as the area under the jurisdiction of the Kuta up to the close of the nineteenth century. The circumstances which surrounded

(75) J. Flint, Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria, op cit, p.39.

(76) Mason, op cit, pp.110-111. It was this steamer (Fulah) which was used, according to Mason, to convey "the army of Bida and its allies across the Niger to attack the insurgents at Egga".

the ganiqa war are self-indicative of the fact that Bida was not in the position to have effectively imposed her hegemony over the Kaduna area. Moreover, the British and other European merchants whose help in 1882 saved Bida from a military embarrassment, were only concerned with keeping the Niger open and secure for trade.

2.3 Commerce and production in the second half of the nineteenth century

The shift from the demand for slaves to tropical products in Europe had inspired European penetration into the interior of the Nigerian area, through the Niger, in the course of the nineteenth century. The result was the development of direct trading relations between the Bida Emirate and the Europeans on the middle Niger. This provided a boost to what already had been a (relatively) thriving economy. (77) The items of trade with the Europeans were not exclusively of Bida origin but also included a variety of items from the north. One of such items was ivory, which was brought in from Adamawa, in the north-east. (78)

By the time the trade on the Niger was beginning to gather momentum, the Bida Emirate had already emerged as a dominant power around the lower middle Niger. It was in recognition of this that, in 1871, the British sought Bida's protection for their commercial interests in the

(77) According to Mason, *ibid*, p.66, by the time Clapperton passed through Nupe, "the word 'Nupe' had become a label for a range of prestige goods found throughout the whole of central Sudan.

(78) *ibid*, p.99.

interior, i.e. from around the confluence upstream. The British were assured of this protection by Etsu Masaba who "welcomed the consulate at Lokoja, had befriended Baikie and defended his settlement with troops". (79) The reward Masaba got in return, according to Flint,

was no less than the creation of a middleman system on the upper part of the river; his [Masaba's] aim was to monopolize and retain at Egga the whole of the British trade above Onitsa, and to supply the north with British goods ... Nupe was to control the commercial intercourse between Europe and the Western Sudan ... (80)

Hence, in the course of the second half of the nineteenth century, the Bida Emirate emerged as a commercial gateway between a large section of the Sokoto Caliphate to the north and the Europeans on the Niger.

Though commercial trips by Europeans into the interior, on the Niger, could have started earlier, it is on the one involving (the West African company steamer) Thomas Bazley in 1865 that we have the first evidence of noteworthy commodity purchase by a European merchant steamer in Nupe. (81) The volume of trade between Bida and the Europeans continued to expand afterwards. Two major items in which there was a tremendous rise in European export from Nupe, especially between 1871 and 1878, were ivory and shea-butter. (82)

(79) Flint, op cit, p.24.

(80) ibid, p.25.

(81) Mason, op cit, p.86.

(82) Flint, op cit, pp.25-26, put the value of the ivory taken out of Nupe in 1871 at £13,000, £24,000 in 1876, and £52,000 in 1878. For shea-butter, the export rose from 120 tons, worth £4,800 in 1871, to £25,460 worth in 1876 and to 1,500 tons, valued at £58,500 by 1878.

One important item which was brought in by Europeans in exchange for items purchased from Nupe and the monopoly on which was strictly and jealously guarded by the Bida aristocracy, was firearms (i.e. guns and gunpowder). With the importance of this for equipping the Bida armies, its re-export, when it had to be done, would strictly be to friendly rulers of the Hausaland.

We can however not isolate the expansion in European commerce from the general economy of the Bida Emirate. It was the local or internal economic potentials which after all served as basis for the trade with the Europeans, as for that which existed with the Hausaland and beyond. It was the capacity in this economy to respond positively to the challenges created by an expanding external commodity trade that helped sustain the expansion in commerce from the mid-nineteenth century in Nupe.

The expansion in commerce was also accompanied by certain demographic changes. This involved the concentration of mostly non-agricultural populations in towns, especially Bida, but also in other centres of importance to regional trade, such for example: Katcha, Gbajibo, Dabba, Kutigi, Jagi, Ezigi, Gbodoti, etc. (83)

(83) Extract from - Report of Archdeacon Johnson, 3rd December, 1884, CHURCH MISSIONARY INTELLIGENCER (Kipo and Onitsha), pp.653-660. (Arewa House Kaduna, collection of documents on the "History of the Niger-Benue Confluence in the 19th century").

Johnson, for instance, describes Katcha as a market centre that was "subject to a constant flux and reflux of strangers". Gbajibo is described (NAK MINPROF: 229/1917, "Mokwa District Assessment Report") as having been "a flourishing market centre by c.1897". The others were all

even if to a lesser extent and less permanently than in Bida. Thus, in a 1869 account, Crowther estimated the population of Bida at "not less than 110,000 inhabitants". (84) Another estimate by Archdeacon Hamilton in 1886/87 puts it at between 30,000 to 60,000, with enough indication to suggest that much of this would have engaged "almost exclusively in artisanal production". (85) An equally or even larger section of the inhabitants were people whose livelihood would have been mainly tied to trade, besides those who were exclusively in administration, living on the produce of others.

We may suggest, based on the information given on Bida, that this was the feature of other trading centres within the Emirate, the difference being most logically that of scale. Urbanisation itself was however not a phenomenon that could be exclusively ascribed to the second half of the nineteenth century. At least, Kulfo of Clapperton's time (c.1829, when he passed through Nupe),

located on the major North-South caravan route (NAK MINPROF: 237/1914, "Assessment Report on Sakpe District"). These characteristics therefore combine to strengthen our conclusion on the nature and demographic status of towns of this nature in the emirate.

(84) Extracts from Rev. S.A. Crowther's Journal on the Niger, August-September, 1869, CHURCH MISSIONARY INTELLIGENCER, 1869 (Visit to Etsu Masaba), pp.251-256.

(85) Extract from - Archdeacon Hamilton's "A Visit to the upper District" July-August, 1886 (Bida, Shonga, Loko. Iddah, Lokoja), CHURCH MISSIONARY INTELLIGENCER.

An observation by Mason, The Foundation of the Bida Kingdom, op cit, p.94, that "artisanal production, by men whose livelihood was no longer connected to the agricultural cycle, may have reached new levels", is a testimony to the social and economic character of the population in Bida in the course of the second half of the nineteenth century.

has been described by Mason as having been "a purely commercial centre. Its leading citizens were all connected with trade." (86) Richard Lander's description of Rabba of the 1830s is also an indication of the cosmopolitan nature of the population and the dominance of the trade in that town. (87)

The reference to Urbanisation here is however meant to show the circumstances under which the economic character of the classes which existed in the Emirate was being manifested by the close of the nineteenth century.

2.4 The dominant classes

2.4.1 The aristocracy

The aristocracy in Bida, was made up of a relatively small minority in which was constituted the control of state power. Membership of this aristocracy was drawn mainly from a royal nobility which was defined by patrilineal descent from Dendo. It however had, in addition, a coterie of officials whose elevation in status and appointment to offices, derived from economic and political credentials and not from right of birth. Certain economic privileges derived from the allocation of fiefs and royal estates were a preserve of the nobility, with the control of state power and such titles and offices that guaranteed access to it, vested strictly

(86) Ibid, p. 59.

(87) See Lander, R.; Records of Captain Clapperton's Last expedition to Africa, in vol2 London 1967. p. 312-314.

in the three ruling houses. (88) However, other royal titles which do not give a holder the right to succession to, say, the position of etsu, were conferred on members of the nobility, irrespective of whether they were born into any of the three houses or not. To these titles were attached specific offices, with the holders being assigned specific responsibilities in the administration of the emirate.

The Etsu (emir) was the highest in the hierarchy of the titles of the nobility, and succession to the office was based on "precedence and promotion", (89) in strict rotation within the houses. Next in the hierarchy of authority, was the Shiaba (Yerima - the heir apparent). A holder of this title was usually appointed from the house which would be next in succession to the throne. Next to this title (of Shiaba) was that of the Kootun followed by the Makun and then Nakorji. Except of these five however, or even less, there was no strict order of seniority of royal and even other titles by the close of the nineteenth century. The reason given for this by Aliyu Bida and P.G. Harris is that the titles having been adopted from the old pre-Jihad Nupe titles, except for a few adoptions from 'Hausa and Fulani' titles, (90) these

(88) NAK. SNP. 17, 25355, "Notes on Nupe." The three ruling houses are those descendant from Majigi, Usman Zaki and Masaba. Those from the other four sons, Mustafa, Mamudu, Ibrahim and Abdu Gboya, however remained part of the nobility, though without right of succession to the throne.

(89) See Nadel; A Black Byzantium, p.88.

(90) Such adopted Hausa and Fulani titles include: Ubandoma (Fulani), a ruling house title. Others include

order seemed to have been forgotten. This explanation appears the least satisfactory when viewed against the features of the aristocracy as a class.

Though paternal descent was an important prerequisite for conferment of royal titles and ascendance to the highest level of leadership within the nobility, it was by no means all that was required. Existing mainly as an economic category which is characteristic of a social class, wealth and power, defined in terms of the possession of a personal army, determined the influence which an individual could muster within the nobility as well as outside it. (91) Fiefs were however also allocated to non-titled members of the nobility, including women. (92) The most prominent of women titles include: Saqi (the most senior) who was "the

civil titles such as: Galadima Gari (Fulani-Kanuri), Magajin Gari (Fulani), Mayaki (Hausa), etc. NAK, SNF 17, 25355, "Notes on Nupe".

(91) Nadel, op cit, p.116. Of the prerequisites for appointments and arrogation of administrative duties among members of the Bida nobility, Nadel observes: "Political influence, however, could alter the rule [for allocation of fiefs], and a rich district would sometimes go to the more powerful royal prince irrespective of his rank ... Power and possession of a strong army was essential for the post of an Ajele. An Ajele who failed in his task was dismissed from rank and office and replaced by a 'stronger' man."

(92) See R.N. Kolo, "The Bini in Nupe History with Special Reference to Zhima (Jima) Doko", unpublished B.A. History research essay, A.B.U. Zaria, 1973, p.46. He indicates that Emifefefu was allocated to a woman (sister of Etsu Masaba whose name oral accounts give as Gogo Abiba). The inhabitants thereafter had to leave while those who remained became tenants, without right over land. The same woman, according to Mallam Muhammadu Man-Katcha, Tutijiba, was given the whole of Badeggi area as fief, with over a hundred slaves, besides several other fiefs.

head of all women of the royal family", (93) the second was Ninwoye, followed by the Sarauninya (or Soninya) who was in charge of markets and prices of foodstuffs.

Besides these royal officials, there were civil and military title holders, a category in which also belonged the Manzi (ulama) of official standing. Their authority and responsibility within the state apparatus was mainly of complementary significance to that of the royal officials. For instance, the Etsu's councillors were exclusively drawn from among this category of officials. Of these, the Ndeji and the Mavaki (civil and military titles respectively) were the most senior and belonged in the "electors of the Etsu Nupe". (94)

The civil and military title holders were appointed by the Etsu and therefore constituted the Rowni-tsuzi or Ticizi (i.e. Etsu's staff). These title holders were grouped into enazi (guilds) according to their duties. Hence, the:

1. Ena kun (guild of war lords or commanders)
2. Ena Ndejizi (guild of town elders)
3. Ena Manzi (guild of the intelligentsia) (95)

(93) NAK, SNP 17, 25355, "Notes on Nupe".

(94) Ibid.

(95) D. Forde (ed), The Nupe: People of the Niger-Benue Confluence (London: 1970), p.34, defines the intelligentsia as comprising "the Mallams, the religious and judicial officials such as the Alkali and the Liman with their assistants and scribes.

4. Ena Wuzizi (guild of slave title holders). (96)

The combination of royal, civil and military offices constitutes what may be referred to as the state apparatus. And, if we may borrow from Lenin's conception of the role of the state, it existed as an instrument by which the aristocracy

compelled the slave to remain in slavery, which kept one part of society subjugated to and oppressed by another. [As] it is impossible to compel the greater part of society to work systematically for the other part of society without a permanent apparatus of this sort. (97)

And just as was characteristic of members of the nobility, civil and military title holders were "granted land and slaves consequent of their offices". (98) We may suggest that this is an additional proof of the economic nature of the aristocracy in the Bida Emirate. The economic interests of the dominant classes which the control of the state vested in the nobility served to perpetrate, involved more than just the interests of the relatively small family to which the right to political leadership was reserved. What is important is the perpetration and regulation of a form of social relations within the Emirate which would be conducive to the growth of private property. In this wise, the interests of other propertied classes generally was objectively protected.

(96) The leading title holders within the ena wuzizi, according to Aliyu Bida and F.G. Harriss (NAK, SNP 17, 25355), were the Gabi Seyedi, the Nda Turaki and the Zwafu, each attached to one of the ruling houses.

(97) Lenin, "The State", p.636.

(98) Forde, op cit, p.34.

In fact, direct royal patronage was not the only means by which the subordination of the production by the lower classes was guaranteed. Members of the nobility, even individuals who were ennobled by means of conferment of titles with the privileges attached to them, were only assured the more direct means of appropriation that was enhanced through the access to and use of state apparatus.

The slave title holders, in their capacity as state officials, also enjoyed certain privileges which guaranteed them access to acquisition of wealth and property like other title holders or state officials, the scale notwithstanding. Their location in the administrative network of the emirate, as overseers, tax collectors and resident agents to fief holders who themselves were stationed in the capital and rarely visited their fiefs, enabled them to rise "to position of wealth and influence". (99) It was a position which placed them economically and socially above even the average commoner. (100)

The civil, military and slave titles and, by implication, the privileges attached to them, were in principle hereditary like those of the nobility. By the close of the nineteenth century, however, it had become a

(99) Nadel, A Black Byzantium, op cit, p.103.

(100) The "humble status" of having once been a slave in the nineteenth century Bida, according to Nadel, *ibid*, p.106, "disappeared with signs of success and prosperity open to slaves [especially of the nobility] as to anyone".

practice to have one title or the other being conferred consistently on specific families in succession. In fact, some selected families had even evolved into hereditary holders of some specific titles. Hence, the title Rwafi became "an hereditary title, held by relatives of the Hausa general of Manko [i.e. Mallam Dendol, Handi Boshi". (101) This would not have been unlikely titles for which specific skills such as scholarship served as a basic criteria since scholarship and jurisprudence would have been adopted in some families as a strong tradition.

It can be suggested that these titles and the responsibilities attached to them were a means at the disposition of the aristocracy for the perpetration of its class domination. But they also served as an important medium for class mobility.

2.4.2 Merchants and entrepreneurs

The attempt to identify the existence of a distinct group of merchants and entrepreneurs as a feature of the dominant classes in Bida by the close of the nineteenth century shall involve an assessment of the role of the members of the aristocracy in view of the fact that the aristocracy was central to the trade between the Emirate and the Europeans on the one hand, and, on the other, with the merchants from outside the emirate, especially from the north. This in itself was founded on a high level of subordination (directly and indirectly) of a

(101) Ibid, pp.101-102.

greater sphere of the productive activities by the aristocracy. Carried away by the fact that trade was of primary interest, much of our documented accounts, especially by Europeans, concentrate mainly on the role of the aristocracy in trade. In doing this, mention is often made of alien merchants, suggestively for the same reason. Hence, the situation seems to be portrayed as if the aristocracy was the only medium between the producers of trade goods in the Emirate and merchants who came from outside.

To appreciate the basis for the nature of participation of the aristocracy in trade by the close of the nineteenth century, we may first take a look at the level of subordination of production in the agricultural sector.

The kola-nut plantations in the Labozi area, for instance, which had been passed over to the Dendo aristocracy from the old Nupe kings, became (as it had always been before the take over) an exclusive property of the emirs of Bida. Consequent on this, all the yield of the trees was supposed to go the Etsu in Bida. (102) It could therefore be suggested, that Hausa traders, who traded in this commodity would have had to procure much of their supplies through the nobility, in exchange of their luxury imports, for which the aristocracy also served as the main consumer.

(102) NAK, MINPROF: 279/1909. "Niger Province Historical Notes". Also NAK Acc.13, Bx20, "Mokwa District Note Book".

This type of conclusion however has to be taken with caution, in view of the fact that in spite of this claim, those involved in kola-nut production in the Labozi area, are said to have had yet, "found reasons for disposing of enough of their crop to make it profitable". (103) Oral accounts also attest to this, indicating that there were people who carried out the planting of kola trees in defiance of the restriction, which made propaganda an exclusive prerogative of the Etsu, in the same manner as the exclusive royal ownership of the plantations. Such private plots were cultivated by nocturnal method and located in the "epazi," (104) which had no access roads and could not be reached by agents of an etsu. The kola-nuts could have been collected in the same manner and disposed of.

Even in other sectors of agricultural production, where control by the aristocracy was obviously not as absolute, it was nonetheless considerable. This was facilitated either directly, through the acquisition of land and the labour which worked on it, or indirectly through various forms of imposition on peasant producers. Thus, on the immediate surrounding of Bida, inhabited mainly by the Bini, Mason writes:

The widely seperated Beni [Binil] hamlets became more and more interspersed with slave farms on which were settled the captives and tribute slaves

(103) Ibid. See also Mason, The Foundation of Bida kingdom, p.52.

(104) These were the very thick sections of the forests, usually cut off by marshy strips and could therefore not be reached by agents of the etsuzi. Rev. Peter Audu Kolo.

taken as a result of the kingdom's numerous wars or, less frequently, traded to Bida by its neighbours. (105)

The autochthonous Bini population, in the process, either had to desert their land or remain as tenants without any right to land. (106) The produce of the slave estates and the rents collected in kind from tenants combined with surpluses appropriated from free land-holding peasant producers, constituted a major source of trade goods to the aristocracy. Mr. Whitford, a British merchant, reported in about 1864:

We sent a black clerk up [to Bida] to receive payment from the king [Masabal] for powder and guns and the king levied a tax of a pot of shea butter on many of his subjects and returned value a trifle over invoice. (107)

The influence which the aristocracy exercised over the production and distribution of trade goods was as dominant in artisanal production as it was in other sectors of the economy. It was even more obvious in the textiles, especially in Bida, with their konuzi (captives), by the second half of the nineteenth century, weaving mainly for the noblemen of Bida. (108) In addition, there were, resident in Bida, groups of glass and brass smiths, blacksmiths and independent weavers,

(105) Mason, "Population Density and Slave Raiding ...", J.A.H., p.558.

(106) Zitsu Mamma Kolo, oral interview, 12th April, 1989, Kuciworo. See also Kolo, "The Bini in Nupe History", pp.46-48.

(107) Whitford, cited by Mason, Foundations of the Bida Kingdom, op cit, p.88.

(108) Ibid, p.54 and p.94.

organised in guilds. Though we cannot state precisely the extent of control exercised by the nobility over these artisans, it has been indicated that annual tributes and tithes (in kind and cash) were paid to the etsu through the guild heads. (109) Moreover, the prosperity of these guilds is said to have depended much on the patronage of the etsuzi. (110) Oral accounts in Dokodza, Bida, indicate that in the reign of "Etsu Saba" (Masaba), twaci (blacksmith) captives from Kpanti were brought to Bida and settled in Tswatagi (i.e. small blacksmiths' workshop) to practice as slaves of Masaba. (111)

So much for the entrepreneurial role of the members of the aristocracy and its basis. As for merchants of Hausa, Bornuan and Yoruba origin, their presence in Nupe continued into the second half of the nineteenth century, as a feature of the expansion of trade in the Bida Emirate. But their activities and presence was mostly limited to Bida and to a lesser extent other smaller trading centres - located along the major trade routes and the ferry points and trading centres on the Niger. The Lalemi and Fogun quarters in Bida, for instance, are known to have been dwelling places for "thousands" of Yoruba and Hausa traders respectively (112) by the close of the nineteenth century.

(109) See, for example, Nadel, A Black Byzantium, p.102.

(110) Mason, op cit, p.93.

(111) The Tswatagi, according to Nma Ndaziko, is no longer in existence, though the ward name is not lost.

(112) The Hausa area of Fogun, according to Mason (op cit, p.93) extended from the Etsu's palace to the town

The level of the participation of the aristocracy and the itinerant alien merchants in trade notwithstanding, we cannot rule out the existence of local agents (distinct from the aristocracy) who engaged in local and external long-distance trade. To deny their existence in itself would amount to the same thing as saying that the aristocracy and the alien merchants constituted the only medium for the circulation of local and imported trade goods. It would also amount to saying that producers of the variety of export trade goods had links only exclusively with the aristocracy and the visiting itinerant merchants. But scanty though our information on the existence of local agents may be, we have little incisive evidence to prove otherwise.

Of the commercial contact between Nupe and Hausaland which dates back to the fourteenth century, for instance, Mahdi Adamu writes:

Though Hausa traders may have dominated the trade between their country and Nupe, there is nothing to show that they monopolized it to the exclusion of the Nupe traders. (113)

Baikie also describes Nupe in a 1854 account, as a country "of ancient date, ... whose inhabitants ... are a

wall, besides the 2,000 Katsina merchants who resided outside the walls. This is in reference to the 1860s when Crowther visited Bida.

(113) M. Adamu, The Hausa Factor, op cit, pp.49-50. Accounts of slave dealing and trade on the river Benue (NAK, SNP 17, 12579, Vol.I, "Slave dealing in Nigeria and Cameroons") indicates the existence of Nupe settlements along the Benue and the presence of Nupe itinerant traders on the Benue, dealing in slaves and in the fish or salt trade with Garua.

very ingenious and trading race".(114) In fact, the distinguishable identity of indigenous Nupe traders, existing as a feature of the dominant classes, is such that had warranted the use of the concept Kodagba (pl. Kodagbazi), (115) in reference to traders who roamed the Nupe countryside and made extensive trips outside Nupe in pursuit of trade. It can therefore be suggested that "some of the persons of property" who Mason acknowledges were a feature of the villages in the nineteenth century Nupe, (116) would have had traders within their rank. And the Kede aristocracy, for instance, derived much of its affluence from trade among others. This merchant aristocracy was strong enough to have challenged the attempt by the Bida aristocracy to monopolise the trade with the Europeans on the Niger.

These indigenous Nupe merchants traded mostly in peasant agricultural and artisanal products but also in the products of the Bida workshops, over which they had to compete for access with the other trading interests, whose activities mainly centred on Bida. The production of iron goods, practised in several villages throughout

(114) W.B. Baikie, Narrative of an Exploring Voyage up the Rivers Kwara and Benue in 1855 (London, 1966), p.269.

(115) Kodagba is distinct from the petty trader (called shinya), made up mainly of women, who shuttled between the various local markets. The former, according to Mallam Usuman Musa Yerima and Zitsu Mamma Kolo, were merchants who travelled widely - going as far as Yorubaland, Hausaland and on the Niger to Igboland, among other places.

(116) Mason, The Foundation of the Bida Kingdom, op cit, p.50.

Nupe was however an exception. It would therefore serve as a better means of identifying the existence of indigenous merchants in the Emirate. Oral accounts in Dokodza indicate that side by side with visiting traders, those from within the Emirate based in Bida and from outside it engaged in the export and local distribution of iron goods such as iron bars and a variety of tools. (117) There were in addition to the artisanal products, peasant agricultural products from the villages. These included shea butter, groundnuts and cotton which had always been important items for local and export trade, long before European demand for them started on a large scale from around the mid-nineteenth century. (118) Oral accounts also testify to the fact that indigenous traders supplied the numerous weavers in Bida, for instance, with cotton thread, spun mainly by women in the villages as a simple household activity.

2.5 The lower classes

2.5.1 Peasants

Our attempt at attributing to the peasants a definite socio-economic status within the context of the social classes in Bida by the close of the nineteenth

(117) Some of the tools involved in the export, according to Nma Ndaziko, were hoes such as: potoninyagi (made for use within Nupe), lawuyagi (meant for export to Hausaland), and daka (for export to Yagba). Other tools, according to him, were arrow heads, swords and spears, and also bridle (called dzami in Nupe) for horses. In exchange for these exports, "horses, cattle and donkeys" were imported from Hausaland by Nupe traders.

(118) Mallam Usuman Musa Yerima, Lukpma nya Nupe.

century has to take into account the controversy to which the concept itself is subjected. Teodor Shanin indicates that scholars who deny the "existence of peasantry as a valid concept" would argue that "the unlimited diversity of peasants in different villages, regions, countries and continents makes any generalization spurious and misleading." (119) However, the usefulness of the concept as an analytical tool for locating the position of the African peasant in a historical context (120) seems to serve our purpose. This is because our focus is to locate, within a wider social spectrum, the socio-economic status of an aggregate of a category of people which, to use Karl Marx's description of the early nineteenth century French peasant societies, was "formed by a simple addition of homologous magnitudes, much as potatoes in a sack form a sack of potatoes". (121)

Peasants in the Bida Emirate by the close of the nineteenth century included the free land-holding and tenant cultivators among who the family formed the basic unit of production, and the basis for social relations. This applies to the Kede and Bataci, who inhabit the riverine and marshy plains of the rivers Niger and Kaduna. Their economy, mainly dependent on fishing and canoe transportation, was tied to the Niger and Kaduna

(119) T. Shanin (ed), "Introduction", Peasant and Peasant Societies (England, 1984), p.12.

(120) See J.S. Saul and R. Woods, "African Peasant Societies", *ibid*, pp.103-105.

(121) K. Marx, "Peasantry as a Class", *ibid*, p.230.

rivers.(122) Yet, like the peasant cultivators, the family served as a basic unit of production and the basis for social relations, with comparable right to the major means of production. Thus, just as pastoralists would fulfil John Saul and Roger Wood's limited criteria for qualifying their inclusion in the study of African peasantries based on their being "subject to the same kind of political and economic forces", (123) so would groups which pursued fishing as a main economic activity in the Bida Emirate by the close of the nineteenth century.

Among peasant cultivators, whether they exercised some right to land through communal ownership or cultivated it as tenants, production was centred around the household units known as efako. (124) The size of the efako units varied and neither was it determined by any fixed standards, nor was it guided by any rigid traditions. (125) The size of each unit was instead determined discretionally, at the convenience of each household. And large households could have more than one

(122) NAK, MINPROF: 71/1920, "Kede District Assessment Report".

(123) Saul and Woods, op cit, p.105. See especially footnote 2.

(124) NAK, SNP 17, 25355, "Notes on Nupe". See also Nadel, A Black Byzantium, op cit, p.241.

(125) It was not always the case, as Aliyu Bida and Harris (NAK, SNP 17, 25355) would conclude, that "from the day a man married he ... becomes entirely independent".

efako unit, each consisting of at least a man, his children and grand children.

This form of organisation was itself necessitated by a combination of social and economic factors. These bordered on the need for collective responsibility to marry for members, feed the units and meet the obligation for the payment of taxes, tithes and land rent, e.g. gandu (also called enya kin or alubarika kin) in the case of tenant cultivators. (126) Individuals who would therefore wish to break from an efako in most cases did so in groups of two or more (mostly married) adults. Even then, it was a rare practice to involve younger unmarried members of the old unit. In some cases, even the children of the members establishing a new unit would be left to work within the old unit. This was because the new unit, lacking in the nature of the pool of resources which sustained the older and larger ones, would not be capable of providing the social and economic security which would fall on the unit as an independent responsibility.

Apart from the efako farms, it was a common practice, or even the tradition, among members to own personal farms, known as buca. Members were allowed a day or so each week to work on their personal farms, with the proceeds from such farms belonging to the owners.

(126) A cash payment had to be made, according to Zitsu Mamma Kolo, to gain tenancy to a piece of royal land. And, at every harvest, a kind of payment of one stock of corn or some quantity of corn and other produce was would have been agreed upon, would be made to the fiefholder. It was the same thing for silvian products.

To supplement family labour and in the absence of any form of paid labour, individual cultivators and family units depended on two major forms of labour summons. One of these involved summon of a smaller scale which at times could even be an agreement between at least two people, but mainly of the same age grade, to work in turns on their farms. This form of labour summon was known as dzoro (labour requital). The second, which involved a much larger scale of summons, cutting across age groups, was the egbe (communal labour summons). Neither of these two involved any form of payment, except food and some refreshment. For the family units, farm produce was kept in a common pool, in the custody of the family head, usually the eldest member of the unit.

Women belonged in these units in the same way as men, sharing in such efako work as was often determined by the simple division of labour which characterised peasant production.

Among the Kede and Bataci fishing groups, though the family existed as the basis for social relations and the centre of production, the units were not as large as they were among the cultivators. Moreover, fishing did not necessarily require a large number of hands to profitably sustain a unit of production. This made it possible for the fishermen to operate in smaller units consisting of a man, his children (at most) and the wife who may do the smoking and selling. (127)

(127) NAK, MINPROF: 71/1920, "Kede District Assessment Report".

Rights over the fishing pools and creeks in the riverine areas, including right over fishing and canoe traffic in the Niger and Kaduna, were vested in the Kuta and his subordinate chiefs and servants to whom rents and tolls were paid. (128) The pools attached to each title varied in number, relative to the rank of the chief or servant. Thus, the eqba, next in authority to the Kuta (according to a 1920 account), had ten pools attached to the title while the Isawon-Kuta (a servant of the Kuta) had four. (129) Besides, there were pools owned by noble families as an inheritance. There were also pools attached as communal property to communities on which rents were paid through the Zitsu (village head) to the appropriate chief. The personal pools and those attached to offices were usually rented out at more or less fixed rents to individuals or groups on annual basis.

The trading canoes were however "owned by the richer elements [most of who belonged to the aristocracy] as not everyone [could] afford the outlay". (130) These canoes were manned by servants and slaves of the chiefs who owned them. For the Kede and strangers who fished in the main channels of the Niger and Kaduna, tolls were paid as in the case of the rents on pools.

We may suggest, but in relation to peasant cultivators than to fishing groups, that given the level

(128) NAK, B.1756, "Report on Kede District".

(129) NAK, MINPRDF : 71/1920, "Kede District Assessment Report".

(130) NAK, B.1756.

of development of the technology available to them, expansion in production was highly dependent on the number of hands that could be engaged in production. Hence, the increasing burden of taxation imposed by the aristocracy meant that peasant cultivators would have had to explore other sources of labour. The taxes were so arbitrary and high as to warrant the acknowledgement by Nadel that "under the greedy Maliki [1882-95], ... there was no limit". (131)

It had, for instance, become a practice among the eqbagizi (sub-ajelai - residential agents to fief holders) to levy additional taxes called eduqi (small tax) to the eduko (big tax). Besides, there were other such levies as kurdin quzuri and kurdin sabka"(132) - levied in preparation for a war and on the return of the troops respectively. Of the taxes paid by the people of Kutigi town in the reign of Etsu Umaru (Umaru Majigi, 1873-82), Nadel writes:

The town of Kutigi ... paid ... a money tax of 20,000 cowries (about 10 shillings) to the Etsu through the Eqba; to the eqba himself 10,000 cowries (5s) and to the eqbaqi 5,000 cowries (2s 6d). In addition to this, the people of Kutigi sent the Etsu 20 mats of the kind which has made Kutigi the centre of a famous mat industry, worth over 1 pound, 4 bundles of corn worth 7s, "for the king's horses", and 10 mats and 1 bundle of corn to the eqba. (133)

(131) Nadel, A Black Byzantium, op cit, p.116.

(132) NAK, MINPROF: 45/1922, "Assessment Report on Egbako District".

(133) Nadel, op cit, p.117. It must be observed, however, that, if converted to the current Nigerian currency, 1 shilling would equal 12 kobo, as a shilling was 12 pence - or approximately 1s to 10 kobo. By implication, 1 pound would be equivalent to N2. The real (relative and

Under this condition, peasant produce fell below what would have been necessarily required to pay taxes and other levies, and to meet the social responsibilities of the family units. As a result,

When Etsu Abubakar came to the throne [in 1895], he found all the wells of supply dried up. The taxation system of his predecessors had left nothing in the country that could be made into money ... (134)

In the alternative, subjects were raided and enslaved by Abubakar. In addition, the pawning (tsofa) of tax defaulters to agents of the aristocracy gathered momentum.

Pawning had however started much earlier and had grown as the extortion of the peasantry gathered momentum. In this regard, it should be pointed out that pawning was not exclusive to the aristocracy and its agents after all. Oral accounts indicate that the tsofa system had actually become the vogue among peasant communities by the close of the nineteenth century, as several families became caught in a vicious circle of borrowing and indebtedness. Hence, in addition to slave labour, tsofa emerged as a dominant form of labour employed to boost production within the family unit (but only among units or to individuals of means).

It should be observed that the nature of relationship which evolved between the peasants and the aristocracy did not just result in a simple polarisation.

absolute) value of the shilling here however is out of context, with the present real value of the Naira.

(134) Ibid, p.119.

It also provided a favourable social and economic environment for the emergence of family units and individuals, existing side by side with those whose wealth was derived from trade and access to political power and strong enough to subordinate the labour of other economically weak members of the society.

The nature of organisation within the family units, in which wealth and property were entrusted to the custody of a head, also put wealth at the disposal of individual heads and served as a basis for the emergence of individuals of means among the peasantry. Such family heads acquired slaves and could lend money and food out to people who could eventually be pawned, or who would instead present their wards to the creditors pending the payment of the debt. (135) While the slaves and the tsofazi so acquired worked on the efako, any member of the efako who intended to break away from it to start a new unit did so without any claims to the slaves and tsofazi. It was the same for the pool of family food storage and other property, except implements and such other necessities which may be required to start off a new unit. It was in this economic power, constituted in individual heads and the unit of production which provided the family the basis for its existence and essence. It also provided the basis on which individuals who belonged in the family and lacking in the capacity to

(135) Zitsu Mamma Kolo.

survive independently of the unit were objectively compelled to remain and work within the unit.

2.5.2 Servile classes

2.5.2.1 Tsofa

The tsofa (pawning) system in the Bida Emirate involved the commitment of persons to a more or less servile status, in guarantee for a debt. The tsofa thus worked under the same condition as a slave until the debt was completely settled. This was based on the principle that the labour of the tsofa amounted to the interests accruing to the amount owed, had it been put to trading or other uses. (136)

For a society in which the peasantry lived mostly on subsistence agriculture, with exchange at a primitive level, tsofa had become a common phenomenon by the close of the nineteenth century. It was not exclusive to the members of the aristocracy and their agents, but had become a common feature of peasant communities, within the Emirate. Even where grains or other food items were given out, payment was supposed to be made in the currency value of whatever item. This was under a situation in which even where there was enough to sell, buyers would not be easy to come by, except in such places like Bida and a few other market centres with non-agricultural populations. (137) Hence, for a dowry of

(136) Ibid.

(137) Mallam Usuman Musa Yerima.

about thirty shillings (30s) equivalent, a ward from a family proposing a girl's hand in marriage could be pawned for upward of eight years to a person from whom money would have been borrowed. The incidence of tsofa in the Emirate by the close of the century was so prominent that oral evidence indicates that some wealthy individuals had upward of twenty tsofazi working as farm hands, porters, etc. Amongst the blacksmiths and iron smelters for example, tsofazi and slaves are said to have been engaged among others as porters and for the supply of charcoal. The latter involved a tedious process of extensive tree felling and burning. (138) There were also tsofa girls and women who were pawned to, among others, women grain traders, working as milling hands and porters.

The tsofa, unlike the slaves (wuzi in Nupe) however could neither be sold, exchanged nor transferred from a master to whom he or she was pawned to another. This was because the tsofa was supposed to be entitled to his or her civil rights and therefore did not belong to the creditor as an absolute property. Some however, after years in servitude without being able to settle their debts, were eventually absorbed into the families of their creditors and would thereafter enjoy same privileges as every other born members of the family.

(138) Nma Ndaziko, Dokodza, Bida.

2.5.2.2 Slaves

The slave (wuzi in Nupe) belonged to the slave owner as absolute property, with no liberty and claim to the produce of his labour, except for what would be allowed by the master for marginal subsistence. Alder Burdon had indicated that, apart from the "children born in slavery" who remained slaves but could not be sold, slaves in the nineteenth century Nupe could be disposed of in the same manner as other personal effects. (139)

With the decline in European slave trade and the shift from the need for slaves to tropical products, commodity trade became increasingly the dominant feature of European relation with the Nigerian area, in the course of the second half of the nineteenth century. Direct European contact with the Bida Emirate and the establishment of commercial presence in the middle-Niger at a considerable scale started from around the mid-nineteenth century. (140)

We may recall here that the expansion in European export only opened a new dimension to the external trade with the Bida Emirate since the local producers here had for long been drawn into producing at least for a regional market covering the whole of Central Sudan. (141)

The two, continuing side by side, therefore had

(139) NAK, SNP 17, 15849, "Early History of Anti-Slavery Legislation", Alder Burdon to the Acting High Commissioner, Nov.1.

(140) Flint, Sir George Goldie ..., op cit, pp.25-26. Also Mason, The Foundation ..., op cit, pp.85-86.

(141) Ibid, p.66.

overlapping impact in relation to the expansion in local production. But the two had nevertheless divergent consequences as European "commercial capitalism" was disposed towards the alienation of the local economy. The two therefore represented competing and potentially conflicting phenomenon, as the expansion in European export would be of dialectical relevance to the decline in the former. As, for instance, as late as the 1890s, "Nupe woven goods were still prominent in the markets of places as distant as Yola and Salaga"(142) and back in Bida, the market was still swarming with alien traders. This however was of little significance to the form of social relations within Bida.

Under the same circumstances, the engagement of slaves for local production, in addition to other forms of labour in the various sectors of the economy, was all the same intensified. Among the Kede, at least, it has been indicated that slaves served as "the backbone of river canoe traffic".(143) And upland, war captives were mostly settled on land for agricultural production or put to other non-agricultural production. Hence, Etsu Masaba (1859-73) alone is reputed to have established as many as 694 exclusively slave settlements during his reign.(144)

(142) Ibid, p.53.

(143) NAK, SNP 17, 15849, "Early History of Anti-Slavery Legislation".

(144) See Mason, op cit, p.89. The geneology of several villages in the Jima area (NAK Acc.12, "Jima District Note Book 1932) and in the Katcha area (NAK, BX 19, "Katcha District Note Book"), testify to the existence of several slave villages (i.e. settlements). This is corroborated in Harford-Battersby's account of his visit

Of the war captives, we have evidence of the Yagba who were mostly assigned to cloth weaving in Bida. And there is the account that "at least 30,000 [slaves] escaped across the Niger from the Bida province", (145) consequent on the Royal Niger Company invasion in 1897. "Exaggerated" though this figure may have been, (146) it is a further indication for the extent of slavery in the Bida Emirate by the close of the nineteenth century.

In spite of the importance of slave labour to Bida economy, slaves still constituted items for trade to Hausaland, at least up till the beginning of the last decade of the nineteenth century. And though the magnitude of this traffic is difficult to determine, Harford-Battersby still saw, on his visit to Bida in 1892, "200 poor creatures ... put up for sale every night", (147) in Bida market. Yet, there existed in a separate category, tribute slaves that were sent to Gwandu annually from Bida, of which there were in 1867 up to 400 slaves. (148) We are not certain, though, whether

to Bida in 1891. On his way from Katcha to Bida, he indicates having seen "many farms owned by the princes of Bida, [and] worked entirely by slave labour". Journal of Harford-Battersby, February-March 1891, CHURCH MISSIONARY INTELLIGENCER 1891, Bida, pp.652-661. (Arewa House Kaduna Collection).

(145) NAK, SNP 17, 15849, "Early History of Anti-Slavery Legislation".

(146) See Chapter One, footnote 45.

(147) Journal of Harford-Battersby, op cit.

(148) Mason, The Foundation ..., op cit, p.90, and NAK, SNP 17, 15849, "Early History of Anti-Slavery Legislation".

tribute paying to Gwandu involved the sending of slaves by the close of the century. Within the Emirate, however, slavery and slaves remained of vital importance to the economy up till the conquest.

2.6 Conclusion

Our attempt to grasp the form and nature of the social classes in the Bida Emirate by the close of the nineteenth century has taken us far back into the century and even further still in a few instances. In doing this, we are fully aware that our scope limits us to the close of the nineteenth century (i.e. the eve of British conquest) as a starting point. But the phenomenon of social classes in the Bida Emirate of the close of the nineteenth century is one on which we cannot idealise as given, more so that the changes which had been influenced by the reform movement in Nupe, with its relevance to changes in the form of the classes, was even by the close of the nineteenth century, anything but complete.

We have therefore discussed these classes in historical perspective, only as a means towards identifying and contextualising the forms and nature they manifested by the close of the nineteenth century. In doing this, we have treated the economy, society and social classes as a related whole. Lacking in any empirically perceptible features, as may be characteristic of any particular form of social relations and the classes peculiar to them at the peak of their advancement, we have attempted to identify the classes

through a theoretical articulation of their social and economic manifestation. Such, for instance, is our identification of the local merchants and entrepreneurs and their location within the dominant class in Bida. So also is the case of the ordinary Kede and Bataci fishermen and their location (socially and economically) within the peasantry in Nupe.

As classes continued to take form, developments in the Bida Emirate towards the close of the nineteenth century were at the same time continually being influenced by forces related to the expansion of capitalism on a world scale. And central to this development was the tendency towards the integration of the non-capitalist economies. In the pursuit of the imperialist economic objective for higher profits and the tendency to carve out areas for exclusive economic influence (which fueled intra-imperialist struggle), the interests of the British clashed with that of the Bida aristocracy. The result was the British conquest and imposition of colonial rule, with its consequences for the social classes in the Bida Emirate.

CHAPTER THREE

THE FALL OF BIDA: 1897-1901

3.1 Introduction

The military encounter between the Royal Niger Company (RNC) and Bida in January 1897, with the conquest and imposition of colonial rule which followed in its wake, was the climax of a long-drawn conflict. The progressively deteriorating relationship which preceded the outbreak of hostilities, however, was of complex nature and did not engender a simple polarisation of the conflict into one between Europeans and the people of the Bida Emirate as an inarticulate mass.

British merchants, since 1876, had started a move towards the formation of a "single commercial front". Under the umbrella of this single commercial front, "monopoly rights" were acquired from Etsu Umaru Majigi (1873-84) and by the beginning of the last decade of the nineteenth century, had been used to marginalise French and German commercial presence in the emirate. But still, the realisation of British imperial ambitions continued to be threatened.

In the course of the 1870s, the general trend of "declining commodity prices" which had affected the West Coast since the 1860s, reached Nupe. Thus, in 1878 when Etsu Umaru Majigi granted trading concessions to the French, thereby upsetting the monopoly hitherto enjoyed

by the British traders, he was responding to the pressure of political contradictions which this had engendered in his domain.

The situation within the heartland of the Bida Emirate and in the area to the south of the Niger river, over which the political influence of the Bida aristocracy had showed an increasing presence in the course of the second half of the nineteenth century, was becoming explosive. Thus, its fledgling hegemony as the single strongest and more coherent ruling class amongst the various contending political and economic interests in Nupe, was seriously under threat. As a result, the balance of power which had gradually tilted in its favour up till the close of the 1870s despite challenges, would appear to have been heading towards an upset in the course of the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The situation was aggravated by disintegration within the Bida aristocracy itself.

The conflicts within the aristocracy seem to have resulted from the same reasons for which there were challenges from outside the aristocracy. (1) Hence, sides were taken (either overtly or covertly), even among top members of the aristocracy, based on material interests. In all these, the oppressed classes responded, either before, during or after the period of conquest. (2) Such

(1) M. Mason, The Foundation of the Bida Kingdom, op cit, pp.106-113 and 122-129, discusses extensively on British trade monopoly in the Emirate, the resistance to it and the complication which it caused.

(2) M.M. Tukur, "The Imposition of British Colonial Domination on the Sokoto Caliphate, Borno and

responses varied from indifference to the conquest to desertion or even open revolt against both the British and the aristocracy.

Meanwhile, a situation in which politics in the Emirate showed an increasing tendency towards disintegration and proliferation of factions within the ruling class, would not augur well for British economic interests. Moreover, Etsu Abubakar who ascended to the throne in 1895, had become very apprehensive of British traders. Their intensions towards becoming "the rulers of the Emirate"(3) had become obvious to him. It is this complex development which provided the occasion, first, for the company invasion in 1897 and then the colonial conquest by 1901.

3.2 The turn in economic fortunes and the Bida aristocracy

Much as the economic basis of the crisis which engulfed the Bida Emirate in the last two decades of the nineteenth century has been narrated, its class conception remains contentious. This is because the instrument of analysis seems to have been premised on the

Neighbouring States: 1897-1914: A Reinterpretation of the Colonial Sources", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, A.B.U., Zaria, 1979, 2 Vols., p.114. On the political circumstances which prevailed (generally in all the Emirates of the Caliphate), in the run-off to the conquest, he avers: "In each Emirate there were internal contradictions even among the ruling class apart from that between the ruling class and the commoner class ... these contradictions seem to have acquired new dimensions in the last two decades of the nineteenth century".

(3) *ibid*, p.6.

concept of tribe. This is so even where, as is mostly the case with the Nupe heartland, the social criteria for such a categorization is hard to locate. (4) -

It has been observed that the political stability which Bida enjoyed in the 1870s, one which was manifested in Etsu Umaru Majigi's "unrivalled" succession in 1873, "was closely related to the economic prosperity which had developed in the 1860s". (5) The economic prosperity, at least for the dominant classes in Bida, had continued into the 1870s, if the sharp rise in the tonnage and income from the shea butter lifted between 1871 and 1878 is anything to go by. Thus, from 120 tons valued at 4,800 pounds lifted in 1871, the income from shea butter had reached 25,460 pounds in 1876 and 1,500 tons valued at 58,000 pounds by 1878. (6) In addition to this was ivory, a product which was brought in from Fombina (to the north and north-west) and sold to the Europeans at the Niger river port and commercial centre of Egga. The prices for this had risen in 1879 "from £200 to a vertiginous £800 a ton". (7)

(4) In reflection of the main focus of this thesis, an attempt has been made to redress this limitation in Chapters One and Two above.

(5) Mason, op cit, p.101, has emphasised that "The succession of [Umaru Majigi] to the throne in 1873 was the first in almost half a century which had not either precipitated or forestalled a crisis within the ranks of Bida's ruling class".

(6) Ibid, p.101 and J.E. Flint, Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria (London: 1966), p.26.

(7) Mason, op cit, p.106.

It seems, however, that 1879 was to mark the peak and end in the rising prices of trade goods lifted by the European merchants from Bida. From then onwards till the end of the century, the general trend of falling commodity prices which had been witnessed in other West African regions, set in.⁽⁸⁾ Before then, the competition which the British merchants faced from their French rivals around the middle Niger contributed to driving up the prices of trade goods. Besides, commercial operations by the various British trading agents themselves was conducted independently. In addition, there were numerous independent African traders: the Lagos and Sierra Leonean elements especially, who also engaged in trade to Nupe. We may observe therefore that these two factors were as relevant to the circumstances under which prices of exports from Nupe continued to rise up till 1879. The fact that the challenges from the Lagos and Sierra Leonean elements against the Royal Niger Company Charter in the 1890s has been acknowledged along with that from the Liverpool traders, is a manifestation of this. British merchants were therefore compelled by circumstances resulting from the conduct of a free-trade commerce to amalgamate by 1879. This development, its results, and the course it took up till the founding of

(8) A.G. Hopkins, An Economic History of West Africa (London, 1973), p.133. He indicated that there was a recovery in prices of West African exports after 1866, till 1886, from whence a decline set in again, with a little recovery till the turn of the 20th century.

the Royal Niger Company in 1886 and beyond, have been serialised in other studies. (9)

The economic prosperity which was enjoyed in the Bida Emirate up till the close of the 1870s was accompanied by a proportionately sharp expansion in the production of export goods, manifested, for instance, in the volume of shea butter exports. The fall in prices, which characterised the assertion of trade monopoly by the British from c.1879, did not however follow in the same logic (i.e. to result in a fall in production). Instead, to sustain a steady supply of luxury goods and arms which constituted the main import items, for instance, the Bida aristocracy had to step up the drive for surplus. The importance accorded arms supplies is acknowledged by Michael Mason who states that "it was gunpowder which was the cement of British-Nupe accord". (10)

If this is true of Masaba's reign (1859-73), the political crisis which was precipitated by the declining economic fortunes in the course of the last two decades of the nineteenth century made a steady or even

(9) Flint, op cit, pp.243-244 and 246, provides a detailed discussion on the challenges against the Royal charter granted the Niger Company and its attendant monopoly of trade in Nupe. See also Mason, op cit, pp.106-112 and 122-129.

(10) Ibid, p.87. Also imported, in addition to arms and ammunition, were items such as spirits and cheap European textiles. NAK MINPROF: 279/1909, "Historical Notes on Niger Province", and M. Johnson, "Cloth on the Banks of the Niger", JHSN, 6(4), June 1973, p.353.

increasing demand very likely. Hence, on ascension to the throne in 1873,

Umaru Majigi sent his Ndeji [from a war camp in Rogun, south of the Niger, to where he had crossed just after his coronation] to "salute" the executive officer at Egga, and also to buy as much gunpowder as possible ... [preparatory to his first military campaign after appointment]. (11)

Meanwhile, the exchange of trade goods would be carried out under circumstances in which economic initiatives in the Emirate continued to be determined at the instance of the British merchants. This became even more obvious as the monopoly and the internal contradictions consequent on it combined to shift the balance of power continuously in favour of the Royal Niger Company. (12)

For the Bida ruling class, the turn in economic fortunes provided an occasion for a break in the fragile internal cohesion and stability which it seemed to have attained by the time of Masaba's death in 1873. Besides, the fledgling supremacy which it seemed to have had over other close rival socio-economic and political interests in Nupe, faced a renewed challenge towards the end of the century. (13)

(11) NAK MINPROF: 279/1909.

(12) See Tukur, op cit, p.6.

(13) The Kede rebellion of 1881/82, also known as "Ganega" war or rebellion, is one instance of the challenges the Bida aristocracy faced from her Nupe rivals. This however should not be viewed as a tribal phenomenon, an impression which its identification with the name Kede in itself seems to create. The role played by the Kede trading aristocracy in this rebellion cannot be isolated from the general response against economic and political marginalisation from sections of the dominant classes in the Emirate. That the Foqbaqba rebellion in the western districts erupted at the same time is therefore no coincidence. NAK. MINPROF: 279/1909

Umaru Majigi's reign therefore coincided with a period in which there was a pressing need to secure and protect the monopoly of the trade on the middle Niger.

There was also a need to increase the resource and revenue base of the aristocracy. This had to be achieved through the acquisition of slaves - employed directly for production; but some of who, our sources indicate, were still being disposed as exchange goods by the beginning of the last decade of the nineteenth century. Bida's broker position between the foreign traders on the Niger and other Emirates of the Caliphate to the north, and the economic benefits which accrued from it had to be enviously protected. To this end, the focus of Umaru Majigi's attention, from the beginning of his reign, towards Bida's southern neighbours is not unexpected. And in the course of the military exercises which characterised this development, Bida's southern non-Nupe districts around the confluence and further south in the Kabba and Akoko areas were not spared. After being presented with a flag (as a symbol of authority) in confirmation of his appointment by Sarikin Gwandu (Mustapha),

instead of returning to Bida [from Yebo where his appointment was confirmed, Umaru Majigi] proceeded to visit the grave of his grandfather (Mallam Dendo) at Raba. After leaving Raba, Umaru Majigi crossed the Niger at Kaseogi [Ketsoegi] and went to Rogun and camped there till the rainy season was over. From Rogun he made war on the Igbirras. (14)

& NAK. BIDA Div., Acc.8, "Kede District Note Book, 1933". Also Mason, 1981, op cit, p.107; p.110 and p.119.

(14) NAK. MIN PROF: 279/1909.

The Igbirras were subdued and the campaign closed on their promise "to pay tribute and acknowledge Umaru Majigi as their suzerain".(15) This notwithstanding, however, intermittent military campaigns against the southern districts seem to have remained a feature of Umaru's reign. By the end of Umaru's reign, large scale wars in the southern districts were no longer necessary. Isolated and relatively small skirmishes, which were determined in scale and nature, by the way in which tax obligations were met, however continued. In the same vein, attempts by any of the communities to disrupt the Niger traffic would warrant punitive action in retaliation from Bida.

Under the reign of Etsu Maliki who succeeded Umaru Majigi and ruled from 1884-95,

Other minor engagements took place in the Kabba country ... Maliki never made war himself during his reign, but after dividing up the southern portion of Nupe, he allowed the fiefholders to do pretty well as they liked, and there were consequently constant raids on the pretext that no tribute had been paid.(16)

Nor was the Nupe heartland spared the excess which characterised this era of commercial monopoly. However, with the authority of the Bida aristocracy relatively more consolidated within its Nupe districts, surplus appropriation seems to have been more systematic. The process (common among its southern districts), by which

(15) Ibid.

(16) Ibid.

open coercion was maintained as a prominent feature of its political presence was therefore marginal. In the riverain district, for instance,

the Kede and Batachi were subject to every form of extortion, which can hardly be termed taxation ... Normally, the Sarikin Bida received 10,000 cowries and 400 fish from the Kuta.

The Gabi Saidi (a slave title holder of the Masaba house) received 200,000, besides these sums the Masu Ungwai of Bida received various sums, their messengers received further sums; further presents of fish were exacted, in fact there was no end to these exactions. The Kede canoes were pilfered and many of the men held in pawns till further sums were forth coming ... [agents of the nobility from Bida] plundered every village they happened to visit.

The Batachi seemed to come off even more badly ... (17)

The situation in other districts was not any different. Thus, among the neighbouring Beni villages, taxes had risen steadily since the reign of Masaba, through that of Umoru Majigi, becoming so high under Maliki (1884-95) that "there was no limit". (18)

The result of this vicious form of extortion and appropriation of surpluses by the Bida ruling class is not difficult to assume. Thus, the low prices which export goods from Nupe attracted notwithstanding, Etsu Maliki "is said to have been the wealthiest Etsu of Nupe, but (of course, quite) avaricious and cruel". (19) While the era of monopoly occasioned a phenomenal accumulation

(17) NAK. MIN PROF: 71/1920. "Kede District Assessment Report".

(18) S.F. Nadel, The Black Byzantium: The Kingdom of the Nupe in Northern Nigeria (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p.116.

(19) Ibid, p.82.

of wealth by elements within the Bida aristocracy, (20) in irony it also provided an immediate cause for renewed factionalisation and rivalry within the ruling class.

The basis for the internal rivalry was not however unconnected with the nature of the Bida ruling dynasty itself. Its complex form, distribution of political power and authority, did not create room for the emergence of an all-powerful etsu with supreme control over all three houses into which the aristocracy was divided. Each of the three houses had struggled since the rise of the Dendo dynasty for political consolidation through the widening of its economic base - usually rooted in the ownership of slaves, royal estates, fiefs and spheres of influence.

Every king [of Bida therefore], adding more land and power to his kingdom is adding at the same time more land and power to his own family, and distributes land and wealth among his own followers and favourites. Every Etsu Nupe uses the period of his reign to increase to the utmost the wealth and power of his house. (21)

We can speculate that by the time of Umaru Majigi's reign, there were already in existence, within the

(20) One important manifestation of the accumulation of wealth among members of the Bida nobility is in the establishment of slave settlements (i.e. client villages). There were between 1,601 and 1,611 such settlements in the Bida Emirate, by the close of the nineteenth century. Umaru Majigi (1873-84), Maliki (1884-95) and Abubakar (1895-1900) founded 484, 311 and 57 respectively. This amounts to more than half of the whole of such settlements established since 1857. M. Mason, "Captive and Client Labour and the Economy of the Bida Emirate 1857-1901", J.A.H. Vol. XIV, 3, 1973, pp.453-459.

(21) Nadel, *op cit*, p.89.

aristocracy, individuals with such power and property to warrant such an observation from S.F. Nadel that the

rise of slave officials of the Fulani court [was] the counterpart of the rise of a powerful, dangerously independent nobility. (22)

This seems to have manifested itself in increasing official poverty which could only have resulted from a declining central royal revenue base. As Umaru Majigi, Maliki and Abubakar struggled in turn to reverse this trend, they could not but encroach into some of the possessions. In fact, Etsu Maliki, either out of necessity or simply avarice (which is said to have characterised his rule), resorted to seizing property and slaves from others. (23) For Etsu Abubakar, it was the raiding of Bida territories for slaves indiscriminately.

This was a potential contributor to the factionalisation and political rivalry, into which the Bida aristocracy fell in the course of the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Hence, it is no coincidence that Mamudu, Makun under Umaru Majigi and later Shiaba under Etsu Maliki (1884-95), "in 1875 smuggled arms to the defenders of Okene". (24) And, later on, in the course of Umaru Majigi's siege on Oka (in Akoko), the same Makun ran food to the Etsu's enemies. The reasons for Mamudu's actions should not be far to locate, given the fact that a large section of Bida's

(22) Ibid, p.107.

(23) Mason, 1981, op cit, p.140.

(24) Ibid, p.107.

southern district was the possession of the Masaba lineage. (25) Mamudu's actions were therefore aimed at ensuring that tributes from their possessions in the south were not lost, first to Majigi, and then Maliki after him, and their loyalists.

But Mamudu's covert and overt activities, aimed at subverting the authority of the throne, were not limited to the non-Nupe districts. He connived with and encouraged exiled Etsu Babba when he (Babba) inspired and led an aborted attack on Bida in about 1879. He also pledged support to the Kede chiefs in the 1882 Ganega war.

In a similar vein, a Bida prince of the Masaba lineage, the Benu, in c.1885, carried out a raid in the vicinity of Lokoja. And, having raided Agbaja, confiscating the property of its chief (who was his subject), "he proceeded to Lokoja with the avowed intention of raiding the Royal Niger Company's station". (26)

(25) Masaba's influence south of the Niger had started far back in the 1840s, while he was in Lade. He had since then subdued the Aworo, in the Kabba area, for instance, and appointed his son, called "Olukpo" by the Aworo, who ruled from Lade, through agents. He was succeeded by his brother who later moved to Bida and by the close of the nineteenth century, the retainership of this fief had passed on to the Gbenu (that is, the Benu Mustafa of the Masaba lineage). NAK. SNF 7, 2749/1910. "Historical Notes on Kabba Tribes".

The other lineages, though, also held territorial possessions in the south (NAK. BIDA DIV. B.655. "Extracts from Kabba Province Annual Report, 1931"), these were later acquisitions. Traditions in Bida moreover attribute to the Masaba house the largest possession - not only in the non-Nupe districts but even in the Nupe heartland.

(26) NAK. SNF 7 2749/1910. The prince is most probably the Benu Mustafa, a grandson of Masaba, whose exploits as

We can therefore observe that under the circumstances created by the trade monopoly granted the British, some elements within the aristocracy were being marginalised. Consequently, their reaction to British presence and activities had varied, depending on which section benefitted from it at any given time. While the Etsuzi (Umaru Majigi and Maliki), for instance, were paid subsidies in return for granting and ensuring to the British, monopoly of trade with Nupe, those who were being impoverished in consequence resisted. Hence, the activities of Mamudu, for example, are symbolic of the resistance against trade monopoly and the economic problems incident on it. The contradictions which this heightened within the Bida ruling class, apart from that between it and its rivals, remained a feature of the relationship with the Royal Niger Company by the last decade of the nineteenth century.

3.3 Response from outside the aristocracy widens the contradictions

We have been provided with enough details, including the variety of products, all attesting to the fact that the Bida Emirate had emerged as an important centre of regional commerce by mid-nineteenth century. (27) It is

a fiefholder to the Koton Karfi and Lokoja areas, have been acknowledged. In fact, Ndako Damisa, the resident agent (Eqba) to this territory, who died in a campaign at Akoko in c.1878, was Mustafa's Eqba. NAK. SNP 603P/1914, op cit, provides additional evidence of the 1878 Akoko campaign.

(27) See, for instance, Mason, *ibid*, pp.49-69 and Johnson, "Cloths on the Banks of the Niger", p.383.

therefore logical to assume, and this has been attempted in Chapter Two, that the growth of commerce in Nupe gave rise to a class of merchants and entrepreneurs. In fact, an 1855 observation on Nupe as "a country (...) whose inhabitants (...) are a very ingenious and trading race", (28) put paid to this. Moreover, the growth in commerce and inter-regional trade could only have meant a proportionate growth in local production and integration of the various sectors of production. This can be a more likely observation on an economy which, by the end of Masaba's reign in 1873, was characterised by such level of specialisation as to warrant the speculation that "artisanal production, by men whose livelihood was no longer connected to the agricultural cycle, may have reached new levels". (29)

In addition to these, were the peasants, who produced the food crops which were consumed locally, but part of which also served as part of the trade items taken out of Nupe. (30) This is besides other agrarian products - cotton, ground-nuts, shea butter, etc. Some of these, apart from being important trade items in themselves, also served as major raw materials for other

(28) W.B. Baikie, Narrative of an Exploring Voyage up the Rivers Kwara and Benue in 1855 (London: Frank Cass, 1966), p.269.

(29) Mason, 1981, op cit, p.94.

(30) Alhaji Mamma Saba and Rev. Peter Audu Kolo (Mokwa, 22 and 23 July, 1989) testify to the fact that traders from western Nupe traded in guinea corn, rice and other food stuffs to Ilorin, Ibadan and other distant places. Mason, 1981, op cit, p.58, also acknowledges that plantains were sent to Sokoto.

local products of great importance to trade. Cotton products (of clothes and spinned cotton); soap - of which shea butter served as a major ingredient, and iron tools, may provide us enough examples here.

But the production of trade items (and social production generally for that matter), was not an exclusive preserve of the peasant. Nor were the numerous royal estates the only other source. Oral information indicates that slavery and pawning were as much a feature of Nupe villages. We can speculate that these slaves and pawns were owned by those who, together with the traders and entrepreneurs, must have constituted the persons of property that Mason indicates were a feature of (nineteenth century) Nupe villages. (31) The Kede trading aristocracy and the old Nupe ruling classes - which though marginalised, still wielded some influence by the close of the century, could be said to have belonged in this category. Persons belonging in the ruling class in Bida, a section of which was also being marginalised, were therefore not the only interest groups incensed by the consequences of European commerce and the subsequent British trade monopoly in Nupe.

For the peasants, however, the increasing burden of taxes and levies to which they were subjected (in a more extra-ordinary form), since the reign of Umaru Majigi (1873-84), coupled with lower prices from the British, could only have meant mass poverty. We may assume that

(31) Ibid, p.50.

professional artisans were not spared the consequences of this development. Nor were those who made their living mainly from trade. We can speculate that the wave of arbitrary seizure of property and slaves under Etsu Maliki (1884-95) and Abubakar from 1895, heightened the economic pressure caused by excessive formal taxes and levies.

But the effect of the trade monopoly granted the British under Umaru Majigi transcends the fall in commodity prices. Suggestively more serious was the disintegration and alienation of the Bida economy, its prosperity having hitherto been derived from growing specialisation and the integration of the various sectors of production. And this formed the basis for the status which the Nupe economy enjoyed - as a commercial centre, of regional importance. (32) The fall in prices which affected Nupe only after 1879 therefore resulted more in consequence of developments which had started being manifested much earlier but which were not unrelated to the objective tendency inherent in commercial capital: to subordinate weaker economies. This has however been discussed in detail in several other studies that its

(32) When, therefore, Masaba welcomed the establishment of a British consulate at Lokoja in 1871, neither the choice of the British nor Masaba's projection of the economic advantage which the presence of the British would afford him, was out of tune with the reality of Bida's economic potentials. Masaba's aim, according to J.E. Flint (Sir Geroge Goldie and the Making of Nigeria, p.25), "was to monopolize and retain at Egga the whole of the British trade above Onitsa, and Nupe traders would act as middlemen to supply the north with British goods ... Nupe was to control the commercial intercourse between the Europeans and the Western Sudan ...".

repetition here should be of no relevance. It should be enough to point out that the new wave of political crisis which engulfed the Emirate from the turn of the 1880s, seems to have been in response to the monopoly and the economic difficulties incident on it. This culminated in large scale rebellions from the western and riverain (i.e. Kede) districts of the Nupe heartland.

3.3.1 The Fagbaqba and Ganeqa "rebellions"

Umaru Dan Majigi appeared to have had a particular dislike of the Trans-Kaduna peoples (i.e. western Nupe or the districts to the west of the Kaduna river)(33) whom he regarded as rebellious and it is said that he ordered every male in this area to be executed.

According to one account, he even went as far as to order the wombs of pregnant women to be ripped open in case they might contain a male child.(34)

But what degree of rebellion, one may ask, could have attracted such response, as to warrant such type of picture painted in a tradition of this area?

Masaba, Umaru Majigi's predecessor, had fought an exhaustive civil war in the mid-1860s, against the Zugurma-based faction of the old Nupe Etsuzi-led by Etsu Baba.(35) If, however, that was in continuation of the long-drawn struggle for political and economic supremacy in the lower middle Niger, between factions of the old

(33) The districts were mainly Mokwa, Bokani, Rabba, Yeti, Bete and Sakpe - NAK. BIDA DIVISION. B.655. "Nupe History from 1897".

(34) NAK. BIDA DIV. Bx 20: "Mokwa District Note Book".

(35) NAK. MIN PROF: 279/1909. "Historical Notes Niger Province".

Nupe Etsuzi and the emergent ruling class of Bida, the outcome of the encounter made success for the Zugurma-based faction an even more remote possibility. The result, after several bloody encounters, was a devastating defeat that saw Etsu Baba fleeing into exile in Borgu, left with just a fraction of his men. (36) Besides, there was devastation of villages on a massive scale, with captives being carted away and sold into slavery on the advice of Umaru Majigi, instead of being killed as Masaba had wished. The reasons behind this should not be difficult to speculate. It would have been aimed at pacifying a population from which Baba drew his support. According to oral information, such support involved tribute and the provision of men, as volunteers or levies for the prosecution of wars. At least, accounts recorded by J.C. Sciortino at the beginning of this century, indicating that: "Nupes on both sides of the Niger [still] paid their tribute in secret to Etsu Idirisu Gana" (37) by the close of the nineteenth century, is a testimony to this.

At best, what Masaba seems to have succeeded in doing was to have marginalised Zugurma's authority. In its place, existing administrative structures were

(36) E.G.M. Dupigny Esq., "GAZETTEER OF NUPE PROVINCE"; A.H.M. Kirk-Greene (ed), Gazetteer of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria Vol.III, The Central Kingdoms (London: Frank Cass, 1972), pp.16-17. See also Mason, 1981, op cit, p.80.

(37) J.C. Sciortino, "History of the Nupe Kings and the Foundation of Patigi", J.A. Burdon, Northern Nigeria (London, 1909).

subordinated and adopted to facilitate Bida's dominance. (38) Whatever its successes, it did not kill the will in the people to resist oppression. The perpetration of Bida's drive for appropriation of surpluses amongst its subjects in western Nupe (as would have been the case in other districts), would remain unchallenged therefore so long as it remained within certain limits. These seem to have been exceeded under Umaru Majigi, to the extent that it provided Etsu Baba an easy opportunity to rebuild his following. Hence, Mason agrees that, starting with just "his horse and fifteen or so followers", (39) Baba in no time succeeded in mobilising a considerable force from the Kaduna districts into a major offensive against Bida. Locating Baba's popularity in the context of the circumstances leading to the Fogbaqba rebellion, Mason argues:

In general we know that the Nupes suffered not only the regular imposts of the Etsu but the arbitrary exactions of Bida princes and soldiers who served them as well. But regularized oppression, while a necessary cause of popular revolts is not a sufficient cause. What is needed if ignition is to take place is a sharp shift to a higher level of exploitation. This was provided by the precipitous fall in the unit price of shea butter ... So the peasants would have been caught in the scissors of higher demands from the Etsu

(38) In a description of the administrative changes that were facilitated by the Jihad, in the Yeti/Egbako area, for instance, S.W. Walker affirms: "To a certain extent the Filani used what they found of an administrative system ... they used the family and tribal ties already existing. Yet they managed to graft much of their system on to that they found ...". NAK. MIN PROF: 45/1922. "Assessment Report on Egbako District".

(39) Mason, The Foundation of the Bida Kingdom, p.107.

[as a means of making up for fall in revenue] and lower prices from the British ... (40)

This was very obvious in the case of the Ebes of the Yeti area. The immediate cause for their own part of the spontaneous rebellions that culminated in the Fogbaqba war had to do with the "depredations of the Filani agents" and petty pilfering by royal messengers. (41)

But developments resulting from the trade monopoly which was granted by Umaru Majigi had implications beyond falling prices. It can be speculated that as the economy got progressively alienated and slumped into disintegration, it would have meant a loss in a substantial aspect of a hitherto bouyant trade. This would involve local and regional trade, an activity which, in spite of the growing trade with Europeans since the mid-nineteenth century, still remained an important aspect of Bida's commerce. Most especially affected by these changes would have been the independent traders and merchants who, as has already been indicated in Chapter Two above, constituted a feature of the social classes in the Bida Emirate by the end of the nineteenth century. Hence, the "allies" which Makun Mamudu is said to have assured Baba that he still had in Bida, (42) could have been real. Even if Mamudu had done this to incite the

(40) Ibid.

(41) NAK. MIN PROF:45/1922. Besides, oral accounts indicate that such indiscriminate pilfering and other excesses seemed a general phenomenon rather than an exception.

(42) Mason, op cit, p.107.

Etsu's enemies, thereby furthering his personal ambition of seizing power by causing Umaru Majigi to abdicate, this would not have been out of context. First, he was a victim of the slump caused by the monopoly and with him, in Bida, others within and outside the aristocracy who were being marginalised. Secondly, he should only have assessed correctly the chances of such an enemy to win the sympathy of an impoverished and agrieved population. The impoverishment itself, resulting from the Etsu's commercial policies, or rather British imposition of trade monopoly to which the Etsu at least seemed to have assented. Moreso that the Etsu, using his position, seems to have been the only benefactor. At least, even if not specific on Umaru Majigi, general evidence testifies to the fact that the Etsu received some subsidy in return for this concession, (43) while Maliki, who succeeded Umaru Majigi in 1884, actually did, even if it was "paltry". (44)

By December 1881, however, uprising in western Nupe had been muffled. Baba himself, in a bid to flee across the Niger to Borgu, got drowned. Meanwhile, Bida's political triumph was hardly carried beyond the battle fields. The military exercise itself was mostly in the form of punitive invasion, without the establishment of strong administrative network to back it up. Oral accounts in Mokwa, for instance, claim that, in spite of

(43) F.O. 48/2109. "Niger Benue Tribes", 1890 (NHR's collections, A.B.U., Zaria) and Flint, op cit, p.137.

(44) Mason, op cit, pp.123 and 126.

the sacking to which it was subject in the course of the chase for retreating Baba, attempts to establish administrative control met with futile results. Bida thereafter had to resort to diplomacy when it became obvious that Mokwa would not succumb. At one point, an eqba (ajele) was sent from Bida. But, lacking in any effective means for control, the people did not recognise his authority. At the heat of it, the town was deserted, leaving the eqba an empty town.

At the same time as the rebellion in the west was being suppressed, tension was mounting in the riverain district. This was centred mainly around the Kede trading aristocracy. While the outbreak of hostility between Bida and the Kede came at the heat of a power struggle within the Bida ruling circles, however, there had already existed deep-rooted apprehension of the latter's attitude by the former. The reasons for Kede grievances, or at least that of its trading aristocracy, are not different from those which had caused political rivalry and disintegration within the Bida aristocracy itself. Even worse for the Kede was the loss in their monopoly of transportation and commerce on the Niger. As the main owners of canoes and also controllers of traffic on the Niger, they acquired a high stake, as middlemen, in the Niger commerce, at least until the imposition of trade monopoly by the British. Besides, having succeeded in maintaining a more regular steamer services as far as Raba, coupled with the establishment of trading factories (in Egga and Shonga, for instance), the British, as from

the 1870s, sidelined the Kede middlemen. This was the case with the Hausa traders, who supplied ivory in exchange for European salt.

Under such circumstances, resistance from the Kede was a predictable eventuality. And when, in 1878, Umaru Majigi openly admitted his apprehension and unease over the Kede, (45) we must assume that it would have been in appreciation of this fact. We have every reason to assume, therefore, that, for the Kede, economic grievances were central to the causes of the Ganega rebellion in 1881. Resulting in consequence of British monopoly, the contradiction became clearly manifested with the ascendance of Umaru Majigi to the throne in 1873. (46) While this happened, the etsu made efforts to avert a possible Kede revolt.

The Kede, it will be recalled, and at least in Nadel's description, "are united in a strongly centralised political organisation", constituting within the Bida Emirate a "state within the state". (47) This

(45) Ibid, p.109.

(46) When, earlier in c.1866/67, Masaba fought the "Kpanti" war (against the Zugurma Etsuzi) in his continuing pursuit of political consolidation in western Nupe and to secure the banks of the Niger, the Kede aristocracy, sharing in the economic aspirations of Masaba, fought on his side. They withdrew from the war only after loosing their war chief, Choida Lumella, who got drowned in the Niger, opposite Raba, when his "canoe was broken up by an explosion of gun powder that he carried in the canoe". NAK. MIN. PROF: 279/1909. "Historical Notes Niger Province".

(47) NAK. BIDA DIV. ACC.13. "Mokwa District Note Book". Notes from an article entitled "THE KING'S HANGMEN" by Dr. S.F. Nadel, September, 1935.

means that the relationship between the Kede aristocracy and Bida was that of mutual understanding. Lacking in the means of dominating the Kede, which in other cases was effected by means of the presence of administrative agents (i.e. egbazi), Bida had to treat them as equals (or so the Kede chiefs saw themselves).

But for Umaru Majigi, this semi-autonomy had to be broken if only to keep the Kede in check in the face of mounting economic pressure, caused by the monopoly granted the British. And to do this, he relied on a plot to get a stooge elected to Kede leadership. This had been initiated by his immediate predecessor, Masaba, who however could not put it through before his death in 1873. This has been narrated vividly in a 1909 Historical note:

When Kuta Baki died, Masaba gave the insignia of office to Mallam Isataku; [the] latter accepted the rank but refused to live at the waterside and eventually handed the turban to his younger brother Usuman ... Mallam Isataku [then] sent his two sons, Saba and Tsado, to Usuman at Muregi and requested that they be given the ranks of Choiwa Kuta and Sonfada respectively. Usuman refused, saying that his own sons held the ranks already; he also refused on the grounds that they were Mallams and knew nothing about canoes or fishing, or in fact anything to do with the water ... (48)

Having been rejected, Isataku "intrigued" with Umaru Majigi, waiting only for an excuse to dethrone Usuman. The opportunity seems to have been provided when, on a

(48) NAK. MIN. PROF: 279/1909. While Mason (The Foundations of the Bida Kingdom, p.109) gives the name of the controversial figure as Mustafa, he gives that of the two sons as Saba and Tsado. It should be the same figure however, the other name only being Nupe (Taku - meaning stone in Nupe).

hasty return from a southern campaign, possibly in the wake of the war in the west (in c.1881), the Kede refused to cross the Bida army.

But even then, the refusal to cross the Bida army was just a smokescreen for more fundamental material interests. Nor were "tribal" loyalties the central issue. Besides, the Kede did not constitute a distinct tribal or cultural group from the rest of Nupe, as has been explained in Chapter Two above. The fact that Isataku, himself a Kede, was in alliance with the etsu in Bida, is even a further indication that the Kede would have been divided in the same manner as the aristocracy in Bida was divided over the turn in economic fortunes. Thus, apart from being Kede, Isataku and the interests which he symbolised within the riverain district, hardly had any claims to leadership within the Kede trading aristocracy. It can be speculated that neither he nor his children had any stake in the ownership of the means of production - the threat to which the dominant economic interests in Kede were resisting.

Nor was the Kede resistance, which culminated in the ganega war, an exclusively Kede affair. In fact, by the time the Kede offensive was launched, the characteristics of the principal characters and groups in the struggle, existing symbols of a broader struggle, were manifested. The relationship which existed, for instance, between the Kede resistance, the rebellion in western Nupe and the activities of Makun Mamudu in Bida is too much of a coincidence. This is especially so when viewed from the

context of their timing and joining of efforts. Hence, the speculation that the Kede had "planned to attack Bida when the western Nupes reached the capital". And though this did not materialize, the refusal to cross the Bida army could be seen as an attempt to subvert the etsu's efforts - in complement to the struggles of the western Nupes. Meanwhile, after the crushing of Etsu Baba, the survivors among his soldiers together with other fugitives, fled across the Niger to the relative safety of the south bank. There they joined the Kede and, together, they attacked Shonga (host to a British trading factory). Shonga was sacked and its Emir was forced to abandon his capital. The Emir of Lafiagi, Aliyu, probably counting on the benefits which would have accrued to him if the Niger commerce was liberalised, sided with the insurgents. As a mark of this support, a Lafiagi contingent led by the Shaba, joined the rebels. They then advanced on Egga: an important commercial port, laid siege to it and imposed exacting levies on its mainly commercial population. A detachment of the rebels then proceeded down the stream to deal with the Kakanda allies of Umaru Majigi. By the close of 1882, however, the rebellion had been crushed; "the Kede camp at Esu Wunangi was broken and Egga relieved". (49) Nevertheless, the rebellion had left its permanent consequences for the Bida ruling class; with the economic and political contradictions assuming a new trend which drew the rulers

(49) NAK. MIN PROF: 279/1909.

in Bida towards a collision course with their erstwhile trading partner.

It can be surmised that the hands of the rulers in Bida, in the control which they exercised over the middle Niger commerce, were weakened. In fact, this weakness was already being manifested in the course of the ganega rebellion.

Being in opposition to the trade monopoly which was responsible for the collapse in incomes, a section of the Bida aristocracy, symbolised in the character of Makun Mamudu, found natural allies in the French, the Lagos and Sierra Leonean traders.⁽⁵⁰⁾ Also included were, of course, members of the Kede aristocracy and other sectors of the dominant classes who would have been marginalised by the monopoly. Hence, Umaru Majigi owed his victory over the rebels in 1882 mainly to the timely intervention of the United African Company with a reinforcement from the French. By the time Umaru Majigi died in 1882, the British (United African Company) had lost the monopoly of trade with Nupe. And at the heat of the rebellion in 1881, there was already an influx of African traders from the south, besides "two new Liverpool companies" and the French, whose commercial activities had been reinvigorated by 1881, to the same footing as the British. While this lasted, it was a manifestation of

(50) The Lagos and Sierra Leonean traders had even supplied arms to the Kede in 1882. Mason, *op cit*, p.116, footnote 75, and p.119.

victory for those who were opposed to the British monopoly.

The response from the United African Company against the threat to her commercial dominance in the middle Niger has been narrated in enough detail elsewhere.⁽⁵¹⁾ We may assume that the incorporation of the Royal Niger Company in 1886 and the powers arrogated to it by the royal charter establishing it, was in response to the inability of Bida to secure British interests. This weakness had not only been manifested in the inability to deal decisively with the 1881/82 rebellions but also the success with which the enemies of monopoly were undermining its existence. Under Etsu Maliki, who reigned between 1882 and 1895, the activities of the Royal Niger Company continued to erode the independence of the Bida ruling class. This was on top of the decline in the authority of his office, resulting from the disintegration which had infested the Bida aristocracy since the reign of Umaru Majigi.

3.4 From collaboration to collision: the gathering tension and the Royal Niger Company invasion of 1897.

When, in 1897, the Royal Niger Company carried out an invasion of Bida, it was not out of any drawn-out theory of occupation. It was a more or less instinctive response to changing political circumstances. While the

(51) Flint, op cit, Chapters 2,3 and 4; Mason, op cit, pp.122-129; and A.M. Mohammed, "European Trading Companies and the Underdevelopment of Northern Nigeria 1855-1939: The Case of the Royal Niger Company", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, A.B.U., Zaria, 1985.

rivalry between imperialist interests served as an important ground for this invasion, and in fact a good deal has been said of this, of equal significance was the souring relations between the British and the local rulers. But the occasion for this had been provided only by the disruption in the local balance of power; a balance which we may assume enhanced the assertion of commercial monopoly by the British in the reign of Umaru Majigi. A brief reflection on the political situation under which the growth in British commerce in the middle Niger had been nurtured since the mid-nineteenth century will help in locating the social and political essence of the 1897 invasion.

In 1858, when Dr. Baikie and Reverend Crowther pioneered British commercial presence to the middle Niger and established a station at Lokoja, it was on the rulers in Bida that they depended for protection. First, it was Usuman Zaki who, in response to the robbery of a British trader in Sidzi (a settlement south of Lokoja) made an example of its inhabitants to deter other interlopers. As Reverend Crowther reports in 1859, after Usuman Zaki's death,

they [the thieves] were taken as slaves, and had to be purchased by their families; the inhabitants of Sidzi, who it appears were aware of the theft, but made no effort to produce the thieves, were heavily fined ... The report of the king's public testimony in favour of the Anasara, his active measures in finding out the thieves and punishing them, and his official charge to the master of the ferry and to old Ndeshi of Rabba to take care of our people in the absence of the steamer, had no doubt been conveyed down the river; hence the civility and kind care I had experienced in my

passage up as soon as I got into the Nufi country.
... (52)

Then it was Masaba, who succeeded Usuman Zaki in 1859, and under who (between 1859 and 1873), European commerce in the middle Niger witnessed a considerable expansion. W.H. Simpson acknowledges, in an 1871 account, how Masaba had guaranteed that all "English people were safe in his kingdom; that Lokoja especially was for the Queen". (53) And in fact, after ascending the throne in 1859, he sent a detachment of troops numbering 4,000 to secure Lokoja. While Baikie served not only as a British representative but also "became as much the Etsu's emissary". (54) It was therefore a relationship in which the British and the other foreign traders accepted a subordinate status.

But then, Bida, or Masaba, as the case may be, dealt with the British and other traders (in this case, the French and the Lagos and Sierra Leonean elements) from a position of strength. Masaba particularly was in his time undisputably the most powerful political figure within the Bida aristocracy. This influence he seemed to have mustered since the 1840s when he founded his capital in

(52) Extract from: Rev. S. Crowther's "Journal on the Niger", August-September, 1869. CHURCH MISSIONARY INTELLIGENCER, 1869 (Visit to Etsu Masaba). Collection of documents on the "History of the Niger-Benue confluence in the 19th century", Arewa House, Kaduna.

(53) W.H. Simpson, "Nupe under King Masaba" as quoted in Thomas Hodgkin, Nigerian Perspective (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), p.359.

(54) Mason, The Foundation of the Bida Kingdom, p.85.

Lade. (55) Since then, he had built for himself a resilient political resource base, having carved for his house a vast and rich domain, south of the Niger. This facilitated the powerful influence which he commanded within the aristocracy in Bida and the Emirate in general, when he finally ascended the throne. Besides, Masaba's reign was characterised by an increasing importance of Nupe as a centre of regional trade, a development which it derived from an equally expanding local economy. To this, the growth in European commerce was an added impetus. All these combined to provide a vibrant economic base which articulated the material interests of the dominant classes, and served as an instrument for the convergence of political loyalty in the authority of the Etsu.

This argument will be appreciated when viewed against the background in which the authority vested in the office of the Etsu is rooted.

The Emirate itself was made up of fiefs in which, by right of conquest, the three ruling houses in Bida, between them, had specific claims. These fiefs were in turn allocated to "capable" members of the nobility, civil and slave title holders. (56) The fiefs were central

(55) The circumstances leading to Masaba's flight from Raba to Lade, where he remained from c 1835-1845, and his political exploits in the course of his stay in Lade, have been discussed in Chapter Two above. This has also been discussed by R. East, Labarun Hausawa da Makwabtansu, Zaria, 1933, Vol. I, p. 62.

(56) Such capability, according to Nadel (A Black Byzantium, p. 116) was judged by the individual's "power and possession of a strong private army ... [Thus] an

to the Etsu's (i.e. Bida's) exercise of political authority, as they served not only as the major conduit for the surpluses appropriated but also for the mobilisation of levies in times of war.(57)

It was to this relatively strong political and economic position, typical of Masaba's reign, that Umaru Majigi succeeded in 1873. And it was from such a position which guaranteed him control of political initiative that he granted to the British the monopoly of trade. Ironically, the monopoly struck at the very foundation on which the cohesion within the ruling classes in Bida rested. It was also an upset to the economic factors which had helped to keep a potential intra-class conflict in the background. Thus, by the time Umaru Majigi died in 1882, disintegration had set into the Bida ruling class. It was such that no one from the nobility, not even Maliki who was the rightful heir, "had either the same authority or the same unimpeachable claim"(58) to the throne as Masaba and Umaru Majigi had exhibited.

With the bases from which the authority and supremacy vested in the office of the etsu being eroded, Maliki turned out not being more than a mere figure head

Ajele who failed in his task was dismissed from rank and office and replaced by a 'stronger' man".

(57) J.P. Smaldone, Warfare in the Sokoto Caliphate (London: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p.140, provides a vivid description of the general tradition of warfare, dominant to the Emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate. See also Nadel, op cit, p.24 for his description.

(58) Mason, 1981, op cit, p.119.

- in the midst of powerful fief holders. It should be mentioned that these members of the nobility wielded enough military and political might which they used independently of the state to pursue sectarian political ambitions. But even more threatening is the possibility that the system would have provided for the emergence of civil and slave officials, with the influence to have contested along with other factions in Bida. A testimony to this speculation has been provided by Nadel who avers that the

rise of slave officials at the Fulani court [was] the counterpart of the rise of a powerful, dangerously independent feudal nobility. (59)

No wonder then that apart from some minor engagement in the Kabba area, "Maliki never made war himself during his reign". (60) This he was compelled to leave to the powerful fiefholders who did so to extract tributes. In the circumstances, the European trading factories, located between Lokoja and Rabba, were targets of frequent attacks.

The reasons for the attacks should not be difficult to speculate. The factories must have been seen as symbols of the monopoly which was responsible for the sharp fall in profits and the economic disintegration in

(59) Nadel, *op cit*, p.107. Besides, the case of the Ndeji, Umaru, under Maliki and Abubakar, is a good example of this trend. For instance, by 1895, when Abubakar succeeded Maliki as the Etsu, the Ndeji had become so powerful and influential that he could be adequately considered "the de facto ruler of the country" (Mason, 1981, *op cit*, p.130).

(60) NAK. MIN PROF:279/1909.

the Emirate. But for the Benu, Mustafa, a grandson of Masaba, who persistently plagued Lokoja and its environs as from c.1883 till the end of Maliki's reign in 1895, it was to ensure the payment of duties from trade, and taxes from his subjects in an area which formed part of his royal possession.(61) Meanwhile, in return for the monopoly granted the Royal Niger Company, or so the British assumed, a "token" subsidy was paid to the Etsu. Thus, it must be assumed that the Benu's harassment of the British, bears some relevance to the intra-class struggle which characterised the political development in Bida, in the run off to the 1897 invasion. After all, with the keen competition for dominance between the three ruling houses in Bida, it had become the practice with every etsu in turn to use "the period of his reign to increase to the utmost the wealth and power of his house".(62) Hence, while the economic base which sustained the dominant classes in Nupe was continuously being eroded under the increasing influence of merchant monopoly capitalism, factions within the aristocracy battled themselves to mutual weakness.

In the event, and under a renewed threat of French and German competition, British quest for "effective occupation" of the emirate was stepped up. Official poverty, coupled with years of internal disintegration to which the aristocracy was witness under Maliki, had

(61) NAK. SNP 7. 2749/1910. "Historical Notes on Kabba Tribe".

(62) Nadel, op cit, p.89.

eroded the authority and power with which Abubakar could have dealt with the situation. Moreover, by 1895, the political situation in Nupe seemed to have more or less deteriorated into a state of anarchy. And especially in the districts south of the Niger over which Bida's control had become greatly ineffective, hence losing control of commerce and access to a major source of labour (in the form of slaves), (63) they resorted to incessant raids. Thus, when between December 1894 and January 1895, Frederick Lugard made his journey by road from Lagos to Lokoja, he found

the rather unsettled boundary between Yoruba and Nupe peoples. The raiders [from Nupe and Yoruba] did not appear to have been concerned about the origins of the slaves they took; Lugard was told that most of the Nupe porters in his caravan were escaped slaves whose homes had been in this southern region of Nupe. (64)

It can be speculated that this trip, which was made at the instance of the Company, was meant to find justification for the plan to carry out a military assault against Bida. By this time, tension had so mounted that the Company was only biding for time to strike. And when, some time in 1896, Etsu Abubakar ordered a blockade of the British, in retaliation to the

(63) The fact that, in 1897 alone, after the invasion of Bida, "at least 30,000 [slaves] escaped across the Niger from Bida province", most to their homes in the south (as some would have been escaping to the relative safety of the south), attests to the extent to which the south served as a major source of slaves. NAK. SNP 17. 15849. "Early History of Anti-Slavery Legislation".

(64) M. Perham and M. Bull (eds), The Diaries of Lord Lugard Vol. IV Nigeria 1894-95, (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), p.239.

latter's refusal to heed his call for the removal of the military garrisons which they had established in Jebba, Gbajibo and Leaba, "the battle", observes M.M. Tukur,

had been joined and it was logistic and tactical problems rather than lack of will on either side that postponed the main showdown till January 1897. (65)

It should be observed, however, that by the time the Royal Niger Company constabulary struck in 1897, the ensuing battles, in essence, ceased to qualify simply as external invasion. For, with the establishment of military posts, the encounter had more or less assumed a local dimension. (66) This is affirmed even further in the fact that the Company had become inextricably enmeshed in the complex political development which preceded and provided the circumstances for the invasion. Earlier on, in 1882, during the paneqa rebellion, for instance, besides the alliance which the United African Company had gone into with Umaru Majigi to fight the insurgents, a leading company figure, Flint, "had organized, and at least partially armed a local force". (67) Bida's weakness having been manifested in her inability to decisively and independently suppress the 1881/82 rebellions, and in the disintegration to which the aristocracy was witness under Maliki, the Royal Niger Company (between c.1887 and 1891) mustered the confidence to declare that Lokoja was independent of Bida,

(65) Tukur, 1979, op cit, p.161.

(66) Ibid, p.6.

(67) Mason, The Foundation of the Bida Kingdom, p.111.

established a garrison there, appropriated to itself the right to collect duties from foreign traders, to try the Emir's own subjects and to encourage them to revolt against the Emir. (68)

But the Company did not merely content itself in overt and covert activities which were contemptuous of the sovereignty of the hosts - on whose hospitality and protection it had counted at least up till 1882 (when Umaru Majigi died). And around Lokoja mainly, but even further away, it resorted to taking part physically in the frequent skirmishes, (69) which were characteristic of commerce and politics in the lower middle Niger towards the end of the nineteenth century. With the Royal Niger Company being firmly entrenched in Lokoja, it should be expected that its safety and commercial prospects would depend on the political climate in the outlying districts. Thus, when in 1890, Wilmot Brooke, Harford Battersby and E. Lewis visited Lokoja, they did not hide their ill feeling over what they saw of the activities of Bida princes, which they attributed to the weak rule of Maliki. They had thus complained over "the rapacity of the petty princes", stressing that "last September (i.e. 1889) their insolent violence and robbery in Lokoja itself became quite intolerable". (70) At the height of

(68) Tukur, *op cit*, p.6. Also F.O. 84/2109 "Niger-Benue Treaties", 1890 (NHRs Collection).

(69) *Ibid*. It is indicated that, south of Lokoja, "The Egarras ... have on more than one occasion fought side by side with the company in their punitive expeditions against other tribes".

(70) Journal of Wilmot Brooke, Harford-Battersby, E. Lewis, March-May 1890. CHURCH MISSIONARY INTELLIGENCER, 1890 (Lokoja), culled from a collection of documents on

the raids, the company sent for military assistance from another company station in Asaba to keep the Benue especially in check. Under such circumstances, we do not need a categorical declaration from the company to be able to tell what its position was. And when in 1896 Etsu Abubakar, "thinking that the Yagba were seeking the protection of the whiteman" (71) sent an expedition against them, his suspicion was not without basis.

In an intuitive manner that was typical of British imperial political approach, the Royal Niger Company planned to neutralise Bida's power militarily, as a means of subordinating the dominant classes. On this would rest the hopes for effective occupation and hence subject the economy to penetration and exploitation by merchant capital. The resistance which Abubakar inspired against the encroachment on the sovereignty of the local rulers, had only provided the excuse which the Royal Niger Company needed to carry out the invasion of Bida. The results for the company however were rather disappointing. The collapse of even the last vestiges of Bida's authority created a political vacuum under which the class reality of the Bida polity will be manifested.

the "History of the Niger-Benue Confluence in the 19th century, Arewa House, Kaduna.

(71) H.S. Goldsmith, "Nupe History", Bida, 14.2.05, culled from a collection of documents, *ibid.*

3.5 The socio-political dimension and outcome of the Niger Sudan campaign.

By December 1896, plans had been concluded and, in January 1897, what was to be known generally as the "Niger Sudan campaign" took off against Bida. And just within a stretch of two months (January and February 1897), the Royal Niger Company constabulary, which only "consisted when at its highest strength, of five hundred men, ... completely defeated and dispersed" (72) the Bida army, with Etsu Abubakar taking to flight. It cannot be denied that the ease with which this little force overran Bida, may as well be accounted for in the dazzling fire-power which it possessed. (73) But we may suggest that it cannot be exclusively so. More so that the Bida army was neither "an unorganized mob of ill-equipped men" nor short of manpower. It was an army to which has been attributed the capacity to "muster somewhere between ten and thirty thousand men, most of them equipped with fire-arms, many of which were of recent design". (74)

We should however not be delayed in an attempt to narrate details of the military encounter between Bida and the Company, or even the one in the run off to

(72) NAK. SNP 15/1. Acc No 347. "Niger Sudan Campaign 1897". Lt. Seymour Vandeleur, in his account of the 1897 campaign (NAK. MIN. PROF 279/1909, "Niger Province Historical Notes") puts the strength of the constabulary at 500 fighting men, in addition to 900 carriers.

(73) Mason, 1981, op cit, p.144, emphasizes this fact.

(74) Flint, op cit, p.248. The capacity of the defenders of Bida has also been estimated by Reuters special service report of January 26, 1897, to have been about 30,000. NAK. SNP 15/1. Acc. No.347. "Report of the Niger Expedition".

colonial occupation in 1901. This has been discussed in other studies. It should however be pointed out that the form the 1897 invasion and the subsequent colonial conquest took, the resistance put up by the aristocracy, and the response from its rival and subordinate classes, was determined more or less by the level of development of socio-political relations in Bida.

For the Bida ruling class, just as had been the case with the pre-Dendo ruling classes in Nupe, the army existed as an exclusive institution of the state. It existed as an organised instrument of coercion, typical of the level of development of relations of production, and mainly used in the pursuit and defence of the interests of the classes which possessed it. Thus, by the close of the nineteenth century, warfare in the Bida Emirate was no longer a means of collective defence as is typical of less developed social formations (or rather, communal societies). It may be observed therefore that for the dominant classes in the (19th century) Bida Emirate, war was mainly a feature of their internal and external relations. And as Nadel would put it:

War was essentially a concern of the Nupe state. No warfare or organized fights occurred between the villages or tribal sections of the country. (75)

This featured prominently in the aristocracy's struggle for political supremacy and dominance in Nupe and in the course of its defence of the Emirate's territorial integrity. And these remained a basis, whether in

(75) Nadel, 1963, op cit, p.108.

instances involving "great wars planned and organized by the central government" or in "smaller raids and military expeditions carried out by individual feudal lords". (76)

It was this army, consisting of "levies of slaves, volunteers and mercenary soldiers" (77) organised around a small corps of regular troops, that was charged with the responsibility of resisting the invasion of 1897. The military encounter itself, given the nature of Bida's military tradition, was limited to sporadic battles. In the circumstance, the mass of Bida's subjects predictably either watched in apathy or, stricken by panic and the act of brigandage committed by the invading troops, fled. Thus, for instance, non-Kede towns on the right bank of the Niger, including Lade, were destroyed and looted in the course of the fruitless pursuit of the fleeing Bida army (led by the Makun Mahammadu). And, in the wake of the fall of Bida on January, 1897, the town was burnt and most likely looted. (78) Moreover, as warfare was a specialised art, the assault on Bida could only be left to the army. But its formation, numerical strength and fire-power, though quite adequate for the prevailing local conditions and had enhanced the supremacy of the Bida aristocracy in the middle Niger, was hopelessly and

(76) Ibid, p.110.

(77) Ibid, p.109.

(78) NAK SNP.15/1 Acc. No. 347, "The taking of Bida by Major A.J. Arnold". While in 1898, June 25, "foraging parties were [officially] sent out and some horses, sheep and corn were brought" after the defeat of Agaie and the flight of her Emir. NAK. SNP 15. Acc. 27 "Field operations Bida and Lapai".

pitifully incommensurate to the task of defence against European invaders. (79) It is thus in the context of this background, coupled with the prevailing socio-political environment, that the comparative advantage which the invaders enjoyed and which enhanced the decisiveness of the war of conquest makes meaning.

By January 7th 1897, the invasion had come to an end with the fall of Bida and the flight of Etsu Abubakar. In Abubakar's place, Makun Muhammadu was appointed as a puppet. But the Company could not go beyond this. In fact, rather than enhance "effective occupation" of the emirate and an absolute economic control which the company had hoped for, the invasion left a very precarious political atmosphere in its wake. This actually put to question the political significance of the whole exercise and the competence of the Company to administer the territory. Flint describes the development most vividly:

In Nupe, the breakdown of the Niger Company's authority was total. After the battle of Bida the company had "deposed" the Emir Abu Bakari, and replaced him with Makun Mohamadu, but without a garrison or other tangible evidence of support from the company Mohamedu was powerless to resist the legitimate Emir. By August 1897 Abu Bakari was once more in control of Bida. Goldie had no illusions about this, and followed a policy of supporting Mohamedu in the south where he had the support of the "pagans", the riverain tribes, and the restored shadow-king Idirisu (in Pategi). The basis of Goldie's policy was commercial; "what happens in Northern Nupe is not vital to us so long as we hold the waterway". (80)

(79) Smaldone, op cit, p.124.

(80) Flint, op cit, pp.297-298.

Nor did the invasion itself bring to an end the endemic rivalry between factions in Bida. If anything, the softness which the Makun Mohammadu seemed to have exhibited towards the company, while the Abubakar-led faction responded with unflinching hostility, could suggestively only have worsened the relationship. In fact, traditions in Bida indicate that the Makun had tried in vain to convince Abubakar, after his return in August 1897, on the futility of any attempt to resist European occupation.

Cashing in on the circumstances created by the invasion, the French made a renewed attempt to gain access to the middle Niger. And, in February 1897, the Niger Company had been alerted by reports "that a French or German expedition has entered Boussa, in the company's territories on the middle Niger". (81)

For the Liverpool and other independent traders and companies in Britain, and the Lagos and Sierra Leonean traders, the threat from the French would seem to have provided an additional reason which they needed to press their case with the Foreign Office, for the abrogation of the Royal Niger Company's charter. With the total collapse of the Company's authority having become obvious, the royal charter was withdrawn towards the end of 1899. Hence, the Colonial Office, in principle, assumed direct administrative responsibility over this area (among others). But this was in itself not enough,

(81) NAK. SNP. 15, Acc.347 (Reuter's special service report, February 20, 1897).

as British commercial and political presence in the Bida Emirate was anything but secured and strong. It is stated in one of the accounts thus:

From 1897 (when the Royal Niger constabulary defeated the Nupe army before the walls of Bida and deposed Emir Abubakari) to 1901 the native administration more or less ceased to exercise control and a state of chaos existed ... the Emirs and their Fulani office holders proceeded to ravage the old Nupe districts right up to the banks of the River Niger, and even threatened the protectorate Headquarters at Jebba. (82)

But the threat of French incursion seemed to have caused the British government an even greater concern. And the Niger Company's limitations in coping with the challenges having been manifested, the imperial government had taken initiatives to form the core of what would be known as the "Royal West African Frontier Force". For this purpose, F. Lugard was assigned to the job of raising a brigade. Thus, "on November 13, 1897, the first batch of British personnel", comprising of six officers and nine non-commissioned officers, left Liverpool for the West Coast. On arrival, it would be charged with the responsibility of organising and training African recruits. When, on January 1, 1900, the Union Jack was hoisted in Lokoja, symbolising the assumption of direct administrative responsibilities, the imperial government had predictably prepared for the eventuality. Thus, in spite of Etsu Abubakar's preparations for the final struggle with a strong backing from his younger brother, the Lukpene Yusufu (according

(82) NAK. MIN PROF: 279/1909. "Historical Notes Niger Province".

to Bida traditions), the final encounter in 1901 was as decisive as the one in 1897.

[And] on the entry of the [R.W.A.F.F.] troops into Bida (February 17th) Abubakari and the Masaba section of the Nupe dynasty took to flight. Muhammadu (Makun) was for the second time proclaimed Emir and was given a letter of appointment containing the conditions on which he held the Emirate. (83)

Makun Muhammadu's compromise with the invaders was not without basis. Right from 1897 when the first advance by the constabulary was initiated, he seemed to have conceded to the belief that the Bida army could not match the invaders. Rather than engage the invaders when they made their advance on Kabba therefore, Muhammadu Makun, who was at the head of a 10,000-strong detachment of the Bida army (camped near Kabba at the time) retreated. In fact, he avoided any contact with the invaders throughout their march to the Niger. But even more was the response from the rival and subordinate classes within the fallen Emirate. With this we may assume that the situation was created in which the Makun and his followers had to choose between subordination and collaboration or face total liquidation.

3.5.1 Unfolding class contradictions

One important class dimension to the conquest of the Bida Emirate was the source of materials for the constabulary and the Royal West African Frontier Force.

(83) Ibid. See also M.M. Tukur, 1979, op cit, pp.129-130 on the conquest of Bida, between 14th and 17th December, 1900.

For instance, of the 907 men in the ordinary ranks of the 1st Battalion (of the RWAFF) which moved from Ibadan to Jebba in December 1898, "430 were Yorubas, 400 Hausas and 77 Nupes". (84) Given the political essence of the invasion, it should be pointed out that the success of the British in recruiting these men must have depended on certain socio-political peculiarities. In fact, Lt. Seymour Vandeleur's acknowledgement of his troops after the invasion of Bida in 1897 is a testimony to this. He states:

That they [Hausas] can be made into good soldiers was proved during the recent expedition, and although Mohammedians, the religious question did not occasion any difficulty. (85)

In the Bida Emirate (as indeed in other Emirates of the Caliphate), warfare by the nineteenth century had evolved into a specialised art, depending mainly on levies - of slaves, mercenaries and volunteers. The levies were the possession of the powerful members of the nobility. The mode of reward for military service was a share in the booty taken at war, with the percentage being determined by the social status of the soldier. (86)

(84) S.C. Ukpabi, "The West African Frontier Force (An Instrument of Imperial Policy) 1897-1914", unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Birmingham, 1964, pp.89-90.

(85) NAK. MIN PROF: 279/1909.

(86) The practice, according to Nadel, op cit, p.112, was that: "All booty taken before the decisive battle ... belong to the king [in general war] ... Upon the capture of the town Wasoso was declared, free looting, in which every one who fought in the battle could join. The shares in the spoils of war varied according to rank and position. The slave soldiers had to deliver everything to their masters but were rewarded with small share in the booty they had taken. The bara soldiers could keep all booty in kind (called dukiya, wealth) but were expected

We may assume that for soldiers of fortune, a share in booty would serve as a political motivator and means for sustaining this vital instrument of coercion. It provided, for instance, one of the most important means for the accumulation of wealth, hence an instrument for social mobility. In this regard, the case of Ndeji Umaru is instructive. A man of humble beginning, he rose from being a common soldier to being one of the strongest political figures (in fact, a "de facto ruler") in Bida, in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. While this provided a basis for mobilisation in defence of the political institution and the status quo, it nevertheless had its inherent contradictions. And these contradictions suggestively provided the basis for the availability of local materials for the invasion and conquest of Bida by the British.

Under the circumstances, the superior and "dazzling" fire power and tactics which the invading forces possessed, made the striking difference which was manifested in the defeat of the defenders of Bida in 1897 and 1901. Moreover, economic crisis and political disintegration had led to the emergence of rival factions even within the ruling class in Bida, to the advantage of the British.

to present some of it to their overlords as 'gift or thanks'; the independent fighters, i.e. the sons of noble houses kept whatever they captured, both 'wealth' and slaves, except for a voluntary gift to the head of the house."

For the independent mercenaries who would have enlisted with the Niger constabulary and the RWAFF, there was little difference in terms of rewards. After all, the invasion and conquest guaranteed them access to booty. In fact, the result of the military encounter from 1897 to 1901, showed an even more sinister form of banditry and looting, some under official sanction while others were indiscriminate. (87) That this did not manifest in the rise of war lords and landed slave owning gentry has to do more with the essence of colonial domination and exploitation, which would thrive on the ruins of these classes.

For the slaves who were enlisted, though, and we may assume that they constituted the majority of the materials, the circumstances went beyond the prospects for material rewards. In addition, it served as a means of protection against re-enslavement, a protection which Lokoja provided, especially from the 1880s, as the British position became more secured in the middle Niger. Lokoja thereafter became a centre for the recruitment of materials, not just for the Niger constabulary but, later, for the RWAFF as well. This was after the mass liberation of slaves that was consequent on the British occupation of Yorubaland. Before then, the British (in Lagos especially) had depended mainly on run-away (Hausa)

(87) The case of villages along the Niger, including Lade, which were destroyed under the pretext of destroying "Foulah strongholds", should serve as a good example. NAK. SNP 15/1 Avcc. No.347, "Niger Sudan Campaign" (The Taking of Bida by Major A.J. Arnold). Also Tukur, op cit, Vol.1, p.173.

slaves from the Yoruba hinterland as source of recruits. Besides, free men refused to enlist, the offer of "one pound to be paid to any man who enlisted" (88) notwithstanding.

Right within the Nupe heartland itself, the age-old rivalry between the Bida dynasty and factions of the old Nupe etsuzi did not help matters. This assumed a new dimension however with falling profits and the impact of economic disintegration that characterised the imposition of British trade monopoly, in the course of the last two decades of the nineteenth century. It was this at least which led the Kede trading aristocracy into a collision with Bida by 1881/82, and also caused bitter rivalry between factions of the Bida ruling class afterwards.

With this in the background, the rulers in Bida were predictably alienated in their struggle against the invaders. And though this fact seems to have been neglected in favour of the superior fire power possessed by the invaders, it nonetheless contributed to the decisive nature in which the resistance against the invasion was crushed (in 1897 and 1901). The form of response to the invasion from the various sections of the dominant classes and Bida's subjects generally differed in form, however. It varied from outright alliance with

(88) Ukpabi, *op cit*, pp. 83 and 100. Besides, according to Ukpabi, even among those who enlisted, it was a common practice among the African members of the ordinary ranks to desert when "they had earned enough money to pay a debt or to fulfil pressing financial commitments".

the invaders to indifference and attempt by sections of the subjects to assert their independence.

Prominent in the alliance with the invaders were, for instance, Yahaya Marike, a Kede chieftain, and Idirisu Gana of the Jimada dynasty (that is, a faction of the old Nupe etsuzi). Both had attempted to use the opportunity to activate their struggle against the increasing political and economic dominance of the Bida ruling class in the middle Niger. (89) In return for this support, Yahaya seems to have been adequately rewarded when, in the course of the invasion, he was appointed Kuta to replace Mustafa (a Bida/Niger Company puppet since 1882) who fled to Bida. While, for Idirisu Gana, whose quest for political supremacy as Etsu Nupe, above the Bida dynasty, was not realised,

Mr. Wallace ... gave him the right bank of the Niger from Lafiagi to Egga and inland as far as Lagos boundary, with Pategi as chief town. (90)

We may assume, however, that the alliance by these political figures (to the invaders) merely represented a broader but salient response from Bida subjects. All seem to have been spontaneous reactions. No less spontaneous, but also opportunistic, was the rehabilitation of Yahaya

(89) NAK. BIDA DIV. Acc. 8. "Kede District Note Book", 1933. For instance, Yahaya who had fled into exile to Lokoja after the defeat of his faction (by the joint force of Bida, the Company and the French) in the Ganega war in 1882, made himself indispensable to the company in the course of the mounting tension and the invasion.

(90) J.C. Sciortino, "History of the Nupe Kings and the Foundation of Pategi", culled from a collection of documents on the "History of the Niger-Benue Confluence", op cit.

as Kuta and Idirisu Gana as Etsu in Pategi. Belonging in the section of the dominant classes which had been marginalised by the time of invasion, they were hardly of any direct significance to the hostilities against the Bida army. However, such response amounted to political detraction which did not make Bida's attempt at mobilising to resistance any easier. And, in this regard, neither the response from the various factions of the dominant classes nor those under them could be treated in isolation.

Thus the Kede, according to traditions, refused to ferry Makun Muhammadu and the contingent of Bida army which he had led into the south, across the Niger as they fled from the advancing Niger Company constabulary in 1897. Even after the fall of Bida and the submission of the Makun to company supremacy, the Kede threatened "to tip Makun Mahammadu and his army into the Niger once they had got them aboard canoes". (91) While the fact that up till the close of the nineteenth century "Nupes on the both sides of the Niger paid their tribute in secret to Etsu Idirisu Gana" (92) is in itself instructive enough of the response which they would have shown in the circumstances. It was under such a relatively favourable political environment, provided by the response in the riverain district and the adjoining Nupe communities on

(91) Mason, The Foundations of the Bida Kingdom, p.161, footnote 60. After the Makun alarmed Goldie, the Kede were compelled to relent with Goldie keeping a close watch to ensure the safety of the Makun and his men.

(92) Sciortino, op cit.

the two sides of the Niger, that Mr. Wallace, still had the situations under control, even in the absence of the "company's troops on the expedition against Ilorin". He had little difficulty in raising from this area "native levies" with which he destroyed settlements near the river, in the continuing effort to weaken Bida's resistance. (93)

The response from the western Nupe districts where up till 1882 at least the Bida aristocracy had had to deal with a resilient resistance, is quite predictable. In the sub-districts of Mokwa, Bokani, Yeti, Bete, Rabba (where Haruna, brother to Yahaya, was chief), and Sakpe, for instance, the invasion and collapse of Bida was followed promptly by rebellion and declaration of independence. (94) And of the situation in Zugurma (further to the north-west), Nadel indicates that:

Kolo Yisa, a grandson of the exiled Majiya, had thought of using the defeat of Bida for his own ends. He hurried to Zugurma, where his ancestors had lived as puppet kings of Bida, made himself king over the territory ... (95)

Among the servile classes, the circumstances created by the invasion and fall of Bida induced mass desertion - taking refuge mainly in the relative safety of areas south of the Niger. Here, the company was fully in

(93) NAK. SNF 15/1 Acc. No.347 (Reuter's special service report, February 23, 1897).

(94) In Labozhi, for instance, the "Legal headman" (i.e. resident agent) was killed and the royal ownership of the kolanut plantations renounced. NAK. MIN PROF: 279/1909.

(95) Nadel, op cit, p.83. See also Dupigny, "The Gazetteer of Nupe Province", 1920, p.18.

control in Lokoja and environs. Besides, the newly created Emirate of Pategi, the Emirates of Shonga and Lafiagi and the Kede district had submitted to the protection of the company. In fact, it can be assumed that the peasant population did not fare any better. It is therefore not unlikely that they made up part of the mass who fled across the Niger between 1897 and 1901. In 1897 alone, for instance, about 30,000 people are approximated to have fled across the Niger. With the inability of the Royal Niger Company to establish its authority in Bida, Goldie seemed to have been contented with the control of the Niger waterway.

But the collapse of the state in Bida exposed its social realities to the British. As the dominant classes lost possession of slaves, and as peasant production was disrupted as a result of the invasion and brigandage by the (impoverished) members of the aristocracy, the economy grinded to a halt. In fact, Wallace acknowledged by 1901 that:

The population in Bida province and at Wushishi and Jebba have been in a state of semi-starvation for months. (96)

Under such circumstances, British commerce was doomed. Nor was the future for the dominant classes in Bida any better. While "the pressure of events" during these last three years of the nineteenth century had laid the basis for changes in the social classes, this was only manifested with colonial occupation from 1901.

(96) NAK. SNP 17. 15849 "Early History of Anti-Slavery Legislation".

Conclusion

The events of 1897 to 1901 had led to the fall of Bida and brought to an end a phase in the interaction between merchant capital and the local economy. The preceding development had been witness, since the mid-nineteenth century, to growing tendency on the part of merchant capital (mainly British) to subordinate the economy of the Bida Emirate. In the process, the British realised the unalienable relations which exist between economy and politics. It became even more obvious as the struggle for monopoly of trade in Nupe (between the British and their rival European commercial interests) intensified. The monopoly, it was hoped, would enable the British merchants to dictate terms favourable to them of the trade and prices in Nupe, or more appropriately, the lower middle Niger.

One of the consequences of the assertion of trade monopoly by the British had been a fall in the prices of the export produce available on markets in the lower middle Niger. This in turn had also affected the economic prosperity of the dominant classes in the Bida Emirate and, in response, inspired a resistance against commercial monopoly. There was an even greater apprehension as the British began to interfere in the local political rivalries, much of which were consequent on the economic crisis.

It was therefore logical that the British seemed to have seen in these classes an obstacle to the achievement

of their commercial ambition. Thus, by the beginning of the last decade of the nineteenth century, they seemed to have resolved, with little option, to crush the Bida ruling classes. But this only created an avenue for the reemergence of long-standing intra and inter-class rivalries, which only added a new dimension to British anxieties. This unfolding political reality would turn out to be a very significant factor in determining the nature and form of the colonial political economy in the Bida Emirate.

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF BRITISH COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION IN THE BIDA EMIRATE: CREATING THE ENVIRONMENT FOR CLASS TRANSFORMATION AND FORMATION

4.1 Introduction

The hoisting of the Union Jack over Lokoja in 1900 symbolised, at least for the Bida Emirate, the beginning of colonial domination. The capacity of the Bida ruling classes to mobilise for resistance had been broken in the invasion of 1897 and the subsequent defeats suffered by detachments of Bida forces in the hands of the invaders. This did not however make things easier for the British, as the collapse of the Bida ruling class left a political vacuum, with severe political and economic implications. Thus, by the time Major Burdon took over the administration of Nupe (in 1900), "the whole province was in a state of the greatest disorder and disintegration". (1)

The disintegration to which the dominant classes and the economy in Bida were subjected to in consequence of the conquest was also accompanied by the collapse of

(1) NAK. Bida Div. 3/1. B.655. "Nupe History from 1897". Even before the abrogation of the Royal Charter by 1900, the Niger Company had lost grip of Nupe. It was such that Goldie had had to contend only in his control of commerce on the Niger waterway and caring little or not, according to Flint, of "what happens in Northern Nupe". See J.E. Flint, Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria (London: O.U.P., 1966), pp.253-254 and 297-298.

slave production - which had hitherto been the mainstay of the economy. Besides, the collapse of the state apparatus (with its bureaucratic network), meant that peasant surpluses could no longer be appropriated. In fact, production as a whole was almost brought to a standstill. Such a situation, we may observe, would not only be emasculating to the dominant classes in Bida but to merchant capital as well.

Yet, the imperial government could not commit herself to the huge financial responsibility which would have been required to assume direct administrative control of the new colonial possessions. Nor did there exist a better alternative to the defeated ruling classes. In fact, the spontaneous proclamation of independence in several districts of the Nupe heartland made this the more unlikely. It is out of this historical experience that the policy of "Indirect Rule" would evolve. (2) And this is of significance, not only for the understanding of British administration in the Bida Emirate alone, but for the rest of the Emirates of the Caliphate in general. (3)

(2) Flint, *ibid*, p.259, has observed, for instance, that: "Indirect rule was not a theory dreamed up by bold administrators as a humanitarian experiment. It was a system which grew out of the normal process of historical evolution, out of the pressure of events which the administrators could control only imperfectly."

(3) The political significance of the invasion and collapse of Bida is to have served the British as an eye-opener to the class reality of Northern Emirates. It is to this extent that a political officer (Mr. Ross) is quoted as having said that: "The battle of Bida has been compared in its probable consequences to the battle of Plassey [which, in India, provided the basis for the

In this chapter, our attention will be focused on the form and nature of colonial administration, political economy, and how these enhanced the environment under which, to borrow from Michael Watts, "the precapitalist formation of the Caliphate was subjected to preservation, dissolution and transformation by specific forms of European capital". (4) The Bida Emirate is indeed part of this general development in the course of which the precolonial aristocracy played a very significant mediatory role. This in turn created a unique socio-political and economic environment for the transformation, not only of the dominant classes but in the subordinate classes as well. It is in this context that we intend to locate the impact of colonialism on social classes in the Bida Emirate.

4.1 Towards a transformation of the precolonial aristocracy: the establishment of the Native Authority System in Bida

The policy of Indirect Rule can follow no set forms common to all communities. It is of its essence that the social and political organisations of each locality shall form the framework of the structure. Not only must there be wide differences between the Native Administration of highly developed, partially developed and primitive communities, but in each of these broad classes, no one Native Administration will be the replica of any other ... Their differences whether of design or method will be governed by the

foundation of the British East Indian Empire]. NAK. MIN PROF: 279/1909, "Niger Province Historical Notes".

(4) M. Watts, Silent Violence: Food, Famine and Peasantry in Northern Nigeria (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), p.154.

varying character of their peoples and their institutions. (5)

The process of imposition of colonial rule on the Bida Emirate from 1901 involved more than a simple adoption of the precolonial aristocracy. The encounter with the British had weakened its position as the single most dominant political force in Nupe (or the lower middle Niger). But this provided an avenue for a stronger expression of the challenges with which the Bida aristocracy remained embattled from its inception. These were manifested throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, even in the course of British invasion and conquest.

It will be recalled that the Dendo dynasty in Bida was made up of three rival and competing ruling houses. Then there existed, within the Nupe heartland, especially from the area west of the Kaduna river, remnants of factions of the Tsoedian Nupe dynasty. And, in addition to this, was the riverain Kede aristocracy. The contradictions between these forces remained a source of trouble even after the fall of Bida. (6) As a step towards transforming the Bida aristocracy into an instrument of colonial domination, the British seemed to have realised the need to pacify these contradictions. It is

(5) NAK. SNF 17. 12450 Vol. I, "Draft Revision of Political Memo IX (1918), Native Administration" by Lord Lugard.

(6) NAK. Bida Div. 3/1 B.655, "Nupe History from 1897". Districts in western Nupe and Zugurma, for instance, had revolted in 1901, refusing to recognise the authority of both the Etsu and the Resident.

predictable that the longer the delay, the greater the chances that these rivalries would metamorphise into a serious source of trouble to the colonial government. This in turn would have made the institution of an hierarchical central Native Administration, built around the Emir and the Bida aristocracy more difficult.

4.2.1 The Native Authority and its configuration of forces

By 1901, the Nupe heartland of the old Bida Emirate was constituted into an administrative division. By this, the excision of possessions south of the Niger, which had commenced since the invasion of 1897, was formalised. This action had two implications. The first was for the Bida aristocracy and the second for the Kede aristocracy.

The strength which the Bida ruling classes possessed by the close of the nineteenth century (i.e. before the invasion of 1897) derived primarily from the capacity of its local economy. We can suggest therefore that the loss of the southern possession contributed greatly to weakening the Bida ruling classes. This is not simply for the same reason that the British would have associated the strength of the Bida aristocracy to the sheer size of its domain. This area had been the most important source of slaves to Bida.(7) And with slave labour being the

(7) Ibid. Of the Kupa (a Nupe sub-tribe), it is stated that: "Women and children were snatched up like chickens by the tax-collectors of Etsu Maliki [1882-1895] by the end of whose reign three quarters of the tribe were in bondage at Bida." The development among the Yagba and other groups south of the Niger tells of similar experiences.

mainstay of the Bida economy, the massive slave desertion which followed in the wake of the Niger Company invasion, together with the loss of her main source of replenishment, had serious consequences for the economy and thus for the dominant classes. (8) The fact that by 1900, Bida was at the verge of famine and its nobility reduced to poverty may be cited in testimony to this.

But the weakening and disintegration of the Bida aristocracy created an avenue for splinter political forces to surface. These were not however a new phenomenon to the Bida polity. This time, however, they were reinvigorated as a result of the power vacuum created by the fall of Bida. One of these was the riverain Kede aristocracy. The anxiety which accompanied the attempt by the colonial authorities to reassert the supremacy and authority vested in the Etsu, the aristocracy and hence the Central Native Authority, was not without cause. At least, not in relation to the threat posed by the riverain Kede.

It will be recalled that Kede chiefs supported the Royal Niger Company constabulary in the course of the

(8) The importance of slave labour in the 19th century Bida economy and its dependence on the southern districts as a major source for slaves, has been discussed in Chapter Two above. Meanwhile, Mason, The Foundation of the Bida Kingdom, p.150, observes that its secession from the Emirate at conquest "deprived the kingdom's economy of the human power which was its motive force. From early 1897, the slave plantations, the army and the economic life in the capital began to deteriorate for want of men". See also Mason, "Captive and Client Labour and the Economy of the Bida Emirate 1857-1901", J.A.H. Vol.XIV, 3, 1973, pp.453-471.

1897 invasion and the subsequent colonial conquest.(9) This support is predictably in anticipation that the autonomy which the Kede aristocracy had enjoyed before the 1882 Ganeqa war would be reinstated. The treaty of Ketsoegi, signed between the Niger Company and the Makun Muhammadu on the 5th of February, 1897, granted sovereignty to the Kede.(10) Kede independence was however short-lived and, with the need to establish the Native Administration, it was again declared, on November 16 1902, that:

The treaty of Kasregi [Ketsoegi] made by the Niger Company in 1897 giving the Kedia or Kedawa their independence is forthwith annulled.(11)

We may observe that this declaration which seemed to have been made in response to an increasing tendency towards political anarchy, did not deter the Kede. And up till around 1909 at least,

The Kuta of Muregi, [still] acknowledging but a shadowy allegiance to the Emir of Bida, treated directly with the Resident, and shared the tribute of his riverain territory with the Government.(12)

(9) NAK. SNP 15/1 Acc. No. 347, "The Niger Expedition: Account of the taking of Bida" by Major A.J. Arnold in 1897. The Kede, using their control of the Niger, had participated actively in the blockade of the Niger which the Makun's army was prevented from crossing - to beef up the defence of Bida. They were also a main source for levies with which, in the absence of the constabulary in Ilorin, on campaign, Wallace kept up the destruction of "several Foulah strongholds near the river [Niger]".

(10) NAK. MIN PROF: 279/1909. "Bida Division - Notes on principal events since British occupation".

(11) NAK SNP 7, Acc. No. 2319, 3989/1908, "Emir of Bida and Yaiya Kuta of Muregi - correspondence regarding settlement of disputes between".

(12) NAK MIN PROF: 279/1909, "Notes on Principal Events".

Still, in 1916, the Kuta had to be invited to Bida, in a continuing effort to compel him and his subordinate chiefs to submit their allegiance to the Etsu. While diplomacy was being used to compel the Kuta into submission, practical steps were also taken to undermine the influence of the Kede aristocracy. It is in relation to this that the excision of the southern territories from the Bida Emirate had implications for the Kede aristocracy. For the Kede, another dimension was even added in the course of the boundary delienation which accompanied the administrative reorganisation of the Emirate.

It should be pointed out, for instance, that on assumption of administrative responsibility over the Nupe province in 1900, Major Burdon had

advocated that all villages on the right bank should be handed over to Nupe. Sir F. Lugard approved of the suggestion and a Gazette notice was published to this effect. (13)

Thus, we may assume that for not less than a decade after the institution of colonial domination, the Kuta continued to exercise authority over the territorial possessions along the southern bank. This was in conformity with the pre-conquest tradition. Considering the Kede intransigence against the authority of the Central Native Administration as vested in the Etsu, it was no coincidence when finally "in 1916 the centre-line

(13) NAK SNP 7, 2769/1910, "Boundary Between Nupe and Ilorin" (1910).

of the Niger was constituted as the divisional boundary". (14)

The immediate consequence of this deception (among other steps taken towards subordinating the Kede aristocracy) was to have dispossessed the Kuta of the title over several fish ponds and "nearly half his people". (15) These were ceded to the Lafiagi and Patigi Emirates. By implication, the Kuta had also lost possession of the material benefits which accrued from the exploitation of the fish ponds and other forms of surpluses. And we may observe that it is in this regard that the attempt by the colonial authorities to pacify the recalcitrant Kede chieftains made more meaning.

The effect of this did not only stop at reducing the Kuta's resource base by almost half. It also served as a source of secondary contradictions which threatened the internal cohesion of the Kede aristocracy (even if it was temporarily). Besides, it opened up a new ground for conflict with former subjects, now in the Patigi and Lafiagi Emirates, hence reducing the Kuta's capacity to muster enough energy with which to resist the authority of the Etsu of Bida.

[...] and for years there were constant wrangles about the ownership of pools and fishing rights on the right bank, since Kuta's territory had once extended over both sides of the river. The question has never been re-opened ... except in

(14) NAK BIDA DIST. B.1756, "Reports on Kede District" by A.G.J. Davies and H.R.J. Sackville-West, April 1950.

(15) NAK SNP 17, 24354, "Kede District Bida Division, Ilorin-Niger Province Boundary Disputes in connection with".

occasional grumbles from the older men who still complain that Patigi people are fishing in their pools, and laughing at them as they do it. (15)

The move towards constituting the centre-line of the Niger stream as the boundary between Bida and the south was carried out in stages (with that of 1916 being the last). These were, however, carried out in quick succession, generating at the same time internal dissent within the Kede aristocracy and creating enemies external to it. The first subordinate chief of the Kuta to dissent was the Leifete. He was stationed

at a place called Kpatako, which is about six miles up the Kange creek and is near Shonga. Here he has extensive fishing rights. When the boundary was made a parallel one mile south of the Niger River, he was told to come inside the boundary of the Kuta. He refused as the fishing rights he had outside this boundary were more valuable than those inside the boundary.

As a consequence a man named Bake Isa from Rabba who is a grandson of Kuta Jiri was appointed Leifete. (17)

By 1916, it was the turn of Bake Isa to refuse to move across the Niger when the Kuta lost the remaining strip of territory. He preferred instead to hold on to the streams which were then under his control. He did not stop at that, but

went to Ilorin and [in addition] asked to be made Kuta of the Kedia and Batachi on the south Bank of the river in Ilorin Division. This was done but

(16) NAK BIDA DISTRICT B.1756, "Reports on Kede District". As it seemed obvious that communities would not relinquish their fishing rights across the Niger, it was agreed that the boundary "should not interfere with fishing rights ... on either bank ...". This however would not stop future skirmishes between communities over such rights. See also NAK MIN PROF: 154/1920: "Niger Province Annual Report No.37."

(17) NAK SNP 17, 24354, "Kede District Bida Division".

one year later he was deposed as it was decided that there could not be two Kutas at one and the same time. He however retained the pools and fished in them to this day. (18)

In the end, the threat which the Kede posed to the emergent administrative arrangement was curbed. The Kuta retained his title, but only as a subordinate chief - a district head of the Bida Emirate. But, in this regard, the Kede were not alone. Nor was the tendency towards the assertion of independence peculiar to only the Kede. The British faced similar problems in western Nupe.

If the use of the Niger as a natural boundary would be suggested as a cause for the excising of part of the riverain Kede territory, such did not exist for western Nupe. Here, the deliberate policy of destroying the compatibility of the geo-political units to which the resisting chiefs laid claim was manifested more clearly. Hence, villages and groups of villages were indiscriminately lumped into new districts in reverse of the forms which they had evolved by the end of the nineteenth century. Providing a general explanation for this policy by 1933, E.J. Arnett put it most vividly:

This [administrative arrangement] was the result of deliberate policy, inspired by a not unreasonable fear that chiefs who held any large corporate area of territory might easily become too powerful for their overlords ... [Hence the] wholesale exchange of villages between one chief and another. (19)

(18) Ibid.

(19) NAK SNP 17, 20651, "West Africa in Review, Nigeria in 1933" by E.J. Arnett, C.M.G.

We shall assume that the ceding of Zugurma and other sections in western Nupe to the Kontagora Emirate in the course of the boundary delienation was also a manifestation of this policy. The excuse that this was in conformity with some nineteenth century claims is hardly tenable. The only evidence we have of this is the alliance Etsu Masaba is said to have entered into with Abubakar, Sarkin Kontagora, giving the latter "all the Ebe country".(20) But even after this, Masaba did not stop raiding the "Ebe country", at least for slaves. Besides, this move was made at a crucial time for Bida - when her attention was focused on securing a firm grip of the Niger waterway, on carrying out military incursions into the southern territories and on contending with skirmishes with the Swari, to the north, and others.(21) The trouble in western Nupe (Mokwa and Zugurma especially) seemed to have required more than what the military capacity of Bida could cope with. And, in fact, accounts in Mokwa acknowledge that Bida did not succeed in gaining any substantial control in this area up till the close of the century.(22)

(20) NAK MIN PROF: 45/1922, "Assessment Report on Egbako District" (Bida Division).

(21) Masaba's reign (1859-73) seems to have been the busiest in terms of Bida's conquests, expansion and consolidation. And, in this regard, his second reign was as important as the first (i.e. in Lade in the 1840s). See Nadel, A Black Byzantium, pp.80-82.

(22) Ibid. Zugurma particularly was base to a faction of the Tsoedian dynasty (of the Majiya lineage) which remained there, presiding over a still-born state and resisting subjugation by Bida up to the close of the 19th century.

Nor was the western Nupe the last to have received some treatment as meted out to the Kede district. Of Katcha, a district bordering the Agaie Emirate and located to the east of the Gbako River, Nadel states:

The territory over which the ancestors of the Sheshi used to exercise their rule as "town-kings" of Kacha has been placed in the political rearrangement of the country mostly into a different Division, the Agaie Emirate. (23)

This goes to attest to the fact that the policy was in general an attempt to mutually weaken the various political forces within the Emirate, as a means towards entrenching the Bida Native Authority system.

4.2 Administrative reorganisation and the aristocracy

An arrangement which sought to place the Etsu at the top of a pyramidal administrative structure in the Bida Emirate by the beginning of the 20th century would have had to alter the 19th century power relations within the aristocracy. And for the colonial authorities, this was carried out as a different aspect of the same process, with the reduction in the size of the Emirate to a fraction of the area within which its ruling classes exercised some influence by the time of conquest.

To start with, the Emirate was partitioned into administrative Districts. By 1909, there were twelve Districts in all, viz: "Bakokma (Gbakokpan), Bangba (Gbangba), Magwe and Dakmon (Dakpan), Jima, Katcha, Bitshitawagi (Bishetiawogi), Wunangi, Sakpe, Yeti, Bete-

(23) Ibid, p.159.

Labozhi, Mokwa and Riverain (i.e. Kede)" (24) Districts. The appointment and responsibility assigned to District Heads was purely administrative. Likewise, the composition of the Districts was exclusively at the convenience of administration. This was, for instance, acknowledged in 1933:

District boundaries were not established until the British occupation, when Mohammodu was made Etsu Nupe (1901-1916). The arrangement appears to have been solely one of convenient administration and there seems to be no reason why with improved condition the boundaries should not be rearranged or abolished for the same purpose. (25)

Each District was in turn sub-divided into village area groups, each of which was a haphazard collection of villages and hamlets. Of these, there were about 91 in the whole of the Emirate by 1944. (26) While village and hamlet heads (Zhitsu or Gago) were elected, based on the traditions of each community, heads of village area groups (Etsunyankpa or tax chief) were not. The latter, being a creation of colonial rule, were appointed by the Etsu and subject to same conditions as the District Heads. They were however directly subordinate to the District Heads and, unlike the latter, did not belong in the Bida nobility. Their appointment was however subject to royal confirmation from the Etsu, whose appointees (called Rowni, i.e. turban) they were.

(24) NAK SNP 7, 1267/1909, "Notes on Bida Division" by Ag. Resident C.C. Yates.

(25) NAK B.71, Acc. No. 7, "District Administration". Labozhi, for instance, was merged with Mokwa while Egbako was merged with Sakpe, with Kutigi as the capital.

(26) NAK B.1333, "Annual Report Bida Division 1944-45".

The village area administrative units with the village and hamlet heads under them, served, according to Cole, as "vital and fundamental base of the administrative pyramid", (27) into which the Native Authority was structured. "To supersede the clan system in favour of a territorial organisation" (28) and, in the process, break precolonial cultural affinities and political loyalties, village area units were created out of indiscriminate grouping and creation of arbitrary boundaries. The chiefs in turn became mere tax assessors and gatherers for the Native Authority.

We may observe that this was meant to strengthen the aristocracy in relation to its subjects some of whom were giving trouble at the inception of colonial domination. This is especially so of the Gbedegi, of the Mokwa area, at least to the extent that the imposition of colonial rule had, for the first time, enhanced the imposition of a District Head from Bida. Oral accounts from Mokwa attest to the fact that the imposition of an Egba (Ajele) from Bida did not succeed throughout the nineteenth century. And the land tenure system in this area could be cited as one of the most enduring legacies of this relationship. (29)

(27) C.W. Cole, "Report on Land Tenure in Northern Nigeria, Nupe" (1949).

(28) NAK SNP 7, 1865/1909, "Annual Report Nupe Province, 1907".

(29) According to C.W. Cole ("Report on Land Tenure: Nupe", p.32), within "That area of the Emirate west of the Kaduna river ... land remained in the hands of the indigenous tribes ... [unlike] the area to the east, i.e. between the Kaduna and Gbako rivers and the Districts to

Even within the area, located between the Kaduna and Gbako rivers and extending farther east of the latter, where Bida's political influence was most strongly entrenched by the close of the century, some chiefs still enjoyed some level of autonomy. At least, apart from the Bini who inhabit the lands in the immediate vicinity of Bida, there were some other chiefs who ranked far beyond the status to which they were reduced under the Native Authority arrangement. Though Bida was recognised as a suzerain among these, with the meeting of the political and material obligation in manifestation, they still retained the right to land and share in the surpluses appropriated from the peasantry and servile classes.

Within the Bida aristocracy itself, it seems so much power was vested in the Etsu, more than what a holder of that office would have possessed in the nineteenth century. It is predictable that this was done to enhance the efficacy of the Native Administration and its hierarchical structure. This would have been impossible, given the existence of rival factions in Bida by the time of conquest, with each struggling to assert itself. Moreso that the conquest, much as it weakened the aristocracy collectively, did not seem to have eliminated this sectarian tendency.

It will be recalled that though the office of the Etsu was the most senior of the royal offices by the end

the east of the Gbako river ... [where] the lands were appropriated and divided up amongst the warriors and office holders of the Fulani invaders."

of the nineteenth century, its strength was derived from a collective support of the numerous fief-holding nobility. (30) And though members of the Bida nobility owed their appointment, elevation in status, and allocation of fiefs to the Etsu, this was only in principle. In actual practice, titles and allocation of fiefs was done in recognition of the wealth and the influence a person commanded. Such influence and wealth in turn were rooted mostly in the possession of a strong private army. Nadel describes this most vividly:

The Nupe army was comparatively loosely organized. It possessed only a small nucleus of regular troops, represented in the king's bodyguard; the rest of the army consisted of levies of slaves, volunteers and mercenary soldiers, raised by the houses of the feudal nobility. (31)

Throughout the nineteenth century, this had often been used in pursuit of rival claims, especially against the Emir. It is this trend which was reversed in the course of the institution of the Native Administration.

(30) Nadel, A Black Byzantium, p.88, makes a similar observation. He states: "Fulani rule, only recently established by undisguised conquest, and dependent upon the co-operation of a band of war-chiefs and faction-leaders, turned semi-sacred kingship into rulership of the strongest. The king becomes a primus inter pares, the highest rank-holder in a royal nobility [which] rules by precedence and promotion. The exclusiveness of primogeniture gave way to a system of succession that allowed for balance of power and could satisfy rival claims."

(31) Ibid, p.109. J. Smaldone, Warfare in the Sokoto Caliphate (London: Cambridge, 1977), p.140, has also observed that the Emir's army during mobilisations for major campaigns, was augmented or depended on levies provided by individual Hakimai and commanded by a small standing unit of "royal professional military officers".

Notwithstanding the authority vested in the aristocracy and the Emir at the top of the hierarchy however, it lost its autonomy by virtue of colonial domination, and for the fact that it lost "the right to raise armed forces, to levy taxation and to legislate".(32) And with the institution of the Bida Beit-el-Mal (i.e. the Native Authority Treasury) on April 1, 1910, the aristocracy became fully constituted into the colonial bureaucracy. Henceforth, all taxes would be paid into the treasury from which Native Authority officials also drew salaries. This arrangement also excluded and would thus marginalise by instalment the retinue of civil, slave and military officials which had hitherto been a feature of the Bida aristocracy. To make this effective, District Heads were meant to move out of the capital and reside in their districts.

4.3 Imposition of colonial economy

In the course of the last two decades of the nineteenth century, British merchants seemed to have identified in Bida's political independence a stumbling block in their quest for economic subordination. The result of this was the military encounter of 1897 to 1901. But while this led to the collapse of state power and eroded the authority of the Bida ruling classes, it also left in its wake the disruption in production. This was detrimental not only to the ruling classes in Bida

(32) NAK SNP 17, 1245, "Draft Revision of Political Memo" IX (1918).

but also to merchant capital in the quest for commodities and market. Meanwhile, to stop the degeneration and provide an environment that would enhance the exploitation by merchant capital, the British were compelled to fall back on the local ruling class.

It is not that the imposition of colonial economy, i.e. production and the social relations engendered by it, was carried out independently of the institution of the administrative apparatus. In fact, they evolved as closely related aspects of the same process - of colonial domination. Moreover, British colonial domination was at the instance of merchants' capital. And since merchants' capital, by its very nature, (33) would not subordinate production, it had to depend on the state. Hence, specific economic instruments were evolved to facilitate production (mainly of export goods) and the social relations which were consequent on it. (34)

(33) K. Marx, Capital Vol. I (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1986), p. 330, identifies the basis from which this nature derives. To Marx, "Merchants' capital is originally merely the intervening movement between extremes which it does not control, and between premises which it does not create." These "extremes and premises" involve that of production on the one hand and, on the other, that of market. With regards the Bida Emirate, this explanation remains relevant to the extent that the involvement of merchants' capital in directly subordinating production remained insignificant throughout the whole period of colonial domination.

(34) Geoffrey Kay (Development and Underdevelopment: A Marxist Analysis, London: Macmillan, 1977, p. 105) seems to contextualise this in relation to the basis for the evolution of indirect rule, and states that the "practice of indirect rule was the clear political counterpart of capital as it existed in the underdeveloped world. For this form of political administration reproduced at the level of the state all the ambiguities that merchant capital created in the economic sphere. It established a centralised political authority upholding private

4.3.1 Taxation

No sooner had calm partially resumed after the 1900/01 conquest of Bida than taxation surfaced as one of the major items on the agenda for the colonial authority. The seriousness and urgency with which it was addressed gives an impression that the colonial government saw in it a strong instrument for the reactivation of production. Besides, it was actually acknowledged as an instrument for the appropriation of surplus needed to sustain not only the colonial administration but also the Bida aristocracy and to save it from further disintegration. Hence the observation and suggestion that:

the poverty of most of the big Ranks, especially in Bida, is a matter for serious concern ... The great loss ... [largely from slave desertion and also from the loss in other sources of surplus] has quite outstripped the courageous efforts of the Ranks to find relief in trading and farming on their own account.

As a partial relief I would suggest that such part of the Town tax (now levied in Nupe on the three towns of Bida, Agaie and Lapai) as fairly represents the equivalent of the non-enforced Taxes on Trades and industries be doubled and the Emir's share thereof be wholly devoted to the Ranks ... I would further suggest that any increase in the land Tax be reserved to the Ranks, until a suitable amount has been secured. (35)

The collapse of the precolonial state apparatus and the degree of disintegration the Bida aristocracy suffered in

property and money, but rested its power, in part at least, on local groups whose own power originated in non-capitalist form of society."

(35) NAK SNP 7, 462/1905, Ag. Resident Nupe Province to Political Assistant, Lokoja, 1905.

consequence however made the old forms of taxation most unlikely. Nor was this even of primary importance in a situation in which commodity production was also an immediate goal.

The attempt to restore taxation was initiated in 1901, when in the Bida Emirate, Town Taxes "were originally imposed as an equivalent of the yearly gando tribute". (36) In the Kusopa area of Labozi, the Emir's royal rights over the kola plantations was recognised by the colonial authorities in 1902. It was therefore agreed that, henceforth, the "annual produce" of kola would be "handed over to the Emir as his lawful property". (37) This was followed by the reactivation of jauqali (cattle tax) in 1904. However, some difficulties were encountered in the imposition of taxes on peasant produce, at least at the time of the inception of colonial domination. This had to do with the disruption in production and the revolts in some districts which followed in the wake of conquest and domination. For this reason, the government

(36) Ibid. Such "tributes" (Gandu) in the 19th century, involved various forms of imposts collected in kind by the nobility. It ranged from rents on land, levied on royal estates, to tithes paid by the free land-holding peasant cultivators. It is also referred to in Nupe as Alubarika kin or enya kin (meaning tithes on produce of the land). The tithes were not static, and were as standard as they were arbitrary - involving demands for grains under several excuses such as the need to feed the Emir's stables. Besides, this was quite distinct from taxes, which were paid in cowries or tithes on artisanal products of every locality. In addition, slaves were demanded, especially from the (non-Muslim) southern districts of Kabba, etc.

(37) NAK MIN PROF: 279/1909, "Historical Notes Niger Province".

and Native Authority had to depend, while these problems lasted, on taxes levied on artisanal and craft production and on traders. Such taxes involving also for instance canoe and caravan tolls and duties on trade goods coming into and passing through the Emirate, were more effective. Of this revenue, 50 per cent went to the government while 50 per cent was allocated to the Native Authority.

Between 1901 and 1910 when the Beit-el-Mal was instituted, the Etsu was allocated "50 per cent of Native share of the tribute for his maintenance" and that of his court. The District Heads kept 15 per cent, while the sub-District Heads (Etsunyankpazi or tax chiefs) "received 10 per cent of the tribute they collected". The Chief Alkali (presiding over the court in Bida), on his part, "retained the fees and fines, for the upkeep of himself and his court", while "about a score" of Doqarai who guarded the city gates and performed other police duties, kept for their own sustenance the dues they collected from traders who came into the city. (38) It was these percentages (made up of tax payments in both currency and in kind) which were adopted as fixed salaries for the Native Authority officials by 1910.

It should be acknowledged, however, that salaries did not remain static afterwards as there were, in fact, instances of upward adjustments, especially for the Etsu and other principal chiefs of the Native

(38) NAK MIN PROF: 225/1912, "Historical Notes Bida Division".

Administration. (39) But the percentages increase would have by no means been proportionate to the rate of increment in the incidence of taxation. For instance, from a total of about 2,245 pounds in 1905-6, the incidence of taxation in the Bida Emirate rose to about 18,098 pounds between 1912 to 1913. And by 1924/25, taxes (made up of General land revenue and Jangali) had risen to a total of about 30,009 pounds, 6 shillings and 5 pence. (40) Nor would it be expected that salaries could have risen anywhere close to the average increase in taxes recorded for "the sixty Native Treasuries of the Northern Provinces" between 1938 and 1946:

Tax assessment for 1945/46 showed an average increase of 13.5%, the highest individual advance being nearly 40%. Coming on top of the general steady rise since 1938/39 averaging 32.8%, this makes an average increase of taxation during the war years of over 37%, rising in one case to as much as 120%. (41)

Viewed against this development, it can be suggested that the impact of colonial taxation on the colonial subjects put it out of proportion with the reasons provided to justify it by the colonial authorities. This is especially so of the much-discarded argument which

(39) NAK MIN PROF: 237/1909, "Lease XXIV Bida Town". Rents from the Niger Company in Bida were, from 1913, "paid into the Beit-el-Mal and the Emir's salary increased to the extent of £25 per annum" in lieu of it. In 1912, it was an increase in the Etsu's salary in return for the abolition of kola tithes from Kusopa. See NAK MIN PROF: 223/1912, "Assessment Report on Labozhi and Gbete Districts".

(40) These figures are quoted, respectively in NAK MIN PROF: 225/1912, "Historical Notes Bida Division" and NAK Acc.3, "The History of the Bida Emirate".

(41) NAK BIDA DIV. 1396, "Annual Report 1945-46".

borders mainly on the acclaimed responsibility to bear the cost of administration and the so-called development of the colonised societies. Notwithstanding the series of imposts to which Bida's subjects may have been subjected in the nineteenth century, colonial taxation was still different in its essence and basis.

We may observe that the precolonial taxes primarily constituted a direct form of surplus appropriation. In essence, they enhanced the subjection of both servile and free (artisanal and peasant) labour directly to the feudal noblemen and others who, by virtue of their wealth or position within the existing units of production, also possessed the means of production. Colonial taxation was quite in contrast of this. It objectively constituted an instrument for the commoditisation of production and labour. That is to say that an economic environment was enhanced under which commodities would be produced mainly for the market. Hence, the official claim by the colonial authorities that colonial taxation derived directly from the precolonial form of taxation and served the same purpose (42) has an implication of divesting taxation of its social and economic essence.

At the inception of the Native Administration in 1901, the extortion of multiple taxes and levies, in currency as well as in kind, was allowed. This gave the

(42) It is the claim, for instance, that "the Native Revenue Ordinance operates to consolidate, regularise and standardise previous miscellaneous contributions voluntarily or involuntarily made, to the expenses of the local chiefs". NAK SNP 17, 12450 Vol. I, "Draft Revision of Political Memo IX (1918)".

taxes a semblance of their nineteenth century form. But this seems to have been more of a temporary measure taken at a time when a state apparatus that would be required to enforce colonial laws was still to be constituted. Thus, by 1906, when some degree of administrative confidence seems to have been attained, it was suggested that:

the innumerable petty taxes should be amalgamated in one or more single taxes to which legal sanctions should be given. (43)

And by the time the Beit-el-Mal was instituted, a principle of assessment for the purpose of taxation, based on the incidence per adult had evolved. This form of taxation derived from an abstract estimate of yield per unit of land:

The principle on which the estimate or valuation of lands shall be made, shall be the amount of produce or profit which can be annually raised and supported on such land by a person cultivating and using the same in the manner and up to the average standard of cultivation and use prevailing in the neighbourhood. (44)

In the kola-nut producing areas, for instance, a census was taken of kola bearing trees as well as palm trees for the purpose of assessment. We should also speculate that the same would have been the case with other economic trees of relevance for the production of export goods (such as shea nut trees, for instance) and of local importance as well. In this regard, craftsmen and artisans, peasant cultivators and the Kede canoe and

(43) NAK SNP 15, Acc.374, "Native Revenue Proclamation 1906".

(44) Ibid.

fishermen were not spared. In addition, a separate, general poll tax was charged on a flat rate, per inhabited hut. By 1912, this was made up of: 3 shillings 3 pence flat rate for poll tax; farmers, 4 shillings; blacksmiths and carpenters, 7 shillings; women, 2 shillings; oil palms, 4 shillings per 100 trees; and kolas, 4 shillings per tree.(45) The total tax paid per head was therefore made up of all or part of these, depending on which was applicable in an area.

The assessment of women for the purpose of taxation should deserve some special mention. Not so much for its uniqueness, but for the relevance which it has, in comprehending the general impact of taxation on the economy of the Bida Emirate and her classes. One of the excuses provided in assessing women for the purpose of taxation was that they engaged in independent productive activity. Mr. Cadman, in a 1920 assessment of the Kede District, for instance, had therefore proceeded to estimate the annual earnings of "six women at 7 pounds 5 shillings", as an average for the District.(46)

Quite a lot of women engaged in petty trading of varying degrees, with a few rich ones according to oral

(45) NAK SNP 7, 5443/1912, "Niger Province Taxation system of".

(46) NAK MIN PROF: 71/1920, "Kede District Assessment Report" by Mr. Cadman, who states that:

"Palm oil and kernels are prepared from the 42,000 odd trees in the District, this industry is confined to the women.

All females who are not occupied solely in household duties, trade. There are 449 unmarried females of mature years who are engaged in petty trading."

accounts. This however does not provide enough justification for the type of generalisation which seemed to have been used as pretext for the taxation of women without distinction. Petty trading among women was mostly carried out as part of the simple division of labour within the family units. Nadel has observed, for example, that:

all food-stuffs and agricultural produce, and of native industrial products manufactured by men those that are typical women's articles, are traded by women. (47)

Whatever petty trading or productive activities most women engaged in outside the family units would have been part of their private source of income. In fact, even male members of the larger family units were entitled to this. But the taxes were levied in anticipation that the burden would be borne collectively, irrespective of whether it was the women or the men.

The general standard for assessing land revenue in the Bida Emirate was fixed at about 1/20th of 1/5th of a penny on each square yard (of a compound). In some instances, it was fixed at about "1/24th of a penny per square yard ... for cultivated land". (48) Though it was acknowledged that "land is in excess of the requirements" of the fast-falling population, hence constituted "an unfair basis for assessment", incidence of taxation continued to rise. And even when, as early as 1912, it seemed to have been accepted that in the Bida Emirate

(47) Nadel, A Black Byzantium, p.330.

(48) NAK, Bida City Assessment Report: 297/1912.

relatively, "taxation is high compared to other parts of Nigeria", yet it was insisted upon "that the people can well bear it".(49) This may not be too much of an exaggeration since Resident Dupigny could still be quoted as generalising in 1918 that:

The incidence in the Emirate as in the rest of Nupe is very high while the town of Bida itself paid in 1917 a higher tax than any other town in the Northern provinces with the exception of Ilorin, which pays a trifle more, but has a much larger population.(50)

On top of these taxes, duties were charged on property of the deceased. This was referred to as the "administration of estates" of the dead. Besides, relations were required to settle outstanding taxes owed by a deceased. In 1917, 592 estates were administered and about 1,718 in 1918.(51)

Assessment for the purpose of taxation in Bida did not cover only goats, sheep, poultry, etc., but also involved, admittedly, a deliberate attempt to evaluate effects "considerably in excess of the real (market value)".(52) This, by implication, attached commodity

(49) NAK MIN PROF: 225/1912, "Historical Notes Bida Division".

(50) NAK MIN PROF:4080/1918, "Nupe Province Annual Report, No.11, 1918". The Sakpe and Mokwa districts especially had their assessment raised by 418 pounds 7 shillings and 262 pounds 10 shillings respectively in 1917. Report by Rochford Rae and Mr. Nyne.

(51) Ibid. The death from influenza which Rochford Rae estimates at 3,980 for the Bida Emirate (10,657 for the province) in 1918, must have accounted for the sharp rise in the number of estates administered and a testimony to the figure too.

(52) NAK Acc.3, "History of the Bida Emirate".

value to such produce and also provided a basis for the emergence of wage labour. This is the more so that for quite a large number of peasant producers, the burden of taxation outstripped their production capacity when combined with their subsistence need.

In making assessment for the purpose of taxation, political officers seem to have been quite aware that a lot of people would not be able to pay the relatively high taxes. But there was often the pretext that since "the usual hamlet consists of one or two families", the burden would be spread and "richer relations" would pay up. (53) In fact, oral accounts acknowledge that taxes were paid collectively by the family units (efako) but that this was not always enough and some members of the units had to work for wages to supplement what was made from the sale of farm products. In some instances, debts were incurred to pay up and to meet other financial obligations. This did not only lead to the emergence of an entirely new phenomenon of wage labour but also led to an upsurge in incidents of pawning in the Bida Emirate. This will however be discussed in detail in the subsequent chapter.

(53) NAK MIN PROF: 4080/1918, "Nupe Province Annual Report, No. 11, 1918". Assessing the Kede district in 1920, Mr. Cadman seems to acknowledge that adults were taxed quite in excess of their reasonably assumed capacity to pay but yet retortedly argued that: "It should be noted that they [the adults] receive considerable assistance from quite young boys of the compound[s] aged from 8 to 11 years old who are not yet reckoned as tax payers." NAK MIN PROF: 71/1920, "Kede District Assessment Report, 1920".

4.3.2 Imposition of new currency

The introduction and imposition of British currency, like taxation, was an aspect of a more diverse political and economic approach towards destroying the relics of precolonial economy and the instruments for its manifestation. In essence, it was not simply an attempt to replace the old currency with a new one and, thereby ease exchange, as the British would claim. By implication, it was meant to give the British an absolute possession of this instrument which would be used to enhance the subjection of the economy to merchants' capital. Alternately, this would enhance the disintegration of the local economy in a manner which, while subjecting to British capital sectors that served its needs, those that did not were destroyed. (54)

The first attempt at the imposition of British currency in Bida was made in 1904. This was when "the town of Bida was assessed ... at 300 bags (in Nupe, gura) of cowries (at 7/-3 per bag)". (55) In return for this, new copper coins were issued. However, this approach

(54) See, for instance, S.A. Olarenwaju, "The Infrastructure of Exploitation: Transport, Monetary Changes, Banking, etc.", T. Falola (ed), Britain and Nigeria: Exploitation or Development? (London: Zed Press, 1987), p.74. He observes that the "introduction of the British currency in Nigeria was meant to complement the British trade in the colony in order to enhance the exploitation of Nigeria ... It gave Britain control over money supply in the colony ... [and] enhanced British manipulation of the colonial monetary system to her economic advantage."

(55) NAK MIN PROF: 279/1909, "Historical Notes Niger Province". By Nadel's calculation that 200,000 cowries = 10 gura (i.e. 20,000 = 1 gura), the 300 bags would have amounted to 600,000 cowries. See Nadel, op cit, p.315.

turned out, from the subsequent experiences, as an exception rather than the rule. Or it might just be that our sources are silent on this form of approach to the propagation of the British currency.

But it can be speculated that rather than systematically enhance the spread of the British currency, it was enforced. In fact, the disposition as implied in the form of taxation and the roles assigned the colonial state, makes this a more likely possibility. Taxation especially was not only a complementary economic instrument to the British currency, but was used as one of the most effective instruments for enforcing the currency. Hence the acknowledgement that:

The circulation of specie must depend primarily upon trade but it is mainly by the introduction of direct taxation into the Northern Provinces and an ever increasing insistence that the taxes shall be paid in cash that barter has generally fallen into desuetude in such a comparatively short time. The producer soon found that he must have cash in order to pay his taxes and he therefore refused to accept anything else ... For many years, too, it has been the custom of Native Courts to demand that fines and other payments shall be remitted in cash. (56)

Taxation was also used as a medium to subject a greater sphere of economic relation to the use of currency. For this purpose, economic obligations which had hitherto been met to the aristocracy from its subjects were absorbed and harmonised as part of the general tax to be paid in cash. Such taxes were besides stipulated by law and upheld by the colonial state (through the Native

(56) NAK SNP Acc. 249, "Political Memo, 1926" by Lt. Governor, Northern Provinces.

Authority). We can therefore assume that it was as much in attempt to enforce the "copper coinage" as it was in attempt to subordinate the aristocracy that "Native Revenue" was proclaimed in 1906 to include:

all forms of taxation known to the country, and makes any taxation not authorised by it illegal and punishable. While the former proclamation [i.e. the Land Revenue Proclamation No.4 of 1904] ... did not in any way touch the nature of those taxes or restrict the power of chiefs as to the extent to which they might tyrannise over, or extort from, the peasantry, the object of the present proclamation is to lay down limits to taxation by native chiefs, to define and legalise the various taxes (57)

The institution of the Bida Beit-el-Mal in 1910 and the allocation of fixed salaries to Native Authority officials symbolised an important stage in the transformation of the aristocracy to a colonial bureaucracy. But it should also be viewed as a step towards enforcing the new currency and thereby furthering economic subjugation.

The idea of introducing the "copper coinage" was presented as if in the Bida Emirate, and in fact, in the "Northern provinces" in general, barter had been the universal means of exchange. (58) This amounts to denying the evolution, use and importance of currency generally

(57) NAK SNP 15, Acc.374, "Native Revenue Proclamation" 1906.

(58) NAK SNP 15, ACC.249. It is observed by 1926, in attempt to justify the imposition of British currency, without exception, that: "It may be said that the use of barter - once prevalent in trading transactions of any importance or magnitude has now been almost entirely obsolete for the last 8 or 10 years and is confined, as far as European trade is concerned, to small individual purchases by firms amongst backward and more remote communities."

as an important feature in exchange, and commercial activities in Nupe by the close of the nineteenth century.

It must be noted that even by the mid-nineteenth century, the cowry had become such an extensively used medium of exchange in the lower middle Niger as to warrant the assumption that it was indeed a major currency. Thus, when in 1859, Rev. S. Crowther visited the middle Niger, sailing as far north as Egga (Bida's major trading port on the Niger, below Rabba), he found it quite easy to pay in thousands of cowries for canoe services. Besides, the chief of Ketso island, a subordinate chief of the Kuta, gave him a "token" gift of 1,000 cowries in courtesy for Crowther's visit. (59) In fact, Nadel has also acknowledged that though "you have to carry them about in bagfuls, and count in thousands and tens of thousands", the efficiency and scope of the cowry remained "practically unlimited". (60) We may assume that the capacity to handle figures infinitely was not evolved out of context. It was in proportion with the level of sophistication in exchange which the massive production capacity attained by Bida economy had enhanced in the course of the nineteenth century. In addition to this, the Bida Emirate had had to cope with an equally

(59) Rev. S. Crowther and Rev. J.C. Taylor, Niger Expedition of 1857-1859 (London: Dawson of Pall Mall, 1968), pp.405-415.

(60) Nadel, A Black Byzantium, p.315.

large volume of trade conducted with her and that which passed through her territory.

It should be recalled that the Bida society by the close of the nineteenth century was characterised by the existence of a dominant socio-economic class. This was made up, in addition to the ruling classes, of local elements who possessed what, in the context of the time, could be termed massive wealth. This was not only in the form of slaves and other material possessions but also included, according to oral accounts, large stocks of currency (mainly cowries), stored in granaries, earthen wares buried in the ground, etc. (61)

The obstacles which the British mercantile interests encountered in their quest for trade monopoly during the last two decades of the nineteenth century came from these dominant classes. One would therefore only expect the British, in the course of the imposition of colonial rule, to, among other things, dispossess the dominant classes of an instrument through which their material prosperity and control of the Bida economy had been manifested. One of these was through the imposition and manipulation of the new currency.

We can speculate therefore that the isolated gesture of replacing the cowry with British coins in Bida in 1904

(61) Zitsu Mamma Kolo, interviewed 12/4/89 at Kuci-Woro, cited an example of his own grandfather. In fact, two other informants, Suman Kataeregi, interviewed at Kataeregi 14/4/89, and Alhaji Mamma Mamma-Saba, interviewed Mokwa 23/7/89, both point to several accidental finds in local excavations as a testimony to this.

was part of the efforts to rehabilitate the aristocracy. On a wider scope, the British seemed more disposed towards weakening the financial solvency of the population. To allow the possession and use of the cowry and other local currencies would have meant arming the Bida economy with an instrument which would have been so vital in resisting the penetration by British capital.

To acquire the cash in which the payment of taxes was required, for instance, producers in the Bida Emirate were compelled to produce commodities for sale, exclusively to the British firms, or work for wages, with the government. There was no choice since the British were the only source for the new currency. This was used as a means for stimulating production at low prices. Moreover, the government and the firms seemed to have maintained a very limited cash supply, as it was observed in 1921, for instance:

In some areas the decrease in trade in produce is attributed to the firms' inability to meet demand for cash, and the natives' unwillingness to barter produce for cloth and co. [as that would serve no purpose]. (62)

Nor was local exchange, even in food crops (almost the only item to which it had been mostly reduced under the influence of colonial domination), spared from this trend. And it was observed in 1923 that "grain prices are so low this year that these products cannot bear [even] transport charges". (63) In consequence, a large share in

(62) NAK MIN PROF: 328/1921, "Nupe Province Annual Report No. 14, 1921".

(63) NAK MIN PROF 11/1924, "Bida Division Annual Report No. 65, 1923".

even local purchase and distribution of such produce as grains was taken over by British firms. It was acknowledged in 1926 that:

the trading firms [in the Bida Emirate] bought considerable quantities of grain for re-sale in the large towns of the North, and have already started buying again this year. (64)

In the course of at least the first two decades of colonial domination, British colonial policy seemed to have succeeded in turning Bida mainly into an area for agricultural production. The success with which this was done seems to have derived mostly from the disintegration of what remained of the local economy and its dominant classes by the beginning of the century. Much of the latter had either been forced into the emerging small-scale commodity production or joined the ranks of those who migrated from the Emirate with the inception of colonial rule.

4.4 The class location of colonized education

British colonial education, from whichever dimension one may wish to look at it, served some specific purposes. One of these was as an instrument of socialisation in the colonial societies. In making this observation, we are aware that quite a lot of studies have been conducted on this subject. Much of these however dwell on its form and relevance, locating its limitations as either a product of deliberate colonial

(64) NAK MIN PROF: 27/1927, "Bida Division Annual Report, 1926".

policy or the shortcomings inherent to local institutions. (65)

We do not intend to absolve British colonial policy of the negative effects of colonial educational development. Moreover, such an exercise would be fruitless. Our concern however is the relevance of colonial education in enhancing the environment under which classes were transformed or formed in the Bida Emirate.

British colonial domination in the Bida Emirate (as in the rest of the Emirates of Northern Nigeria) was mainly enhanced with the aristocracy in mediation. This meant that a form of political balance which ensured the supremacy of the aristocracy among the local population

(65) P.K. Tibenderana, Sokoto Province Under British Rule 1903-1939 (Zaria: A.B.U. Press, 1988), pp.180-227, examines, for instance, arguments on colonial education policy as it affects Northern Nigeria, and seems to rest the blame for shortcomings on the British. But to E.A. Ayandele, The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914: A Political and Social Analysis (London: Longman, 1966), p.12, "The greatest weakness of the cultural nationalists was that they emphasized only the negative results of missionary enterprise on Nigerian society. But the Christian missions were more than destroyers; they were builders as well and, to some extent, preservers." The focus exclusively on missionaries and their activities notwithstanding, this position remains symbolic of the approach which sees British involvement (colonial and missionaries) in Nigeria from the context of negative-positive impact or either. But in debunking such liberal rationalisation of colonialism, M.M. Tukur, op cit, pp.156-157, puts it categorically: "British colonialist domination on the people of the Emirates as Lugard claimed and Perham and others later amplified, was for the benefit solely of the British and that under colonialism, British gain was indeed a loss to the people of the Emirate. In other words, ... the sum and essence of what happened in the Emirates during the period under study was not development, but its antithesis, namely retrogression, or at best, stagnation."

had to be maintained. In this regard, colonial education policy and development in the Bida Emirate was no exception. It derived from the very policy of "indirect rule". And as regards education and the sustainance of this administrative policy, it is stated that:

If indirect administration is to be truly tribal we must educate from the top down, and not as in southern Nigeria [where it had been] from the bottom upwards ... (66)

Notwithstanding the arrival and spread of missionary activities, including education, the colonial authorities pursued this policy. This remained so until the (limited) liberalisation of education from around the 1930s.

4.4.1 Education under the Native Authority

Government education programme in Bida was formally initiated when, with the starting of a school in Nasarawa, Kano in January 1910, "a son of the Emir with a mallam" were sent from Bida. (67) It was hoped that the mallam, on his return, would start a school in Bida to prepare candidates prior to admission into the Kano shcool. Hence, in November 1911, an elementary school had been established in Bida by a graduate of the Kano school, Mallam Amadu. In 1913, another set of 12 pupils, all sons of the sarakuna, together with two Iaki mallams, were again sent to Kano. Interestingly, it is acknowledged in testimony to the primary motive behind

(66) NAK SNF 17/18267^a, "Indirect Rule and Education in Africa" by Sir James Currie, K.B.E., 1932.

(67) NAK SNF 7 2047/1911, "Niger Province Annual Report" by Agt. Resident Anderson.

the British colonial education programme in Bida, that "it is hoped that these boys may in time become useful members of the Native Administration". (68)

For about two decades from 1913, the expansion in government education in the Bida Emirate remained only very modest. By 1917, the Bida Provincial Primary School, which also served the Agaie Emirate, had only 100 pupils on its enrolment. This seems to have improved a bit, as between 1923 and 1927, a total of about 1,816 (though not all came from Bida Emirate) had gone through the Bida elementary school. And though another elementary school was started in Kutigi in April 1929, expansion in elementary school enrolment remained modest. (69) However, in December 1929, a proposal was made for the establishment of a middle school in each province. This was adopted and in 1930 a middle school was started in Bida (for the Niger Province).

Compared to the two decades since about 1913, it was from the 1930s that the Bida Emirate witnessed some accelerated expansion in government education. This was not only in terms of the rise in enrolment into the

(68) NAK MIN PROF: 324/1913, "Niger Province Annual Report 1913".

(69) NAK MIN PROF: 112/1929: "Bida Division Report for March quarter, 1929" and NAK, B.10, Acc.3, "Bida Division Annual Report 1933". Though elementary school enrolment for both the Bida and Agaie Emirates represented 50% of the whole for the Niger Province, it was still relatively small. It has to be considered in relation to the figures which in Bida and Agaie stood at about 34 pupils in middle school and 135 in elementary schools (in Bida, Agaie and Kutigi) by 1933.

existing elementary schools but also in the rise of the number of new schools throughout the Emirate.

Between c.1933 and 1944, for instance, the number of pupils in government elementary schools in the Bida Emirate had more than doubled, with up to 569 pupils in school. This had reached 988, including 255 girls, for the elementary schools in the Bida and Agaie Emirates. Besides, by 1944, there were 16 elementary schools in the two Emirates, and with the starting of another one in Jebba in 1948, the number of schools reached 18. (70)

The expansion in government education however did not represent any significant change in educational policy. Nor did it imply any marked departure from the primary motive which inspired colonial Native Authority education. For H.R. Palmer as Lt. Governor, Northern Provinces, had re-emphasized in 1926:

But in a country which is professedly being taught to govern itself and improve itself on lines of its own, it is obvious that educational methods must conform to and be in sympathy with, existing political institutions - otherwise the children will destroy their own birthright. (71)

The expansion from the 1930s through the 1940s, we may observe, was necessitated by a requirement for the employment of citizens of the Northern Provinces in the

(70) This is an observation that can be drawn from the development accounted for in: NAK B 1333, "Annual Report Bida Division 1944-45"; NAK B 1396, "Annual Report Bida Division 1945-46"; and NAK B 1724, "Annual Report Bida Division 1948". In the Bida middle school, there were in whole for the province, 188 students (14 of them girls) by 1945. NAK B 1750, "Annual Report, Bida Division 1949".

(71) NAK SNP 17 11684 Vol. I, "Education Policy in British Dependences in Tropical Africa" (1906), H.R. Palmer, Lt. Governor, Northern Provinces.

government and British firms. The requirement however was for men with basic literacy to be employed for technical and clerical jobs - for which Bida (as in the rest of the Northern Provinces) could hardly provide candidates. Hence the report in 1940:

The lack of reasonably good overseers is regrettable. Classes are held when possible for training headmen, but the type wanted is an intelligent, energetic and not over-educated ex-middle school man of a reliable character, who is willing to start at the bottom. Only one candidate more or less of this type has been found in the last 2 to 3 years. Hence the importation of southerners, who, of course, lack authority with the Nupe. (72)

But for the reality which is attested to in the form of curriculum and the quality of instruction, we may be tempted to attribute such a claim to conspiracy on the part of the British.

From inception, vernacular (Hausa in particular) was to be adopted almost exclusively as a language of instruction in government schools. The subjects of instruction were: reading, writing and simple arithmetic. In addition to these, instruction was given in craftwork, involving "embroidery, mat making, brass work, carpentry, metal work, leather work, bricklaying, etc" with some elementary geography, hygiene and gardening. (73) This was strictly the form of instruction until the 1930s when, with the establishment of middle schools, there was an expansion and up-grading in

(72) NAK B 1067, "Annual Report Bida Division 1940".

(73) NAK MIN PROF: 225/1912, "Historical Notes Bida Division" and NAK MIN PROF: 27/1927, "Bida Division Annual Report, 1926".

schools' syllabus and curriculum. By the time this change was made,

The syllabus in Government schools [did] not qualify a boy, who may have been more than six years in school, for a career in the clerical service of the Government or the trading firms with the result that, except for the few to whom openings are available in the Native Administration, a boy on leaving school has to revert to some such occupation as farming in which the education he has received proves of little practical value. (74)

We can therefore speculate that the expansion in educational opportunities which led to a reversion of the initial focus on only the sons of the sarakuna had only little relevance for the lower classes. It provided their sons only limited opportunities for social mobility, even when it was liberalised. Hitherto, a few were absorbed into the Native Administration as scribes (Manzi in Nupe or Mallamai in Hausa) at various levels of the Native Authority for other such jobs befitting the marginal formal education which they had received. But even here the focus would have been more on the sons of these chiefs and of those who belonged in the royalty (most of whom were not titled) in Bida. Appointment as a District Head and arrogation of political responsibility within the Native Administration remained a preserve of the aristocracy and the titled nobility. Besides, this was under the Etsu who, by implication, took political initiatives. It was therefore only rational that, in spite of the calls for enrolment into elementary schools

(74) NAK MIN PROF: 4080/1918, "Nupe Province Annual Report No.11, 1918".

from the 1930s, by 1940 it was still to be acknowledged that "indeed it is not very easy to get pupils at all".(75) And this was in Bida town itself. Hence a resort to compulsion.

4.4.2 Missionary education

Missionary activities, with particular relevance to formal education within the area to which the Bida Emirate was reduced after the conquest, started with the establishment of colonial rule.(76) Before then, their presence was mainly restricted to Lokoja, under the protection of the British companies. Of course, one of the pioneer missionaries, Reverend Samuel Ajayi Crowther, had advanced further into the heart of the Emirate, establishing in c.1854-1857 a "missionary rest house" in

(75) NAK B.1067, "Annual Report Bida Division", 1940.

(76) Festus Olufemi Ogunlade, "Differential trends in the development of education in Nigeria: the case of the Middle Belt", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Birmingham Centre of West African Studies, University of Birmingham, 1982, p.29, traces the beginning of formal education in Bida by the missionaries under colonial rule, to 1904, with the establishment "on September 1, 1904 [of] the C.M.S. [Church Missionary Society] school, later known as Saint John's School, Bida".

Missionary activities in the Middle Niger up till the time of conquest, mainly centred on commerce and exploration with religion following only as a logical concomitant. Thus, when in 1873, one of the pioneer missionaries in Nupe, the Reverend Samuel Ajayi Crowther, opened a station (at Kipo Hill) near Egga and put Reverend C. Paul in charge, it was dedicated more to ministering to the alien Christian trading community. And this was only a little different from the exclusively "missionary rest house" established in Rabba by Rev. Crowther in c.1854-1857. For details of the activities of Christian missionaries in the Middle Niger before conquest, see Edmund Patrick Thurman Crampton, Christianity in Northern Nigeria (Zaria, 1975), pp.17-23.

Rabba and in 1873, opened a station at Egga, after the former had been forced to close by Masaba on his ascension to the throne in 1859. But up till the time of conquest, the activities of these missionaries remained mainly exploratory and commercial and guided by their initial ideal that "the Bible and Plough must regenerate Africa (and that) Religion was to work hand in hand with commerce and scientific investigation". (77) Thus, in the Bida Emirate (except probably in Lokoja), their activities till the time of conquest were not extended to education. Meanwhile, this is our concern here, at least to the extent that education could be said to have been used as an instrument for enhancing the spread of social and cultural influence.

It may be observed that the fall of the Bida aristocracy and the imposition of colonial rule provided an added advantage for missionary activity in the Bida Emirate. This is however not an attempt to distinguish Missionary enterprise from objective imperial mission. Culturally, missionary activity was complementary to the

(77) Ibid, p.17. Also Mason, The Foundation of the Bida Kingdom, p.85, indicates, for instance, that, apart from the West African Company (in the lower middle Niger by the beginning of the second half of the 19th century) being closely connected to the Church Missionary Society (CMS), Rev. Crowther and his son, Josiah, had shares in it.

He had also suggested, in a different instance, the re-establishment of the Lokoja consulate so as to create a condition in which the local chief (around the Niger) would "be forced by the British Government to accept treaties by which peace, a rarity then, would prevail and British subjects be protected". Such a position, we must observe, was objectively more inspired by commerce than it would have been spiritual. See Ayandele, The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, p.32.

imperial mission, to the extent that it is widely accepted that imperialism was not on civilising mission. (78)

The first missionary organisation to establish in the Bida Emirate after the conquest was the Church Missionary Society (CMS) which started in Bida in 1904. By June 24th, 1904, Mr. Ball, a C.M.S. representative in Lokoja, had forwarded a proposal to Mr. Goldsmith Esq. (Resident, Nupe Province), seeking permission to start a school in Bida. With approval, the C.M.S. thus started her first school in Bida, with 7 pupils. (79) Next to arrive was the Mannonite Mission with her activities centred mainly in and around the Mokwa District. This had arrived much later, most likely around 1917. (80) Missionary education in the Emirate had been carried out mainly between these two missionary societies.

Between 1904 and 1918, the C.M.S. had established stations with schools in not less than 13 centres, viz: Gaba, Doko, Kuci-Gberi, Shaba-Kolo, Pici, Gbadafu, Kutigi, Fazi, Katcha, Tsadoyagi, Kataeregi, Eseti, and Kamberi. By 1919, she had had up to 305 pupils on role in

(78) The objective motive behind imperialist expansion has been discussed extensively in Chapter One above.

(79) NAK SNP 7, 2372/1914, Mr. Ball of the C.M.S. Lokoja to Resident Goldsmith, Esq. See also Ogunlade, op cit, p.29.

(80) NAK MIN PROF: 340/1917, "Niger Province Annual Report, No.10, 1917". The first mention of this mission in our records has been in 1917.

the schools run from all the stations. According to Mr. E. Alvarez:

There are besides these schools, 39 centres of instruction with an aggregate of 196 under instruction. These places have no school building nor resident teachers but are visited from other stations. (81)

The rate of expansion by the Mennonite Mission (later known as the United Missionary Society, U.M.S.) was comparatively slow and small. From Mokwa, stations were opened in Muwo and Kpaki where a school was started in the 1930s. The school in Mokwa was started in 1917 with about 19 pupils. By 1919, there were only 14 pupils, and this went up again to 31 in 1920 and down again to 21 pupils in 1932. In fact, a Mennonite missionary in Mokwa, Ira Sherk, had complained in 1944 of poor patronage of the school from the Nupe, most of the pupils in attendance being Yoruba children of trader parents. In the villages, however, there was enthusiastic response among "children and young men who want some sort of an education". (82)

(81) NAK MIN PROF: 4080/1918, "Nupe Province Annual Report No.11, Education Return, 1918" and NAK MIN PROF: 475/1919, "Nupe Province Annual Report No.12: Education Return, 1919" - Report by E. Alvarez, Missionary Secretary and Assistant Superintendent C.M.S. Nupe District.

(82) NAK B.1333, "Annual Report Bida Division 1944-45" - U.M.S., Mokwa, Annual Report, 1944, by Ira W. Sherk. The enthusiasm would seem to have been quite general as among the Bini, in Doko, the response to C.M.S. education programme gave Rochford Rae cause to state in 1917: "There is no doubt that these mission schools are popular, more particularly with the Binis, who are not adherents to the Moslem religion". NAK MIN PROF: 338/1917, "Jima-Doko District Bida Division Assessment Report, 1917" by Mr. Rae.

In the regular schools run by these missions, instruction was supposed to have been in vernacular, with some English, reading, writing, arithmetic, scripture, Religious knowledge and grammar. These schools were for some time in the early years, mainly in Bida and Mokwa, with just a few pupils on enrolment. In the village schools which constituted the bulk, instruction was more or less exclusively in vernacular with simple arithmetic, writing and reading. Besides, the main emphasis was on the teaching of the scripture in Nupe, with the main intent to proselytize.

The restriction in instruction mainly to the use of vernacular, with reading, writing and simple arithmetic, was in convergence with the colonial government's policy on education and its curriculum in the Northern Provinces.

It may be suggested that the convergence was no coincidence. Thus, when in 1906, Walter Miller (of the CMS) forwarded a proposal on: (i) "Teaching of Mallams the Roman character to read and write" and (ii) "Education of the sons of Emirs in Northern Nigeria", (83) it was more in complement of the colonial policy, to educate from the top-down, in Northern Nigeria. In the Bida Emirate, where large numbers were enrolled in the several village schools run by the missions, it was not to be expected that the standard of instruction would therefore run counter to colonial policy. Apart from the

(83) NAK SNP 15/1 Acc. No.128, Education", Walter Miller to General Sir F. Lugard, K.C.M.G., 12/4/06.

cultural impact which proselytization implied, with reading and writing in vernacular (mainly for the purpose of propagating the scripture), the education hardly served any different purpose from that in the Native Authority schools. As Mr. Alvarez would admit in 1930:

There is as yet no real movement in Nupe in the direction of welcoming the European type of education except so far as it helps to equip for salaried posts; and as our desire is to keep the people on their farms and in their villages at this stage we do not really cater for this class or encourage the young folk to leave their villages. (84)

Moreover, no opportunities for employment existed for graduands of the missionary schools in the Native Administration. Such was almost an exclusive preserve of a few schools. Besides, the focus was more on the sons of members of the royalty and their subordinate chiefs. For this reason, the elementary schools run by the missionaries admitted only very few pupils, at least in the course of the first three decades of colonial domination. And the graduands were mainly employed for the very limited opportunities offered by the missionary organisations, as catechists and teachers. (85) The expansion in elementary education which therefore came afterwards was in response to new opportunities for employment from the 1930s.

We must acknowledge nevertheless that, in carrying out their programmes, the missionaries had quite often

(84) NAK MIN PROF: 10/1931, "Annual Report Bida Division, 1930".

(85) This explanation was given by the Rev. Canon John Ndace Angulu, interviewed at Bida, 11/4/89.

come into conflict or merely disagreed with the colonial government. Differences however arose more out of form and approach than from any fundamental conception in policy. This was especially so as education, to the missionaries, existed as a strong instrument for proselytization. Thus, in response to a visit to Kontagora by Dr. W. Miller and Mr. Alvarez, with a proposal to establish a C.M.S. station (and start educational work) there, the Resident warned in 1906 that:

The religious side of the question is the chief difficulty. I think it would not be advisable at present to attempt to make converts. The Government being (sic) pledged not to interfere with their religion - I think that all religious instruction should be kept clearly apart from Educational, and at times or on days distinctly set apart for such. To commence instruction with a prayer, no matter how short, is not, I consider, keeping faith. (86)

It may be observed that the tendency towards insulating some aspects of the political system from the cultural influences that may be associated with the missionary activities was rooted in political rather than spiritual considerations. Under the indirect rule system which sought to adopt precolonial formations through a process of "preservation, dissolution and transformation", the government felt more inclined towards harnessing and institutionalising some cultural legacies of the precolonial societies. Moreover, the British colonial authorities seemed more disposed towards

(86) NAK SNP 15/1 Acc. No.128, "Education: The Resident, Kontagora Province to F.D. Lugard, High Commissioner, North. Provs., 1906."

a gradual devolution rather than the instant dislocation which would have been consequent on an unchecked missionary activity.

After conquest, the missionaries only seemed far less appreciative of the concrete political reality in the Northern Provinces and the Bida Emirate in particular, than the colonial authorities. For the latter, the Mahdist revolt which was looming all over the Northern provinces, the Bida Emirate inclusive, (87) was enough reason for them to want to avoid a situation in which religious feelings would be hurt even further.

With little or no access to the dominant classes, hence being unable to subject them directly under their influence, the missionaries in Bida Emirate had to content themselves with operating mainly among the lower classes. By implication, this also had to be mainly within the villages. Among the Bini, but also in western Nupe, with a long tradition of resistance to Bida, certain evidences seem to suggest that ancestral worship or the worship of local dieties were still predominant by the close of the nineteenth century. (88) This is to say

(87) Just by 1902, April 5th, a Mallam Maizanna had "collected numerous followers from the neighbouring villages of Bida and from the lower classes in the town", in a revolt, though short-lived, against the authority of the colonial government and the Emir of Bida. Also, R.A. Adeleye, Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria 1804-1906 (London: Longman, 1971), p.327, draws attention to a Muslim preacher in Kontagora (Bida's neighbour to the north-north west) drawing "attention to the impending end of British rule and exhorted people to stop paying taxes." A similar preacher had also appeared at the same time in Jebba.

(88) By 1917, at least, there was reference to the Bini as people "who are not adherents to the Muslim religion".

that Islam had made some significant political presence and this was symbolised in the reign of the post-Jihad aristocracy. But this had meant far less cultural impact.

The activities of the missionaries among the lower classes were not without predictable consequences. And with regards to the Northern provinces generally, this was stated in 1913, with an example:

Some of the members of a tribe, among whom the Sudan missionaries are working, appeared to have gained the impression that conversion to Christianity meant complete emancipation from the orders of their chiefs and, in some cases, they behaved in a way that was calculated to cause considerable trouble in the locality.

It is to be feared that the spread of the elements of Christianity among the pagans in this country will, at first, create many difficulties, and will certainly tend to weaken the influence of these chiefs who are not prepared to follow the teachings of the missionary. (89)

With regards to such incidents in the Bida Emirate, our records are very silent. There are, however, evidences of the suspicion with which the colonial government and the aristocracy viewed missionary activities among their subjects. In fact, suspicion had sometimes been manifested in open show of hostility, suggestively aimed at frustrating missionary

NAK MIN PRODF 338/1917, "Jima-Doko District Bida Division Assessment Report 1917". An information given of the Kede by 1950 had also claimed that they "no longer (i.e. by 1950) follow heathen practices, although until forty years ago the gunnu cult was practised here as it still is in many parts of Nupe land". NAK B.1756, "Bida District - Report on Kede District, 1950" by A.G.J. Davies and H.R.J. Sackville-West.

(89) NAK SNP 7/12 3754/1911, "Missionary work in Northern Nigeria - Policy of Government with Regard to", H.J. Read, for the Under Secretary of State for Colonies, 23rd July 1913.

activities.(90) Meanwhile, it can be speculated that sheer suspicion is hardly enough to have incited moves by the aristocracy to frustrate missionary activities. Such moves would have been therefore necessitated by obvious threats such as is stated above of the case of the Sudan missionaries.

4.5 Post-conquest resistance and the classes

The defeat of the defenders of Bida in 1897 seems to have been as decisive as it was conclusive. Etsu Abubakar, who returned after a brief abdication from the throne and flight from Bida, did not find it easy or even possible to raise an army large and strong enough to match the invaders. In any case, this would hardly have helped matters, given the experience of 1897. Abubakar himself realised this. But Lugard, bent on deposing him, gave him no option than to fight on in response to continued armed provocation.

(90) NAK B.979, "Mokwa District Affairs" (1937). Miss Hollenbeck, of the U.M.S. Mokwa, in a complaint to the Divisional Officer over the attitude of the District Head (Mokwa) towards the work of her mission, states: "The village head at Kpaki has sent a message to me that the District Head in returning from Bida has stopped there and announced his intention of making his head-quarters there. He asks me to request you to prevent him doing this ... As a mission we desire that he continue here. The Church and school work at Kpaki has made good progress and I know that his being there would affect the attendance and interest to a great extent. Already he has put people to work for him on days that he knows they attend the services and school ... The work in Mokwa has been hindered to a great extent but this is already done and we do not like to see the work that is being successful being hindered, for among the Nupes has been slow for the amount of effort put forth." To this, the D.O. merely responded with an accusation and warning to the village head for spreading rumours.

Abubakar's position was further being weakened by division within the capital. A growing faction of "defeatists", centred around the figure of Makun Muhammadu, had begun to get infuriated at Abubakar's insistence to resist. Successive defeats which detachments of Bida armies suffered in the run off to 1900, predictably strengthened this faction. Left to the Makun himself, the issue of collaboration with the British had been decided by the outcome of the 1897 encounter. Moreso that the aristocracy was guaranteed political privileges. Caught between the pressures, Abubakar finally fled Bida in January 1901 without a fight. And faced by the uncertainty of exile, those who had followed him into flight continued to desert, leaving him with just a servant by the time he was captured in Bauchi in 1903. (91)

Even after being banished to exile in Lokoja, however, Abubakar did not give up his commitment to resist British occupation. And in 1906, "he succeeded in collecting a following large enough to threaten Bida". (92) Though he was promptly intercepted by the British and sent back to Lokoja, Etsu Muhammadu was forced out of Bida briefly. Except Nadel, the records at our disposal are silent over this. This notwithstanding, this incident is of much wider implication. That Abubakar was able to stir up sympathy among a population (and not

(91) Mason, The Foundation of the Bida Kingdom, p.159.

(92) Nadel, A Black Byzantium, p.84.

the aristocracy) which was mostly apathetic by the time he fled Bida in 1901, is an indication of the resentment which British rule and their collaborators had generated. Under circumstances in which run-away slaves were being returned to their masters, peasants subjected to extortionate taxes, forced labour requitals and other excesses, these subjects could not but identify in Abubakar's earlier resistance the attributes of a hero. Hence the large following. The incident, we may suggest therefore, is as much a symbol of general resistance against colonial occupation as it is that of a dispossessed member of the ruling class.

Later in 1912, it was the turn of Abubakar's brother, Yusufu, though he did not stir up a revolt or the situation was not just allowed to deteriorate to that extent. His was however more covert.

Yusufu, ex-Lakpenni of Bida, who was taken prisoner at Burmi and was deported to Ilorin, was allowed to return to Bida in December 1912. As he would not observe the conditions on which he was granted permission to remain in Bida, he was in December this year [i.e. 1913] re-deported to Lokoja. (93)

In the absence of any specific and concrete indication of the conditions which Yusufu refused to observe, we may suggest that British suspicion of his not being forthcoming and his predictable popularity amongst the ranks of the marginalised members of the dominant classes, would have been central to his re-deportation. That he would have refused to submit his allegiance to

(93) NAK MIN PROF: 279/1909, "Bida Division - Notes on Principal events since the British occupation".

the British is particularly likely, considering the new conditions guiding the appointment of former feudal noblemen as salaried officials under colonial rule. This involved, for instance, the condition which compelled "former fiefholders" to move out of the capital and reside in their new districts. This was not all. A nobleman who refused and, presumably only if lucky enough to have been appointed in the first place, "(became) merely an office holder under the Emir at the capital or a private gentleman", (94) in which case "he would soon become a nonentity". Far from being an attempt to suppress exploitation, quite often used by the British in pretext, it seems more or less directed towards dispossessing the aristocracy of its important means for material prosperity. Besides, it was directed towards marginalising a large section of the Bida aristocracy. The essence of this policy is more clearly apprehended when located in the context of the delienation of feudal possessions, which was carried out in the process of instituting the colonial authority.

It was in anticipation of this form of eventuality among others that Abubakar and a faction of the Bida aristocracy resisted British occupation. For the Makun, on the other hand, the conquest was accepted more or less as a fait accompli, even before the first major encounter in 1897. Hence, rather than challenge the advancing Royal

(94) C.W. Cole, "Report on Land Tenure System: Nupe, 1949", p.47, and NAK SNP 7, 1865/1908, "Annual Report Nupe Province" 1907.

Niger Company constabulary in its advance on Kabba in January 1897, the Makun, commanding a 10,000-strong detachment of Bida army, dispersed among villages south of the Niger. The outcome afterwards of the Bida battle merely provided him the confidence with which to openly manifest his fatalistic response to the invasions. According to oral accounts collected in Bida, he was at pains to explain the futility of resistance against occupation.

The submission to the British was rewarded in the reinstatement of the Bida aristocracy as an instrument for the perpetration of colonial domination and exploitation. But it was a subordinate status which guaranteed to the collaborators access to appropriation of surplus nevertheless. Of what magnitude this share amounted to is not our immediate concern. In the course of assuming the status of a colonial bureaucracy, it was not only some groups within the Bida nobility that were marginalised. Among the intelligentsia, traders and other groups, which were located well enough within the Bida economy as to be identified as part of the dominant class, there were groups who were being schemed out socially and economically. To members of these sectors, unlike those who belonged to the nobility, resistance was not directed at the colonial authorities exclusively but also at the aristocracy and vice versa.

We can observe that when, on April 5th 1902, in Bida,

a Mallam Maizanna, of low class, proclaimed himself a Mahdi and called on the people to drive out the British official and the Emir of Bida as the Government nominee, (95)

he was, no doubt, objectively addressing the form of relationship which had evolved between the British and the aristocracy. And fundamentally the response from the colonial government and the aristocracy was not different.

The Mallam collected numerous followers from the neighbouring villages of Bida and from the lower classes in the town. This rabble was, however, unprepared for any action and the ringleaders were surprised and quickly arrested by the Emir's dogarai. The "Mahdi" was tried and sentenced by the Native Court to six months' imprisonment in the town dungeon and the followers were fined 25 bags of cowries each. (96)

Mallam Maizanna was not alone in this "Mahdist"-inspired campaign for the expulsion of the British from the Emirate and the overthrow of their local collaborators.

(95) NAK MIN PROF: 279/1909, "Bida Division - Notes of Principal events since the British occupation".

(96) Ibid. A Mahdist inspired uprising was not peculiar to the Bida Emirat. Nor was the form of response given to it by the Etsu. After the British failed in crushing a similar but more serious revolt in Satiru, near Sokoto in 1906, according to R. Shenton, loosing in the course, "the Resident, two white officers and 25 African troops ... the task of crushing the rebellion fell to [or was rather taken up by] the army of the Emirate of Sokoto under the advice, if not the direct command, of a British officer. The rebellion was crushed with great ferocity, and over 2,000 of the rebels were killed." Suggesting reasons for the Sultan's involvement in crushing the rebellion and meting out such violence, Shenton continues that it was "because the Satiru rising was as much an assault on his [the Sultan's] own position as spiritual and temporal head of the Muslim community as it was an assault on the colonial state". And for the British, it is for the same reasons that they would defend the aristocracy. R.W. Shenton, "Studies in the Development of Capitalism in Northern Nigeria", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1981, pp.60-61.

In 1906, a preacher of same disposition "appeared in Jebba" (located within the rebellious western Nupe). Nor was the Bida Emirate an exceptional case, as a similar trend was noticeable throughout the Northern Emirates. (97) One issue that may be raised here is that of the basis for the role which the intelligentsia played in this form of resistance against colonial occupation in the Bida Emirate.

It should be recalled that a predominant section of the intelligentsia in the Bida Emirate by the close of the nineteenth century constituted a privileged group. Organised into the guild of scholars known in Nupe as Ena manzi, they provided spiritual services (to the community and to the dominant classes of which they were affiliates) and also provided juries for the state judiciary. In return, they received and owned property in the form of fiefs, slaves and other material possessions allocated to them, mainly by the ruling classes.

But the intelligentsia, if we may borrow from V.I. Lenin, "is not an independent economic class and therefore is not an independent political force". (98) In fact, we do not assume that the intelligentsia in the nineteenth century Bida constituted a monolithic group. There could have been those who did not identify with the

(97) Adeleye, Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria, pp.322-327. Besides that of Bida, Kontagora and Satiru, there were similar trends in Yelwa, Bauchi, Gombe and in fact throughout the Emirates. The Satiru incidence however stands out as an extreme.

(98) V.I. Lenin, Collected Works Vol.II (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), p.380.

status quo, but of this the sources at our disposal are silent. Or it may be that they constituted an insignificant political force. The former however have been discussed in Chapter Two above.

The fall of Bida and the socio-economic and political disintegration which followed had contributed greatly in dislocating a section of the intelligentsia. Like the civil and slave title holders, they were also affected by the collapse in slave production and the loss of fiefs. In the course of the imposition of colonial rule and the institution of the Native Administration, a relatively few were retained as Alkalai for the Native Courts. However, these were recruited from the "leading legal families". (99) The intelligentsia was even further dispossessed as the old fiefs were formally abolished from 1901, with the creation of districts and the appointment of District Heads being exclusively from within the Bida aristocracy. And even though the indiscriminate abolition of slavery was being reversed, providing for deserting slaves to be returned to their masters, this would in the short-run be of little relevance to slave-owning intelligentsia. This is because the policy to "nationalise all land in Northern Nigeria"

(99) NAK Bida Div. 338/1923, "Native Courts - Instruction with Regard to (1925)". In 1925, six were selected, exclusively "from the leading legal families of Bida", for (intensive) training in Arabic, in preparation for their recruitment as Alkalai. There is also a case of one Mallam Musa who was appointed in 1941 to fill a vacancy created by the death of the Mufti of Kutigi Native Court. That he too was "a member of a prominent Bida legal family" seems more a product of policy than of coincidence.

in an attempt to forestall the emergence of a landlord class and to enhance the status of the aristocracy as a "salaried bureaucracy" (100) would be put in motion from 1907.

Under such crisis situation in which a large section of the intelligentsia were marginalised, in what direction its loyalty would tilt is predictable. In this regard, the Maizanna-led uprising of 1902 in Bida symbolised an attempt by the intelligentsia to provide ideological direction and leadership in the resistance against colonial domination. In the Bida Emirate, however, this was hardly dominant. There were besides series of overt and covert forms of spontaneous resistance against the imposition of colonial rule.

In the area to the west of the Kaduna river where resistance against colonial domination was most pronounced, it ranged from open rebellion to the refusal to pay taxes or accept British currency. Apart from the refusal to accept the new copper coinage on the local market "when tendered as purchase money or change" oral accounts indicate that the new currency was often rejected, even in functions such as marriages and naming ceremonies, when offered as gifts or for certain religious rituals. In fact, the currency was termed the "infidels' money", hence a pollutant. (101) In 1902, the people of Labozi killed the Etsu's agent (i.e. the

(100) Shenton, Studies in the Development of Capitalism in Northern Nigeria, p.66.

(101) Rev. John Ndace Angulu, Bida, 11/4/89.

plantation headman) and denounced the Emir's right over the plantations. In the same year, the sub-districts of Mokwa, Yeti, Gbete, Sakpe, Bokani, Epa and Raba (under Haruna, brother to Yaiya Kuta of Muregi) rebelled and "attempted to throw off their allegiance to Bida and had refused to pay all taxes". (102)

In the Bida Emirate, however, the incidence of resistance hardly survived the second decade of colonial domination. As a highly stratified society, the early cases of resistance at the inception of colonial domination were mainly inspired by the chiefs. They were therefore not spontaneous revolts. This notwithstanding, it can be said that they were rooted in the interests of the communities. This is the more so because, in most of the communities in western Nupe, land remained predominantly communal property up till the end of the nineteenth century. A combination of reprisal from Bida and the incorporation of these chiefs into the Native Administrative structure within which they formed the bottom of the administrative pyramid, seemed to have weakened their spirit of rebellion. In the districts located between the Kaduna and Gbako rivers, and to the east of the Gbako river, there was hardly the form of open rebellion as was experienced in western Nupe. Here colonial domination seemed to have taken off more easily, as colonial exploitation succeeded precolonial exploitation.

(102) NAK MIN PROF: 279/1909, "Historical Notes Niger Province".

Conclusion

The experience for the British of the conquest and the consequences of the collapse of the Bida aristocracy between 1897 and 1900 had been central to the form of colonial political economy in the Bida Emirate. It was especially significant in producing the features which may have been peculiar only to Bida. We must observe, though, that the experience in Bida bore some general significance to the rest of the Caliphate at least.

In reinstating the precolonial Bida aristocracy and arrogating to it a mediator role in colonial exploitation, the position of its members went beyond simply being instruments for the colonial bureaucracy or political agents to the British. Irrespective of the magnitude or percentage, they maintained some access to a share in the appropriation of surplus. And this share was facilitated by their objective location in the emergent socio-economic relations. Even as this went through a gradual transformation, under the changing economic environment enhanced through colonial domination, the location of the aristocracy within the emergent social relations was being entrenched rather than being destroyed.

As colonial domination moved into its third decade and beyond, the new form which the aristocracy had begun to acquire since the imposition of colonial rule was gradually being manifested. So was the case of the lower classes, that is, peasants, slaves and pawns. In addition

to this, however, was the emergence of new classes as an objective phenomenon peculiar to the emergent capitalist economy and the social relations inherent to it. This, for instance, addresses among others, the rise of a wage labour class and the educated elite group.

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CHAPTER FIVETHE STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL CLASSES IN BIDA5.1 A vitiated ruling class

It will be recalled that the political and economic disintegration which followed in the wake of the fall of Bida presumably left profound impact on the structure of social classes in the Bida Emirate. This was manifested under circumstances in which British capital was hardly employed in the direct acquisition of the means of production. To boost agricultural production in which the Bida Emirate became quite important throughout the colonial period, for instance, the British relied mainly on the colonial state apparatus. The Native Authority (N.A.), constituted mainly of the precolonial aristocracy, was decisive in this regard.

The role of the Bida aristocracy as mediator for colonial exploitation stems from a background of the collapse in production which resulted in the wake of conquest. This in turn was a result of the collapse in slave and peasant production, arguably the mainstay of the Bida economy till the time of conquest.

It should be observed that the political transformation and constitution of the colonial state was, among other things, aimed at reinstating the aristocracy, at least to dominant political position. And though its functions would be performed under

circumstances of political and economic subordination, it must be observed that such political responsibility in itself guaranteed to it a share in the appropriated surplus.

Under a new administrative arrangement, the Etsu enjoyed supreme political authority, at least within the N.A., although he was subordinate and accountable to the British colonial authorities. In fact, the Etsu was at the top of the administrative hierarchy into which the N.A. system was organised. This notwithstanding, however, the old titles and ranks and the order in which they were allocated among the three major ruling houses in Bida, including the order of succession to the office of Etsu, remained predominantly unchanged. (1) This applies to civil titles as well. But only a relatively few of the traditional ranks were incorporated as official ranks of the N.A., however. (2) From these were drawn the ranks

(1) Justifying the relevance of these precolonial traditions for our period (i.e. the 20th century Bida), Nadel has observed that the development, though historical, "Yet it describes a development the results of which are still valid and still mould society to-day as they moulded it thirty, fifty, or even a hundred years ago [from the 1930s when he conducted his studies]. It was not merely reconstructing dead events and past phases. The Nupe kingdom and its society still exist, not merely vividly in the memory of the people but to a very large extent in concrete reality. This is not denying the forces of social changes, but stressing the tenacity of a social structure that survives although its contents have changed materially ... a strong proof of the tenacity of the Nupe social system is the fact that where the Administration had departed from it and tried to make way for a new development the old trend broke through undeflected."

(2) NAK MIN PROF: 59/1927, "Bida Division Report for quarter ending 31/3/27". By 1927 for instance, there were twenty of such royal titles of official status, namely: "Etsu (Saidu dan Masaba), Yerima (Shaba), Kpotun,

which made up a new council of kingmakers. Prominent among these were holders of the civil titles of Ndeji and Mayaki.

Meanwhile, the council of kingmakers seems to have been turned into a mere ceremonial outfit. It hardly had any powers to take independent actions and could do no more than endorse colonial policies. It thereby served merely as an instrument for providing legitimacy, especially with regards to the appointment of local officials. In fact, there is nothing to indicate that the opinion of this council would have made any difference to the British in handling issues such as the appointment of an Etsu and his treatment in office. The activities of the British in this regard, from 1897 to at least 1935 (when Ndanyako ascended the throne of Etsu), is a testimony to this.

When, first in 1897 and then in 1901, Etsu Abubakar took flight with the defeat of Bida, the British declared him deposed and unilaterally appointed the Makun, Muhammadu, to succeed him. The reasons for Abubakar's deposition had nothing to do with his official conduct. Rather, the British felt he was too uncompromising and

Makun, Nakworji, Lukpma, Naqya, Rani, Ginya, Chata, Rofien, Dan Iya (title created in 1923), Kusodu, Iswaye, Ubandoma, Wechimbe, Chekpa, Lukpenni, Benu and Taka". These do not include ranks of civil status some of which were also given official recognition within the N.A. set-up.

According to Nadel, op cit, p.158, by 1936, there were all in all forty-one royal ranks. In a separate instance (see p.158), however, he provides evidence of only nineteen of those ranks, as being officials of the N.A.

were resolved to depose him. And when they did, it was not in consultation with or even in recognition of the existence and functions of the council whose prerogative it was hitherto. Muhammadu's repudiation of the appointment in 1897, at the retreat of the Niger Company's forces from Bida, seems to have been in recognition of this tradition. And in 1901, the British finally had their way, but only after the collapse of Bida and the disintegration of her political institutions.

In 1920, it was the turn of Etsu Bello who, however, escaped deposition with a warning and a salary cut from the administration. He was indicted over an incident involving a tour of Labozi, Egbako, Sakpe and Jima-Doko districts in 1919 by an ndako-qboya troupe. The troupe was accused of having extorted property and money from inhabitants of these districts with the Etsu's patronage. Bello, who had made material advances towards enhancing the tour, was said to have received in return, by the time the troupe was apprehended, "various sums in cash amounting to at least 80 pounds". (3) For making no attempt to prevent the perpetration of what the British termed "extortion", the District Heads, Alkalai and village heads concerned were served with administrative warnings.

(3) NAK MIN PROF: 154/1920, "Niger Province Annual Report No.37, for half year ending June 1920" by Mr. Cadman. Property, including livestock and moneies collected from Egbako, Labozi, and Sakpe districts alone has been valued at 471 pounds 2 shillings and 165 pounds 1 shilling and 2 pence respectively.

In yet another instance, the British attempted to alter the procedure for succession to the office of etsu into one based on open contest among the nobility, without recourse to the old rotational procedure. (4) We may suggest that this was aimed at creating greater room for manoeuvres. Predictably, this would have implied the British attempting to create a situation in which a heir-apparent who was likely to be opposed to British interests would be schemed out.

But District Heads, for instance, were worse victims of a colonial policy which sought to turn N.A. office holders into mere government appointees who could be relieved of their appointments by the same administrative fiat.

(4) Ndayako was appointed etsu in 1935 from the rank of Nagenu, a title which did not appear among the first ten ranks that were designated by then to follow in their order of seniority. Nor was this title one of the nineteen held by District Heads as at, say, 1927 (NAK MINPROF:59/1927, "Bida Division Report"). Nadel, op cit, p.93, footnote 2, seems to provide an explanation for this: "It is the present tendency of the Administration to abolish the office of Shaba and to make the appointment to kingship a free election from royal ranks. After the death of late Shaba in 1935, no new Shaba has been appointed." This should not come to us as a coincidence. Insubordination to the British and general relations between the British and Emirs from the two other houses (Usman Zaki and Masaba houses) had not been very smooth since the reign of Maliki (1884-95) to Saidu (1926-35). We may even suggest that the series of allegations of fraud, extortion and high-handedness levelled at Bello (1916-26) and Saidu, beside being a form of selective castigation, were in response to manifestations of insubordination and actions taken to spite the Administration. It will be recalled that some of these were activities which, after all, were institutionalised in the very nature of colonial domination and the authority arrogated to the N.A.

It should be recalled that in precolonial Bida, rank, promotion and allocation of fiefs were determined by the wealth possessed by a royal or civil official. To this may be added the possession of a strong private army. This could be built and controlled by the individual, but could also be handed down as a family heritage, especially where able descendants existed.

With the changes forced on the Emirate through colonial administrative reforms, the political and economic basis from which the authority of members of the Bida aristocracy derived was eroded. Having reduced these chiefs to mere employees, they were subject to removal not only on grounds of administrative misconduct but, as quite often was the case, on grounds of ill-health and old age. This, for instance, was the excuse given for the removal from office as District Head in 1936 of "Alhaji dan Moma Chado" (dan Abdu Gboiya). (5) Evidence however attests to the fact that ill-health and old age were mere facades behind which existed some concrete political reasons. (6)

(5) As at 1927, he was the District Head of Sakpe. Sakpe was however later merged with Egbako and called Kutigi District, from the name of its new headquarters. The Kpotu, who Nadel (ibid, p.96) indicates was the District Head of Kutigi by 1936, the same year in which he was removed, is most likely to have been "Alhaji dan Moma Chado".

(6) Nadel, ibid, for instance has also observed that: "The grounds of ill-health is a pretext rather than the true reason - and this is very significant. The Kpotu does not belong to the house of Usman Zaki, although he is generally regarded as belonging to this dynasty [being descendant of Abdu Gboiya] ... He is, in fact, the only member of the three highest royal families who had obtained, still in the fourth generation, one of the three highest dynastic positions. His premature

In other instances, charges of "extortion" and financial impropriety would be brought against three officials of the N.A. Thus the Kuta of Muregi (i.e. District Head of Kede) was convicted in August 1917 for what the administration saw as "misappropriation [for which he] was fined". (7) But again, he was convicted shortly after that, for a similar reason, in November (1917). This time, he was suspended from office for three months. Then the Chata (son of Etsu Bello), District Head of Labozi, was charged and fined and at the same time dismissed from office and rank, for what the administration claimed had amounted to "assault and extortion". (8) The same was to later happen to Manko dan Nagya, while he was a District Head in Mokwa in 1932. To his punishments was however added a prison term of three months "in the Native Authority Gaol". (9)

The so-called acts of misconduct apart, district heads and other officials were routinely changed from one position to another. It may be suggested that this had

resignation is a striking evidence of this dynastic policy to restrict succession to the throne to the three 'houses'".

(7) NAK MINPROF: 340/1917, "Annual Report No.10, 1917, Niger Province".

(8) Ibid.

(9) NAK B.979, "Mokwa District Affairs, 1932". The items and money said to have been fraudulently misappropriated and extorted by Manko was estimated at £62.15.3. From Gbajibo, in the claim of outstanding taxes, he extorted £9.17.0, charged "kuridin Sauka", £10.0.0 and withheld the village head's pay for five years - amounting to £9.0.0. In addition, he received 160 tubers of yam, 160 Tukuruwa poles. From Mokwa, in addition, he received 24 bundles of guinea corn and 100 tubers of yam.

other things to it than mere administrative procedure, since some of them ended up being removed under the cover of such changes. In 1927, there were about eleven such changes, with some district heads losing their offices altogether. A good example is that of one Abdu Gboiya dan Maliki, Kusodu of the house of Usman Zaki. He was head of Wumangi district, from British occupation to 1912, Gbakokpa, 1912 to 1916 and Egbako, 1916 to 1921, from where he was finally removed. In his case, neither ill-health nor old age could be used. Yet excuses, though flimsy, were not lacking:

Kusodu, the brother next in age to the deceased Emir Bello (1916-26) and a person who was once in charge of three different districts in the Emirate but whose methods of administration were such that his services had finally to be dispensed with. (10)

But it must be observed that while the Bida nobility held the supremacy of political power by the close of the nineteenth century, in itself it did not constitute an exceptionally homogenous dominant class in the Emirate. By virtue of this position, the state apparatus existed materially as part of a broader dominant socio-economic class. (11) The disintegrating and weakening effect of colonial domination on the Bida ruling class was therefore manifested in simultaneous relation to the broader dominant class.

(10) NAK MINPROF: 59/1927, "Bida Division Report for quarter ending 31/3/27" by Mr. H. Morgan-Owen.

(11) A definition of social classes, based on their economic characteristics as provided by V.I. Lenin, has been given in Chapter One of this thesis.

We may indicate that, at the inception of colonial rule by 1901, there were about twenty-seven royal (gitsuzi) titles, thirteen civil (sarakizi) titles, eighteen military (enaku) titles, eight slave (wuzi) titles, nine guild heads, besides the Kede district with her eleven chiefs. (12) Each of these ranks was, by the close of the nineteenth century, assigned specific administrative responsibilities. Attached to each was also a retinue of clients, agents and hangers-on. This was especially the case with the royal nobility, with their retinue of egbazi (ajelai), resident in the capital, and the egbagizi (sub-ajelai) who resided on the fiefs. This applied to all fief-holding, titled and non-titled personalities, among them women and some prominent members of the intelligentsia (manzi), who were affiliated to the nobility.

The reforms which accompanied the imposition of colonial rule provided for only a negligibly few of the mass of parasitic political class. This would take place under circumstances in which the surpluses that had hitherto sustained the dominant classes in Bida would no longer be at its disposal, or at least not enough to sustain the hitherto large group. For the marginalised sections of the nobility, the hitherto privileged members of the civil population and their retinue of officials, courtiers, hangers-on, etc., the immediate response to

(12) NAK. Bida Div. B.655, "Nupe History from 1897, Extract from Mr. Barnfield's Nupe Grammar".

this turn in fortunes was to desert Bida. This is attested to in a 1906 account which indicates that:

The exodus from Bida town to the neighbouring farms is still marked, an increasing number of the hitherto idle followers of the "Ranks" taking to farming and trading. (13)

We may assume, however, that the movement among this group to the farms was not acute. At least not after the mass exodus which characterised the period of conquest and that following immediately after it. This one seems to have followed a more gradual process, concurrently following in the same manner, as the systematic institutionalisation and transformation of the Bida aristocracy into a colonial bureaucracy. This process at least lasted all the first two decades of the imposition of colonial rule. It involved the systematic suppression of the old forms of surplus appropriation. Thus, an indication by 1917 of "a steady flow (of people) from the Town to the farms outside". (14)

But it is not as if the economy and the classes in Bida can be identified as existing in separate compartments, with the imposition of colonial rule having its impact on each separately. We have already discussed earlier in this thesis how the conquest and, in succession, the colonial political economy, led to the collapse of slave production. In this regard, peasant production was not spared, a subject which has also been

(13) NAK SNP 7, 1520/1907, "Annual Report on Nupe Province for 1906".

(14) NAK B.297/1917, "Bida City Assessment Report 1917".

thoroughly discussed elsewhere. (15) Thus, migration to the farms suggestively only constituted an aspect and speculatively a little of the general trend of migration, not only from Bida town, but throughout the Emirate. And this continued throughout the period of colonial rule. (16) What this implies is that the weakening of the Bida aristocracy which, in turn, provided a favourable condition for its subordination, was preceded by the disintegration in the economy.

5.2 Of the reform and an obstinate aristocracy

The British colonial policy of "indirect rule" seems to have been designed towards adapting the existing political institutions than to changing them. It will be recalled that, as far as the Bida Emirate is concerned, its form was dictated by local conditions especially. To

(15) See, for instance, M. Watts, Silent Violence: Food, Famine and Peasantry in Northern Nigeria (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), pp.266-271.

(16) NAK B.0207/24, "Interview with the Emir of Bida and Council 7/4/37". Enquiring from the Emir an explanation for a marked fall in the population of Bida by up to 5,000 in 10 years (1928-37), he is quoted as having said that "large Nupe settlements [could be found] at Gusau, Sokoto, Zaria, Jos, Kano, Kaduna, Minna ... Nupe were great traders and were to be found in all big market towns."

Some of the noblemen who took to trading at the fall of Bida, as indeed some had always done even in the nineteenth century, but under different circumstances, together with others of no noble descent, would have been part of this Nupe population in diaspora. This existed not only in Northern towns but in the south, in towns such as Onitcha, Lokoja, Ilorin, Ibadan and Lagos. Meanwhile, decline in the population of Bida Emirate continued right through the period of colonial rule. NAK B.1641, "Bida Division Annual Report, 1947" shows a decline from 23,468 in 1940 to 20,413 in 1945 and to 21,173 in 1948.

institute the Native Administration which the British used as a front under this system and from which the concept itself derives, a large section of the aristocracy was sidelined. But the delegation of authority to even a section of the aristocracy would serve as guarantee for some control of the means of production.

The exodus from Bida notwithstanding, some members of the Bida nobility held out. But, schemed out of political power and official responsibility under the N.A., this category of noblemen merely constituted a "redundant" group in the capital. (17) It must be suggested, however, that most of these people were redundant only to the extent that they were not assigned positions in the N.A. and were thus not entitled to salaries when it was introduced in 1910. Apart from this, colonial political economy left enough room for the appropriation of surpluses by these noblemen. It is predictably for this reason, rather than being out of any abstract sense of understanding, that the abolition of the ajele system in Bida

caused no feeling of hostility on the part of the fief holders, while the Emir has given the utmost

(17) M.M. Tukur, "The Imposition of British Colonial Domination on the Sokoto Caliphate, Borno and Neighbouring States: 1897-1914: A Reinterpretation of the Colonial Sources", unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, A.B.U., Zaria, 1979, in two volumes, p.398. He too acknowledges the existence within Emirate capitals of "redundant group of people, mainly made up of the erstwhile Jakadu but also including former fief holders".

assistance and has used his influence to popularise the reform. (18)

But legislations alone could hardly have changed an economic practice as significant to the survival of the aristocracy as fiefholding. Hence, fiefholding, described as an "old custom whereby certain of the town notables exercised rights over lands in the Districts", (19) continued nevertheless. By official reckoning at least, it survived till 1945, when supposedly

Before leaving for Lokoja [on a visit] he [i.e. Etsu Muhammadu Ndanyako] declared publicly at Bida that fiefholding was to cease in his Emirate as from the 14th of December and that the acceptance of voluntary and involuntary gifts by former fiefholders from those who were accustomed to giving them was prohibited. (20)

Going by oral accounts, this seems to have been of little effect. The claims by members of the Bida nobility to such lands and the rents accruing, under whatever guise, continued afterwards. (21) Such official pronouncement could, in the context of the circumstances in the Bida Emirate, hardly be translated into practice. And not quite four years later, in 1949, when C.W. Cole compiled

(18) NAK C.W. Cole, "Report on Land Tenure - Northern Nigeria", Lagos, 1949, p.47.

(19) NAK B.1396, "Bida Division Annual Report, 1945" by R.S. Warner.

(20) Ibid.

(21) In an interview with Baba Mayaki (in Kpaki on November 25, 1989) and Baba Ndejiko (in Kodan on November 26, 1989), they acknowledged that there was hardly any marked difference between the precolonial and colonial periods with regards the collection of tithes in kola, palm produce, etc. Zitsu Mamma Kolo in Kuci-Woro had even emphasized that land rents have survived in some form up till date.

his "Land Tenure Report" in the Northern provinces, the situation in Bida remained such as to warrant the following observation:

the old system was not dead and was very much alive. It was however, confined to Bida and its environs ... In Bida the matter was of some importance. It touched the personal interests of practically every member of the Bida Native Administration.

At first the Native Authority was inclined to the attitude that it was quite in order legally and customarily. Later on this attitude changed and it was suggested that these were perfectly voluntary offerings by the peasantry who liked paying them. This view was not accepted and instructions were issued that steps were to be taken to bring the system to an end. (22)

Nor can we assume that such traditions would cease, in response to whatever administrative measures were taken either. In fact, a situation in which political authority was arrogated to, and exercised by the aristocracy in Bida, is itself contrary to claims of commitment to the abolition of precolonial social relations. Such contradiction was manifested in other colonial policies. The example of the policy on taxation, as stipulated in the "Native Revenue Proclamation" of 1906, would suffice:

[Its] object ... is to lay down limits to taxation by native chiefs, to define and legalise the various taxes, and to place them under the supervision of the Administration. (23)

(22) Cole, op cit, pp.34-35.

(23) NAK SNP 15, Acc. 374, "Native Revenue Proclamation 1906". This was enacted to supersede an earlier one: "The Land Revenue Proclamation No.4" of 1904., which was "limited to land and produce". It gave the chiefs discretionary powers - "as to the extent to which they might tyrannise over, or extort from the peasantry", a given proportion of taxes fifty per cent (50%) of which they were allowed to retain.

By making any form of taxation outside those "authorised by this proclamation illegal and punishable", the British predictably hoped to suppress other means of surplus appropriation outside those institutionalised under the new taxation system. It also seems to be an attempt to limit the Bida ruling classes exclusively to the fixed salaries which were provided for under the new arrangement.

The status and political influence of Native Administration officials did not exist as mere abstract phrase, but were backed up and thus existed as a concrete economic phenomenon. And this seems to have been clearly manifested in the 1918 "Political Memorandum":

The prestige and influence of the chiefs can be best upheld by letting the peasantry see that the Government itself treats them as an integral part of the machinery of the administration. There are not two sets of rulers - British and Native - working either separately or in co-operation, but a single Government in which the Native Chiefs have well defined duties and an acknowledged status equally with British officials. Their duties should never conflict and should overlap as little as possible; and the Chief himself must understand that he has no right to his place or power unless he renders his proper services to the state. It is obviously desirable that Government should be called upon as rarely as possible to intervene between the Chiefs and people, for if a Native Chief has lost prestige and influence to such a degree that he has to appeal to Government to enforce his orders, he becomes not merely

By emphasising that the mode of expropriating precolonial taxes was tyrannical, the British had only sought to provide moral justification for the new taxes. The old forms are thus described, in one of the instances, as "impost upon pagan vassals, which varied in severity chiefly in proportion to the ability of the suzerain to collect." In essence, however, colonial taxation was not different.

useless but a source of weakness to the Administration. (24)

The status ascribed to the various N.A. officials seems to have been reflected in salaries. This appears to have followed in the same order of hierarchy in authority and influence arrogated to each official. The Etsu, for instance, drew a salary almost equal to or even more than that earned by twelve district heads put together. By 1918, this amounted to an annual pay of 2,000 pounds for the Etsu while the twelve District Heads under him put together received a total of only 1,970 pounds. (25)

But salaries, however colossal, may not constitute enough basis to justify or give an appropriate picture of the share the aristocracy retained in the surplus of Bida producers. Nor is it enough instrument for assessing the magnitude of the British colonial exploitation of the Bida producer. Besides these salaries, the ruling classes in Bida still availed themselves of the opportunities and privileges offered by their role as mediators in the process of colonial domination and exploitation, under the influence of British capital.

To the British, surpluses extracted outside the provisions of colonial legislation amounted to acts of corruption, extortion and administrative misconduct on

(24) NAK SNF 17, 12450 Vol. I, "POLITICAL MEMORANDUM No. 9, PART I, 1918" (NATIVE ADMINISTRATION).

(25) Other officials of the Native Administration did not fare any better than the District Heads. The Waziri, for instance, received just 40 pounds per annum. NAK 279/1909, "Niger Province Historical Notes". Also Nadel, A Black Byzantium, p.158, footnote 2.

the part of the chiefs. But it can be observed that some of the few cases which attracted official attention and publicity were selectively picked. Besides, such definitions have relevance to colonial legislations which legalised some precolonial taxes, outlawed others, and introduced yet some new ones. Such moral and legal categories could be of relevance only if we idealize on colonialism and the colonial political economy. This we cannot do. Our disposition is towards apprehending colonial exploitation as it was and the role of the aristocracy in it, as a manifestation of its own class position and interests.

Nor do we intend to idealize the acts of exploitation perpetrated by the aristocracy either. The nature of this exploitation in its turn derived from the nature of colonial political economy.

That forms of extra-legal extortions survived, side by side with those provided for under colonial legislation, was a result of the contradictions inherent in the form British colonial political economy took in Bida. The British had sought and founded the form of colonial domination and exploitation in our area of study on relations of production which remained predominantly precapitalist. This seems to have been attested to in the fact that, by 1912, at the heat of the administrative reorganisation in the Bida Emirate, it was stated:

That changes in the Administration will be of detail or of persons rather than of principle, for it has proved its usefulness. The whole machinery of Government works smoothly, and there seems no reason why it should not continue to develop along

its own lines. The system has been evolved, not imposed. It is in harmony with the best traditions of the past, while it is national, characteristic and suitable, and not exotic, strange or incongruous. (26)

Rather than enhance the direct acquisition of the means of production through injection of capital, the British relied mainly on the colonial state apparatus to enhance production. (27)

5.2.1 The exercise of authority by the Etsu and his chiefs

It will be recalled that the authority which the local chiefs exercised was, in principle, limited by the very nature of control by, and subordination to, British colonial authority. But it has also been indicated that the role of the aristocracy as a collaborating class in the course of colonial exploitation enhanced its access

(26) NAK MINPROF: 225/1912, "Historical Notes Bida Division". And, according to M. Watts (Silent Violence, p.149): "The colonial office developed a system of indirect rule, a peculiar synthesis of indigenous Islamic authority, nineteenth-century emirate administration and direct intervention by a Bonapartist colonial state".

(27) R.W. Shenton, "Studies in the Development of Capitalism in Northern Nigeria", unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Toronto, 1981, p.106. He seems to provide an explanation for this in the fact that: "Before 1910, the presence of British merchants' capital in Northern Nigeria was a modest one. The Niger Company largely clung to the riverain trade ..." In the Bida Emirate which was important mainly for its agricultural production, in addition to serving as a labour reservoir, to centres of colonial commerce, there was hardly any significant improvement throughout the period of colonial rule. Hence the Niger Agricultural project, started in 1948 in Mokwa, and other agricultural and irrigation projects (at Baddegi, Rogan and Edozigi, for instance) were more or less designed and implemented with the goal of boosting peasant production through an adaptation of existing (peasant) socio-economic structures.

to privileges nevertheless. We are interested here only in the extent to which the authority vested in the aristocracy enhanced its access to surplus.

At the head of the Native Authority hierarchy was the Etsu who was also the strongest embodiment of the powers vested in this institution. Though, in principle, these powers and authority were subject to control from the colonial authority (starting from the District Officer as his immediate superior), this was hardly reflected in the relation with ordinary subjects, not even with the Etsu's subordinate chiefs. Legislative provisions could hardly check a tendency in the occupant of this office to exert his influence and extort from his subjects. The features attributed to Etsu Bello's rule (1916-1926) serve as the earliest manifestation of this possibility.

Bello's method of government can only be styled as tyrannical - no one could say him "nay". The plebeian section of the community disliked him owing to the onerous duties imposed upon them; those in his estates feared him, and naturally acquiesced to any behest thrust upon them. He accepted the advice of no man and his sole idea in life was pecuniary self-aggrandizement. (28)

This observation is not without basis. When, between 1919 and 1920, the ndako-qboya troupe toured some districts, extorting property and money from members of the public, the British had expected N.A. officials under whose constituencies and administrative responsibility these areas fell, to act. But these officials were too

(28) NAK MINPROF: 27/1927, "Bida Division Annual Report for 1926" by H. Morgan-Owen, Esq.

handicapped to check an activity in which the Etsu himself had direct interest, avoiding predictably to risk a confrontation with the highest authority within the Native Administration. And it was therefore disappointingly indicated within the administration that:

The District Heads were witness of the daily extortion carried on with the sanction of their paramount chief and the District Alkalai were not permitted to exert their authority.

The Alkalin Bida, whose court is a court of appeal was rendered powerless to act in this matter; on referring the complaint of the Alkalin Sakpe to the Emir, he was practically told to mind his own business and turn a deaf ear to the illegalities which were daily taking place. (29)

Apart from these forms of material acquisition, Bello is also acknowledged for the sale of titles to rich and ambitious persons, from among the dominant classes. (30)

We may speculate that the case of Bello is more or less symbolic of what had become an institutionalised means of material acquisition, not only by an occupant of this high office but also among other principal title holders.

Nor did such practices stop with the reign of Bello. The choice of Bello and the emphasis on his extortionate activities in official records must therefore be seen as a coincidence, or as an act of the often selective response. In fact, oral accounts attest to the witness by the peasantry to indiscriminate extortion - resistance to

(29) NAK MINPROF: M.3784, "MAGIRO CULT ENQUIRIES INTO, 1937", by Mr. Cadman.

(30) Nadel, A Black Byzantium, p.108 has given evidence of one Gabi Saidi of Kupa origin as "a rich slave who under Etsu Bello bought his title for 16 pounds".

which was met with despicable brutality in the hands of agents of the aristocracy. (31) This, without exception, was perpetrated by the aristocracy under the cover of the N.A. and the powers it guaranteed.

Moreover, the use of ndako-qboya cult as an instrument for material acquisition and exertion of authority seems to have continued with the reign of Etsu Saidu (1926-1935). He was, for instance, accused of what, according to one of our sources, involved the use of this cult "for nefarious purposes". (32) This was on account of some mysterious incident involving murder in Bida, in 1932. It was an incident which the colonial authorities in Bida seem to have suspected was a manifestation of political repression. Hence it is acknowledged, in an attempt to establish the Etsu's involvement, that:

one man when asked about the Bida murders in 1932 agreed that it was a good example of the influence of the cult. (33)

Such a speculation could not be far from correct, given the experience with Bello. But even more important in locating the political influences behind this cult is the fact that it had been used in the nineteenth century for

(31) I have been told by Baba Mayaki (Kpaki, 25/11/89) that Gandu defaulters were often beaten or taken bondage. In the latter case, relations and in some cases other members of the hamlet or village would be compelled to pay ransom, on top of arrears which the defaulter had to pay after his release.

(32) NAK MINPROF: M.3784, "Magiro Cult, 1937".

(33) Ibid.

the exercise of political authority by the ruling classes. (34)

Of the sale of titles, Saidu, like Bello before him, engaged in it. But this seems only in manifestation of a practice which, to borrow from Nadel, had "become a feature in the Nupe Nobility". This was therefore not peculiar to the Etsu, as it appears to have been entrenched even among officials of lower rank. The example of an incident involving a Kede District Head, sometime around 1935, would suffice. There were:

complaints of the village Head of Tayi [in Kede District] regarding presents alleged to have been given by him to the Kuta [the District Head] as consideration for being made village Head of Dusu (Dutsu). (35)

In principle, the appointment of subordinate chiefs and other principal officials of the N.A. and their dismissal was done by the "Emir in Council", subject to

(34) Tracing the form of relationship which existed between this cult of Gboya and the aristocracy to the nineteenth century, Nadel (A Black Byzantium, pp.141-142) indicates: "Under Etsu Masaba the head of the order, the grandfather of the present [i.e. the 1930s] head of the ndako gboya society was invested with the pompous title of Maji Dodo, master of the monster, and with this royal recognition the organization of the society was made subservient to Nupe kingship ... This new royal prerogative also entailed a considerable economic benefit: for the king shared in the income of the order which was derived from the gifts collected in the villages which had called the ndako gboya ... This powerful prerogative of the king was, in fact, maintained by the "Mohammadan" [Muslim] Fulani Emirs till very recently."

(35) NAK B.0207, "Interview with Etsu Bida and Council, 1935". This account is corroborated by Nadel (op cit, p.98) who acknowledges that the practice involved even those who sought appointment into "important state offices to which the candidate was entitled by birth and standing such as the office of Alkali".

approval by the Resident. In practice, however, a Resident hardly ever did anything that would threaten or offset the balance of power against the Emir. Thus, from 1935, the British seemed disposed towards undermining or abolishing altogether the position of Shaba as heir-apparent. This was arguably meant to create more room for easier manipulation and control of the N.A. set up. This would further enhance the position of the Emir as the sole authority of the N.A. It would also allow room for the appointment of a candidate, favourable to the British, to succeed to the office in turn. But by implication, it would also further strengthen the Emir within the hierarchy of the Bida aristocracy. Following in this logic, it is not unlikely that this development would have been passed down the hierarchy.

To prevent the exercise of discretionary powers by these officials, given the existing arrangement, would hardly have been viable. Quite often, this had been exercised in manifestation of primitive accumulation. This can be attested to in an observation made by no less a personality than Sir Donald Cameron, the Governor General of Nigeria by 1933. Assessing the conduct of the Native Chiefs, he had identified "bribery" as their problem and blamed it for the weakness of indirect rule and the Native Administration. Interestingly, though, he acknowledged that this was in turn "brought about partly by not paying native chiefs salaries sufficient to make

them realise the seriousness of their office". (36) We must however observe that this could be more relative than absolute.

For members of the Bida nobility, one can hardly expect anything other than the extra-legislative means to which they resorted, to supplement their income. This is the more so as the maintenance of a retinue of court officials and servants, with other royal expenses, remained a feature of life among the Bida noblemen right into the colonial period. (37) This tradition cut across all ranks of both royal and civil status, from the Etsu to very bottom of the hierarchy. At least, the tendency remained, even if to a lesser extent. This was often at costs and magnitude befitting of status and income of the ranks.

5.2.2 Possession of land by the nobility

The land in theory belongs to the suzerain, hitherto the Fulani Emir, and now the British government, and with that transfer of suzerainty begins the right of Government to a share in the occupiers' rentals. (38)

In dealing with this subject, we are not so much concerned with the technical intricacies surrounding the legal provisions for the title to land, but the guarantee

(36) NAK SNF 17/1, 8267A, "Indirect Rule and Native Administration" by Sir Donald Cameron. Cutting from The Nigerian Daily Times, Lagos, 21st January, 1933.

(37) See Nadel, *op cit*, p.91.

(38) Cole, "Report on Land Tenure", p.47.

which this provided for continued royal possession of it in the Bida Emirate.

At the inception of colonial rule, the British claim to suzerainty, hence right to land, served as a basis for the form of taxes imposed on the colonial subjects. (39) Apart from this, a policy which enhanced the "proprietary rights" of the aristocracy to land in Bida was consciously pursued as part of the process of political reforms that followed immediately after the conquest. There was in fact some concern shown by Lugard, not only towards ensuring the proprietary rights of the Bida ruling classes to land, but also towards ensuring the availability of labour "to till the lands of the ruling classes". (40)

British concern in Bida after the conquest, it will be recalled, was mainly on how to restore agricultural production and create a conducive atmosphere for the marketing of imported consumer goods. As for the former, getting the royal estates back into production was as important to the British as was forestalling further disruption in peasant production. The challenges created by this turn of events could not be taken up by British

(39) It was clearly outlined, in testimony to this, that: "The principle on which the estimate or valuation of lands shall be made, shall be the amount of produce or profit which can be annually obtained from, and the number of livestock that can be annually raised and supported on such land by a person cultivating and using the same in the manner and up to the average standard of cultivation and use prevailing in the neighbourhood." NAK SNF 15, Acc. 374, "The Native Revenue Proclamation, 1906".

(40) L. Lugard; Political Memoranda, 1906 (paragraph 8).

capital, especially given its marginal presence and its mercantile form. We may speculate, therefore, that the most viable option left to the British was to ensure that the aristocracy retained a dominant possession of the means of production. This, of course, would be complementary to the authority arrogated to the aristocracy, under the colonial administrative arrangement. Lugard himself seems to have appreciated this necessity while observing:

The majority of cases of assertion of freedom take place among the agricultural population, and the most effective way of preventing the sudden and premature tendency to desertion is, as I have said, ... by enforcing proprietary rights in land. In other words, by not permitting fugitive farm slaves to occupy land to which they have no title, nor to build new villages at will and by upholding the landlords' right to charge rent to his tenants. (41)

Attempts were made after the departure of Lugard in 1906 to reverse his land policies. This was as a means towards forestalling the possible emergence of a landlord class in Northern Nigeria generally. (42) As far as the Bida nobility was concerned, however, the revision made little difference in relation to the possession of estates and the availability of labour to till it. At

(41) Ibid.

(42) Sir Percy Girouard, appointed High Commissioner in 1907, together with Charles Temple and Strachey, then Colonial Officer, according to R.W. Shenton ("Studies in the Development of Capitalism in Northern Nigeria", p.66), had, contrary to Lugard's policy, pursued a policy of "nationalization" of "all land in Northern Nigeria, eliminating any prospect of the development of a landlord class, and have as its corollary the transformation of the indigenous ruling class into a mock-feudal salaried bureaucracy".

least in the immediate vicinity of Bida town, and especially in the area located between the Kaduna and Gbako rivers, extending to the districts east of the latter, the Bida nobility retained its right to land. There could have been changes in the form of labour which tilled these lands but, in essence, the nobility continued to possess them as royal property, as they continued to charge rents on them. By the time C.W. Cole wrote his report in 1949 at least, there had evolved in this area "a complex system of land ownership and land transfer, which in extreme cases amounts to outright purchase for money". (43)

With the commercialisation of land that is being implied here, we may be tempted to conclude that land ownership had assumed a more or less capitalist form. But in the aforementioned area of the Bida Emirate, sometimes also referred to as the Cis-Kaduna area, land remained predominantly in the hands of noblemen of Bida. Besides, descendants of former fief holders, based mostly in Bida, rather than weakening, were asserting hereditary claims to land and consequently charged rents, in varying percentages, on peasant cultivators who tilled the land as tenants. (44) The same may be said of descendants of

(43) Cole, op cit, p.32.

(44) Nadel, op cit, p.181, has cited an instance of which there was in 1935 "a court case in which sons and brothers of a recently deceased woman contested the inheritance of her landed property. Needless to say, none of the parties concerned were peasants; the land had been acquired first through the channels of clientship, and the present claimants - Bida Mallams - wanted it only in order to sublet it for profit."

former clients, titled slaves and the privileged members of the intelligentsia. This category hardly inherited fiefs under precolonial traditions. With some of them either resident in the villages or having moved in after conquest, they started asserting some claims to hereditary rights. According to the Rev. John Ndace Angulu, the group became prominently known as Maqi-Goyi. (45) This, in itself, is significant in identifying a group which, in spite of the marginalisation of the hitherto client class as a result of the fall of Bida and the administrative reforms, still survived as a social and economic phenomenon. It existed as part of the aristocracy, in a broad categorisation of class.

Hereditary claims to land became even more entrenched among the nobility, not only among those who were incorporated as officials of the N.A., but even those who were schemed out of it. This is attested to in a 1944 incidence

When, in connection with an application for the approval of pension to a [non titled] Native Administration employee, it was noted that the person concerned was, before he obtained his appointment, a land-owner who received rent in kind from villagers farming land owned by him. (46)

(45) "Maqi-Goyi" (literally meaning nephew of the nobility, from Nupe maqi - nephew - and goyi - nobleman) may imply descendants of clients and slaves of the Bida nobility. Rev. John Ndace Angulu, in an interview (Bida, 11th April, 1989) describes them as "those born of either or both of slave parents". They were not slaves, at least based on the 1901 slave legislation, nor were they free or owned property.

(46) Cole, op cit, p.34.

Besides, it is acknowledged that this practice touched on the "interests of practically every member of the Bida Native Administration" without exception. The Etsu particularly, and the retainers of each of the other two ruling houses, had royal estates, known as Esozi. (47) These estates were cultivated almost exclusively from the labour of former slaves, who were settled in hamlets on the estates. In addition, communal summons for labour (corvee labour in other words) was employed once in a while.

5.3 An emergent middle class

The imposition of colonial rule and the colonial political economy was accompanied by the establishment of institutions of some cultural significance. Chief among these was in the area of Western education. With the influence created by this combination of factors, a new social environment was created in the Bida Emirate. The Middle Class which emerged in Bida, consequent on the imposition of colonial rule, was a product of this changing environment.

To identify and discuss this class, we have adopted a rather fluid, but descriptive concept. This is because such a socio-economic group, existing independently of and distinct from the aristocracy, can hardly be

(47) At least both Saidu (1926-1935) and Ndayako (from 1935) had Esozi, from which they received tithes in bundles of grain (e.g. sorghum or late millet) annually. See Nadel, *op cit*, p.99-100.

identified in the Bida Emirate for much of the colonial period.

The dominant political influence which devolved to the aristocracy under the N.A. arrangement, enhanced the subordination of economic activities mainly under the control of the aristocracy. In the same manner, political influence and authority, as constituted in the aristocracy, existed as a potential instrument for enforcing this socio-economic order. In fact, efforts were made towards preventing the emergence of any social force outside and rival to the traditional ruling class. (48) This implies that access to economic privileges and elevation in social status was most guaranteed under the patronage of the aristocracy. Even those who would have attained economic and political affluence independent of the aristocracy would be disposed towards the aristocracy, not only as guarantee for the attained status but also to enhance continued economic prosperity. The tradition of ennobling persons, on account of attained influence, is a testimony to this. Besides, this attests to the nature of the Bida aristocracy as a class - defined as such on the basis of

(48) This is corroborated by A.D. Yahaya (The Native Authority System in Northern Nigeria 1950-1970, A.B.U. Press Zaria, p.5) who put it succinctly thus: "The social force represented in the emirates of Northern Nigeria by the N.A. is that of the dominating political group together with its associated social group ... The interests of this social force are determined by the political group that controls the N.A., which suggests that all political organizations independent of the N.A. were considered to be its political rivals, particularly if they were competing for influence at local level."

its social, economic and political features. (49) In this regard, the instrument of geneology was not exclusive. This was characteristic of the Bida aristocracy under colonial rule, as it was by the close of the nineteenth century.

The privileges and influence which the Bida aristocracy enjoyed was even extended to British trade with the Emirate and local commerce generally. This was manifested in the distribution and marketing of imports. Thus, just as was often the case with middlemen with whom British firms transacted business elsewhere, generous credits were extended to the noblemen of Bida. (50)

It must be observed that trade in local produce, especially in food production in which Bida had become prominent throughout the colonial period, was not left out of this influence. (51) This, by implication, also included trade in cash crops. Such an influence was possible for the fact that the aristocracy continued to dominate ownership of the means of production. Members of

(49) See Chapter One above for a definition of social class.

(50) A Bida District Head "with a salary of 40 pounds per month, was allowed credit up to 1,000 pounds and more". NAK SNP 17, 14841/71, "Northern Provinces Advisory Council 1931" - Credit to Natives by Trading firms.

(51) In this regard, the experience of the Second World War years (1939-45) is a testimony. Besides, the importance of the Emirate as an important food producer prior to 1939 is most clearly implied in one of our sources: "In normal peace time a large export of rice is carried on to the southern areas through Baro, Lokoja and on to Onitsa, war-time demands [for exports] resulted in the prohibition of this southern movement of rice but, despite energetic measures, a quantity trickled." NAK B.1333, "Bida Division Annual Report 1944-45".

the aristocracy did not only continue to retain possession to land, but in addition, also subordinated peasant production through the medium of taxation. Bida noblemen had, for instance, taken advantage of their possession of the colonial state apparatus to manipulate these taxes, hence expropriate peasant producers.

The involvement of the aristocracy in commerce notwithstanding, however, an entrepreneurial group still emerged in colonial Bida as part of an emergent middle class. Thus, rather than denying this, our analysis aims at articulating its peculiar nature and by implication the middle class as a whole. That entrepreneurs were a feature of colonial Bida and fit into our broad description of a middle class is attested to in an account, indicating that British firms in Bida made

extensive sale to local traders, however of cloth, enamel bowls, cigarettes and matches. Much of the trade in cloth is done on credit, new cloth being issued in instalments against payment of the previous account. (52)

Moreover, there were in Bida traders who possessed enough capital as to warrant being referred to as "big merchants of Bida". (53) This notwithstanding, however, the expansion and growth of local entrepreneurs in Bida was impeded. This is the more so when compared to similar development in areas located within the centres of

(52) NAK B.948, "Bida Township Reassessment 1931", by Mr. A.T. Weatherhead.

(53) These "big merchants" are described as "the whole-sale traders who, working with large capital, buy goods from European stores and supply the small retail traders". Nadel, *A Black Byzantium*, p.328.

colonial commerce in the Southern and Northern Nigeria and the factors responsible for the growth. (54) These conditions, providing the basis for the limited economic potentialities, affected the opportunities which exist for accumulation of wealth in the Bida Emirate. This makes patronage from the aristocracy even more decisive and provides the very nature of the Bida entrepreneur and by extension that of the Middle Class.

In the Bida Emirate besides, colonial political economy had made poverty almost endemic. It was sometimes so serious that, in 1923 for instance, grain prices are said to have fallen so low as to warrant the observation "that these products cannot bear transport charges". (55) The same had happened to prices of groundnuts and rice in the 1940s.

One group however existed as a dominant feature of the local commerce and this was made up mainly of an inarticulate mass of petty-traders who traversed the whole Emirate, moving from one market to the other.

(54) In the Southern provinces, especially within the cocoa and palm producing areas, but generally within the centres of colonial commerce, middlemen emerged who, according to J.S. Coleman (NIGERIA: Background to nationalism, Benin-City, Broburg & Wistrom, 1986, pp.83-84) "amassed sizable fortunes and became substantial traders and exporters on their own account". In Kano, in the north, for instance, "urban-based indigenous merchant's capital" had played an equally significant role in the trade in foodstuffs and cash crops for export, such as cotton and groundnuts. See, for instance, Watts, Silent Violence, p.224.

(55) NAK MINPROF: 11/1924, "Bida Division Annual Report No.65, 1923".

5.3.1 The educated elite

The fact that colonial education policies were designed and implemented in the Bida Emirate with an aim to entrench the aristocracy has been discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis. However, it is not for the same purpose of outlining these policies that we intend to discuss the elite which emerged in consequence. It is rather in attempt to identify its form and socio-economic characteristics and its objective location as part of an emergent middle class.

It will be recalled that the British, in their policy on education in Northern Nigeria generally, had insisted that "we must educate from the top down, and not as in Southern Nigeria from the bottom upwards". (56) Explaining the basis for this policy, it is stated:

But in a country which is professedly being taught to govern itself and improve itself on lines of its own, it is obvious that educational methods must conform to and be in sympathy with, existing political institutions - otherwise the children will destroy their own heritage. (57)

To facilitate this, schools, like every other apparatus of the state, were firmly put under the N.A., with the Emir exercising control and proprietary rights over them. This is suggestively aimed at ensuring that the education was predominantly restricted to members of the aristocracy. Above all, it would ensure that instructions conform ideologically to the role assigned to colonial

(56) NAK SNF 17/1, 8267A, "Indirect Rule and Native Administration".

(57) NAK SNF 17, 11684, "Education Policy in the British Dependencies in Tropical Africa".

education. (58) Thus, while educational opportunities provided by the state had had to be extended beyond the scope of the aristocracy in the course of colonial domination, this policy provided a guiding principle.

Under this system, elementary education at least served little more than a forum for training scribes (i.e. Mallamai), who served as tax assessors and revenue collectors, as well as secretaries to the District and village group Heads. This was enforced until the 1930s when the British were compelled to liberalise education in the Emirates and also upgrade the curriculum and standard. But even then, enrolment into elementary schools and subsequently into higher schools remained relatively low. And suggestively, the fact that it was being acknowledged of Bida and Agaie Emirates by 1944/45 "that the proportion of places to children of school age is only 3 per cent" (59) attests to this. Besides, instruction seems to have been aimed at equipping the few pupils with only enough and limited skill for the limited manpower needs of the Native Authority. Such characteristics had been manifested in 1928 when, according to a report:

out of the forty boys in school [in Bida] at the beginning of the year, half have left; all of them obtained employment [with the N.A.].

A special class was formed for those seeking Native Administration work and in this class they were given instruction in reading, writing and accounting ... Three boys, who had been especially

(58) Coleman, op cit, p.138, has made a similar observation.

(59) NAK B.1333, "Bida Division Annual Report 1944-45".

coached in Arabic, with a view to their becoming Alkalai, left in January to enter the Waziri's office. (60)

Starting from such appointments, some of them were gradually elevated through the ranks of the Native Authority hierarchy, with a few of them, but exclusively of royal birth, ending up as District Heads or such other N.A. officials. In fact, this had at the same time served members of the nobility as an avenue for elevation in the hierarchy of aristocracy.

Others of course had had the opportunity with the passing of years and the introduction and expansion in higher education, to proceed beyond the elementary/primary level to train, becoming teachers and administrators. Within this rank could be found, but predictably very very few, those who did not necessarily belong in the aristocracy by birth. To them, education merely served as an instrument for elevation in their social status, though not necessarily implying co-optation as (ennobled) members of the aristocracy. It should be pointed out that this emergent elite was of vital complementary importance to the aristocracy. They served in the colonial Native Authority as leading bureaucrats. This sector of the elite developed in close integration with the aristocracy. But for the better part of the colonial period, the growth remained suggestively restricted. Thus, for instance, when by 1933 one Mallam Jimada, a teacher, left the Bida Native Authority

(60) NAK MINPROF: 24/1929, "Annual Report 1928, Schools Niger Province".

education department, on appointment as Naibin Nupe, the department had only two certified elementary school teachers and five others in training.

For this elite, the bureaucracy remained the main platform for enhancing its economic and political status. This did not only put them at the disposition of the ruling aristocracy but also makes it difficult to give this elite an identity that is distinctive of the aristocracy. Nor was its development socially independent of the aristocracy. It is with regards to some of these features and not just in numerical strength that this elite differ from the one which emerged in, say, Southern Nigeria, in the course of colonial domination. (61) For some of these elite who were consequently ennobled by being conferred with civil titles, it hardly transcended being a symbol of the increasing administrative responsibility entrusted to them. (62) The position

(61) Coleman, op cit, p.90, provides a vivid characteristic of this elite and the instruments responsible for their elevation, stating that: "Employment in the firms has been one of the main channels of advancement for a large number of the present Nigerian economic and political elite ... Of the eighty members of the first Western House of Assembly (1951-1956) eighteen, or 22 per cent, commenced their careers as clerks in firms." Considering that in the Bida Emirate, colonial education hardly equipped elementary school graduants, at least throughout the first three decades of colonial rule, for employment in firms or even as clerks with the government, the chances for the manifestation of this instrument of social mobility did not exist. Nor was the impact of missionary education of any significance during this same period, to make a difference.

(62) We have a good example of this in the late Aliu Makama Bida. A man of no royal birth, he started his career as a school teacher and rose to the Headmastership of Bida Middle School before he was conferred a civil title. He became an influential figure in the Bida N.A.,

suggestively served as a potential instrument by which the emergent elite would enhance its economic position. But apart from that, what survived of the precolonial feudal possession remained exclusive preserve of the relics of the royal nobility.

The liberalisation in education from the 1930s however enhanced the growth of this elite beyond the one which owed its emergence to the colonial Native Authority. What this implies is that potential avenues for economic and political advancement, which could exist in consequence of taking up "clerical" appointment with the firms and the colonial government and which hitherto could not be taken advantage of, were now open. This was as important for graduates of missionary schools in the Bida Emirate as it was for those of the Native Authority schools. The former for hardly being provided employment at all with the N.A. while for the latter providing only very very few chances - much of which above all went to children of the nobility.

5.4 Wage labourers

It may be more appropriate to talk of wage labourers in the Bida Emirate, with regards much of the colonial era, than of a wage labour class as a distinct and exclusive social category. And on this, Nadel seems to

serving at various times as Etsu's Councillor in Charge of Works and other duties, and Supervisory Councillor in Charge of District Administration. NAK B.1396, "Bida Division Annual Report 1945-46".

have reached a more or less similar conclusion. (63) Though the Native Authority and colonial bureaucracies had in their ranks employees who may fit into this category, their strength, taken separately, has been quite insignificant.

Nor were citizens of the Bida Emirate, for reasons that have earlier been stated, available for employment into the firms. Besides, the fact that centres of colonial commerce were far removed from this area meant that the firms would have only marginal presence. An observation made in 1918 over the employment situation in the Nupe province attests to this. It states that:

The native, who is connected with the school whether as parent or pupil, began to show some interest a year ago at the possibility of obtaining employment under the Native Administration. This is not astonishing since most boys in the school have realised that this is the one and only prospect they have on leaving. There is no alternative ... there is at present no possibility of their continuing their education so as to obtain employment in European trading firms or in any other concern. (64)

What is more, British colonial exploitation, depending on precolonial ruling classes as medium, hence retaining some elements of precolonial social relations, could hardly afford at the same time the emergence of a proletariat. It should be expected that this would be suppressed as much as is possible. And that this was consciously pursued is testified to in a statement of caution made by the missionary Mr. T.E. Alvarez on the

(63) Nadel, A Black Byzantium, p.252.

(64) NAK MINPROF: 4080/1918, "Nupe Province Annual Report, No.11, 1918".

position of his mission (the Church Missionary Society, C.M.S.) on education and employment prospect for the Nupe. He had emphasized, in a sarcastic response to the people's demand for education while particularly hoping on it to enhance their chances of gaining "salaried jobs" that:

as our desire is to keep the people on their farms and in their villages at this stage we do not really cater for this class or encourage the young folk to leave their villages. (65)

But there existed, at the same time that these policies were being pursued, colonial projects requiring extensive labour to execute. Such were, for instance, the railway projects, road construction, etc. To meet this requirement, the government and Native Authorities resorted to forced labour requisition. And notwithstanding claims of suppression and cessation, the practice remained, even if disguised, for much of the period of colonial rule. If by 1930 at least, H.R. Palmer could still have cause to express how "strongly" he was "opposed to either Government or Native Administration embarking on enterprises which in any real sense will necessitate forced labour" (66) to execute, then it attests to what pressing phenomenon forced labour still was. Forced labour (called keremi in Nupe) continued to be drafted even as late as 1944/45 when, for instance, at

(65) NAK MINPROF: 10/1931, "Annual Report Bida Division 1930", Mr. E.T. Alvarez, Assistant Superintendent, C.M.S., Nupe District.

(66) NAK SNP 17 9318 Vol.I, "Forced Labour" H.R. Palmer, Secretary Northern Provinces, to Secretary of State for Colonies, 2nd January, 1930.

least about 1,000 "labourers and followers had been drafted from the Bida Division to work on the minesfield". (67) Memories which exist of the "Niger Agricultural Project", started in Mokwa in 1948, are also tales of another large-scale keremi.

These, besides, did not include the series of public works carried out through unpaid forced labour by the Bida Native Authority. Prominent among these was the construction of a network of roads linking Bida town to her outlying districts. For instance, between November 1920 to the close of 1921 alone, some 15,000 people were drafted to work on roads as part of forced labour recruits. (68)

Though the initial construction work on the railways was carried out through forced labour, a permanent maintenance staff recruitment needed to be done afterwards. In the Baro zone, for instance, by 1913, "380 labourers were enlisted" with an additional 400 following shortly. And in the Mokwa and Kutigi Districts, the railways, with an addition of a relatively few who worked

(67) NAK B.1107, "Annual Report Bida Division 1944-45". At least, the keremi of Jos is one incident which remains very fresh in the memory of many people, from the age of about 60, in Nupe, most of whom were eye witnesses.

Within the first decade of colonial rule, rail construction was the leading project for which large-scale forced labour was mobilised. By 1909, "an average of 1,229 men from Bida throughout the year" worked on the Kano-Baro line. Another 3,000 men, drawn from the Bida Emirate, worked on the "Lagos Railway - Northern Extension", at about the same time. NAK MINPROF: 225/1912, "Historical Notes Bida Division".

(68) NAK MINPROF: 28/1921, "Nupe Province Annual Report, 1921" and NAK MINPROF: 266/1922, "Niger Province Annual Report, No. 15, 1922, Public Works: Bida Division".

with the firms and the administration, had had 116 persons who may be described as wage labourers. (69)

We may assume that those who took up wage employment within the Emirate and indeed within the whole Nupe province (or the Niger Province, as it was later known in the course of colonial domination) constituted only a fraction of the number that was forced to seek wage employment in other parts of colonial Nigeria. The fact that the Bida Emirate (in this regard along with Agaie and Lapai areas) was witness to sharp decline in population throughout the colonial period may serve as a testimony to this. It should be speculated that some of the able bodied men who took part in the exodus would have left on seasonal labour trips in search of money, to meet the demands of an increasingly monetarized economy. A larger number however would have ended up taking up jobs as more or less permanent wage labourers in the centres of colonial commerce, north and south of Nigeria. It has been acknowledged, for instance, that:

members of the Nupe speaking tribe are fairly extensive in numbers as soldiers. These mainly are those who had left the Bida Division and gained wider experience. (70)

The case of people from Nupe, constituting part of the floating population created by the impact of colonial political economy however transcends the evidence

(69) NAK B.61/1, "Mokwa District Revision of Tax 1933". By 1946, building had started of camps with the capacity to house about 1,000 persons. This was between Jebba and Minna, in Bokani, Woabi, Charati, Tabu and Kutiwengi. NAK B.1396, "Annual Report Bida Division, 1945-46".

(70) NAK B.1107, "Annual Report Bida Division, 1944-45".

provided of recruits. Nor can it be limited to those who travelled out as traders of all descriptions. What emerged for instance in Ibadan, Kaduna and other urban centres as "Nupe colonies" of Nadel's description, had more than these in their residence. The characteristics and form of these settlements have however been discussed by Nadel. While most of these migrants may have retained close contacts with home, they nevertheless formed part of a new phenomenon of growing urban population (of workers and co.), far removed from Bida's predominantly agricultural population.

5.5 The peasants

The peasant in the Bida Emirate was not a new phenomenon that appeared with the establishment of colonial political economy but one that already existed as an important feature of the Bida economy by the close of the nineteenth century. What seems a coherent definition of "peasant" by means of articulating their economic and social characteristics has been attempted by John S. Saul and Roger Woods. (71)

With regards land ownership and the role of the family as the dominant unit of production, colonial economy hardly influenced any immediate changes on

(71) J.S. Saul and R. Woods, "African Peasantries" in T. Shanin (ed), Peasants and Peasant Societies (London: Penguin, 1984), p.105, have defined peasants as: "those whose ultimate security and subsistence lies in their having certain rights in land and in the labour of family members on the land, but who are involved, through rights and obligations, in a wider economic system which includes the participation of non-peasants."

peasant production. Not even the commoditisation of production would influence any remarkable change in these characteristics. Instead, there was an upsurge in small-scale commodity production, especially with British capital being kept away from the production of agricultural commodities.

We may even assume that conscious efforts were made to sustain the peasantry by making them self regenerative. For such reasons, for instance, may be attributed the introduction and enforcement of the idea of mixed farming in Bida. Hence, starting in 1937 with only one experimental mixed farmer and sixteen in 1938, by 1941 the mixed farmers established throughout the Bida Emirate had reached forty-six. (72)

This method was expected to enhance an increase in the production of cash crops, mainly cotton, groundnuts, shea nuts, twine, etc. in Bida. But at the same time, it was supposed to ensure that the peasants produced enough food crops for their own subsistence and a little more (of rice, for instance) to feed the growing urban population in the major centres of commerce. The Bida Emirate served as a major producer of rice especially. Emphasising one of the reasons for introducing mixed farming, it has been indicated in one of our sources:

We are not introducing mixed farming in order ... to make ten groundnuts grow where one grew before and to increase the area under cotton. Our object is to provide the farmer with a balanced system of

(72) NAK B.885, "Agricultural Department Report, 1938" and NAK B.1107, "Annual Report Bida Division 1941".

agriculture under which the land and the livestock upon it support each other. (73)

This is not all. In implementing this policy, the British seem to have been committed to keeping the development within the limits allowed by the existing peasant set up.

It was therefore generally cautioned:

In the social sphere the object of agricultural policy should be to establish agriculture as a way of life for that part of the population which must make its living in agriculture, to make the individual realise that he is a member of a community, to encourage him to take part in community activities, and to discourage aimless drift from the land into urban areas. (74)

Even when, by around 1948, the idea of introducing some limited "mechanisation of Agriculture" in the prospect of boosting production in Bida was being mooted, it hardly transcended the scope of peasant production. Hence the "formation of co-operative units for operating tractors" and its viability was considered, observing that "when the time comes, an adaptation of communal organisation [based on the efako] may prove to be the answer". (75) While some of these programmes resulted in real growth, with regards to the increase in land acreage brought under cultivation, hence an increase in

(73) NAK SNF 17/2, 11703 Vol.III, "Memorandum on Principles of Agricultural Policy in Northern Provinces, 1943" by J.R. Mackie.

(74) Ibid.

(75) NAK B.1079, "Resident's Inspection Notes, Bida Division, 1948". Nadel, A Black Byzantium, p.369, seems to subscribe to the same idea, acknowledging that "in a lecture given at the Summer School for Colonial Studies in Oxford in 1937, ... I was attacked by a member of the audience for attempting to 'boost poverty'" (footnote 1).

agricultural output, there was hardly any changes in land tenure and other features of peasant economy.

The Badeggi mechanisation unit experiment, started in around 1948, and the Edozigi irrigation programme, started in 1949 with initial plans to bring 2,000 acres of marsh land under cultivation, are typical examples. Both, having been located within an area where members of the Bida nobility still had almost an exclusive right over land, could have led to other things but change in tenure and the rents which accrued. Of the Badeggi experiment, "the tendency for Bida Town, with its cliques of slothful and for the most part discredited ex-office holders, to take the limelight" (76) is acknowledged. Of course, they would have featured not as cultivators but as rent collectors insisting that allocation of plots would be at their convenience. In Edozhigi, by 1950, a year after the project was initiated, the system of tenure to be adopted in the allocation of the irrigated fields (for rice cultivation) had still not been resolved. (77) In fact, oral accounts acknowledge that land remained (as it has always been in principle up till date) the possession of a section of the Bida nobility. Hence the peasant cultivators were expected to contribute the usual annual rent (enya kin), in kind, apart from the

(76) NAK B.1724, "Annual Report Bida Division 1948".

(77) NAK B 1811, "Annual Report Bida Division 1950". Also NAK Bida District 1640, "Half Yearly Report on the General Progress of Development & Welfare Scheme, 1951".

"27/- (twenty-seven shillings) per acre" which was charged by the government.

But we cannot idealize on the peasant which survived in the Bida Emirate in manifestation of colonial political economy. Like other precolonial classes which, by implication of the nature of the colonial political economy were preserved, the peasantry in Bida went through some form of transformation. Under the pressure of commoditization and the increasing monetization of the economy, the family units at least did not only face a reduction in size, (78) but also a systematic disruption of the channels for mobilising communal labour. In addition to this were such other means like slaves and pawns. Under the circumstances, wage labour, a twentieth-century phenomenon in the Bida Emirate, took its roots.

We should also point out that among the Kede fishing and professional canoe groups, things were hardly different. Right to private ownership of fishing pools was gradually being exerted, however. But we must cut in here that such a development would not have been completely absent among the peasant cultivators. Moreover, the most likely reason responsible for this among the Kede also applied to the others. And this reason is mainly that involving the indiscriminate partitioning, for administrative convenience, of the Emirate into districts and village areas. To these units, taxes had to be paid, based on the "land revenue

(78) See for instance Nadel, A Black Byzantium, p.242.

assessment system". By implication, communities had right only to the land located within the specific units into which they fell by coincidence.

Back to the Kede. Such rights were condoned by their own chiefs and the Bida noblemen to whom the British had subordinated the Kede, in so far as those involved remitted the annual tithe that accrued from the exploitation of the pools and canoe traffic. It has been observed, for instance, that:

"proprietary rights" are developing to a most undesirable extent and that "native rights" as enjoyed under the patriarchal system of old, are diminishing ... a local authority is more likely to extend claims to proprietary rights supported as he is by the suzerain rather than when of old he was supported only by the clan ... In some cases "ownership" has been divorced from the local administrative authority. For instance a village Head has been deposed for an offence but he has been allowed to continue in his trusteeship of pools, etc. (79)

Meanwhile, this is not to say that Kede economy and the nature of its units of production were eliminated. Together with other peasant groups within the Emirate they constituted part of the lower classes. The peasants in the colonial Bida Emirate may not have constituted an isolated and homogenous phenomenon with features distinct from other oppressed classes. But the socio-economic characteristics which were a manifestation of their relationship with the dominant classes (mainly the aristocracy and agents of British merchant capital) justify our attempt to identify with this collective a

(79) NAK MINPROF: 11/1924, "Annual Report Bida Division, No. 65 1923".

class characteristic. (80) In this case, the peasants exist not as an exclusively distinct entity but as part of a broader oppressed class.

5.6 Servile groups

5.6.1 Slaves

The British seem to have made the issue of slavery one of the reasons central to their invasion and subsequent conquest of the Bida Emirate. But developments following on the conquest, as far as slavery is concerned, made this appear no more than an instrument for propaganda, indeed, a mere pretext. Legislations, by at least 1901, by implication only outlawed the taking of fresh slaves. Also children born as from 1901, even though of slave parents, would be free, contrary to old traditions.

Meanwhile, those who had been in slavery before the effective date (i.e. March 31st 1901) were to remain so, except by special arrangement. This would be through official manumission, to be administered through the court or the colonial authority. In fact, the British seemed more disposed towards leaving slavery to a gradual decline than attempt to force it to an abrupt

(80) We can find justification for such a conclusion on the peasants in our area of study in K. Marx, "Peasantry as a Class", T. Shanin (ed), op cit, p.230. Deriving his generalisation from a study of the 19th century French peasantry, Marx avers: "In so far as millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that separate their mode of life, their interests and their culture from those of the other classes, and put them in hostile opposition to the latter, they form a class".

termination. This was in sharp response to their experience after the fall of Bida. Slave labour having been the mainstay of the Bida economy, its collapse, following in the fall of Bida, had caused disintegration in production and the economy.

We may recall, if only to stress this point, that just after the Niger Company invasion of 1897, the consequences of the "wholesale desertion" of slaves on river canoe traffic, of which "Nupe canoe slaves" were a backbone, became acute. But this also extended to other sectors of the economy. This forced Sir George Goldie himself to redress the company's legal and moral perception of slavery. From what seemed an uncategorical condemnation of slavery before invasion, there was a swift change of position. According to our sources:

Sir George Goldie informed the senior officials of the company that the abolition of the legal status of slavery meant only that "all men whether slaves or otherwise were equal in the eyes of the law" that is to say that a slave could summon his master for assault or breach of contract, but that it was not to be taken for granted that all slaves were free. (81)

This, accordingly, was accompanied by a recognition of the property right of slave owners over their slaves. And slaves were therefore required to pay ransom to their masters to gain freedom. In fact, steps were taken to prevent desertion.

(81) NAK SNP 17: 15849, "Early History of Anti-Slavery Legislation" - Memorandum No.504, Northern Nigeria, Jebba, 7th Nov. 1901, by M. Wallace, Acting High Commissioner.

The fact that, as late as 1929/30, slaves were still being redeemed in the Bida Emirate by official manumission is enough evidence that the institution survived long into the period of colonial rule. There is, for instance, an account of eighteen slaves freed by such means in 1929 and another nine in 1930. (82) We may speculate, however, that the slaves freed by official manumission represented a relatively small number of those who did purchase their freedom and by implication gives a conservative projection of the extent of slavery in the colonial Bida Emirate. A 1910 report, for instance, has acknowledged that "the vast majority purchase their freedom by private arrangement with the owner(s)". (83)

Colonial domination in a sense is in itself a form of slavery. The collaborating aristocracy would have therefore served the British, in the same manner as its own precolonial subordinate titled slaves and civil officials enabled them keep the lower classes in order. (84)

(82) NAK MINPROF: 264/1929, "Bida Division Report for September quarter 1929". NAK MINPROF: 10/1931, "Annual Report Bida Division 1930". Nadel, *op cit*, p.105, footnote 1, has also indicated that in 1936, the property of an ex-slave, including some heads of cattle, was turned over "to the son of his ex-master" at the death of the ex-slave, with the excuse that he had no heirs of his own. The ruling was done by the Chief Alkali of Bida.

(83) NAK SNF 7, 2047/1911, "Niger Province Annual Report 1911, Report on Bida for 1910" by Resident Edwards.

(84) A similar analogy has been drawn by A. Temu and B. Swai, Historians and Africanist History: A Critique (London: Zed Press, 1981), p.65.

But even within this framework of colonial domination, which we may characterise as a form of slavery in itself, there were groups who, in the context of the social conditions guiding their relationship with the dominant local classes, were slaves. They remained, like the slaves in the precolonial Bida Emirate, as cartels of a sort. The only difference being that the slave could not be sold just as fresh ones could not be taken or purchased. And this seems more of a means towards subjecting the institution to a gradual decline than in recognition of the right of the slaves. That colonial accounts are lacking in detail, extent and significance of slave labour while the institution lasted under the colonial Bida Emirate is suggestively a result of conspiracy and an attempt to cover up the true nature of colonial political economy. Such attempt merely involved giving it other names, as a means of moralising and legitimising its existence.

Statements made in 1901 by Alder Burdon, Resident Bida, are suggestive enough of the fact that slaves as a social category would survive for some time in colonial Bida Emirate. He strongly avered:

No - The system of slavery must be legalised. The native laws on it are wonderful in their mindless and liberal spirit and they must be learnt and enforced by us. At present the punishment for running away is sale, and if sale is no longer to be allowed, other penalties to be enforced ... just as penalties for breaking articles or agreements are enforced by magistrates in England, must be enacted for absconding. (85)

(85) NAK SNP 17, 15849, "Early History of Anti-Slavery Legislation" - Enclosure in dispatch N.N. No. 504 of 7th

Burdon had also given reasons to back up such a strong suggestion. There are reasons which seem to have been derived from his specific experience of Bida economy. He argues:

If slavery - the native labour system - be abolished with what are we to replace it? It will take years - generations - to teach the pagans, who form the slave population the meaning of hired labour, and if the existing labour system is broken down before there is a new one to replace it nothing but ruin and famine can result. (86)

But slavery in colonial Bida Emirate was even being further sustained by one of the conditions guiding the granting of freedom. And this is the fact that slaves who wanted freedom had to pay ransom money, as compensation to their masters. In a situation in which free peasants and others in the lower classes found it extremely difficult to pay taxes, it would have been even more difficult for slaves to meet the financial obligation requested for their freedom. In result, it was not just the legal statutes of slavery that were transformed but the economic content as well. The latter, because one form of servile labour would only give way gradually to another.

5.6.2 Pawns

Pawning, known as tsofa (pl. tsofazi) in Nupe, as a form of "money investment in human pledges", to use Nadel's description, had been in practice in Bida even

November, 1901. Alder Burdon to His Excellency the Acting Commissioner, Northern Provinces.

(86) Ibid.

before conquest. With the imposition of colonial economy and the decline in slave labour, however, pawning assumed an increased significance. Legal categorisation notwithstanding, its economic content remained fundamentally servile.

Pawning has however been extensively discussed in Chapter Two above. We may therefore only attempt to identify it and its economic basis as a significant aspect of the servile class in colonial Bida. The first three decades of colonial rule at least witnessed the growth of pawning "to extreme dimensions", suggestively in the same proportion, dialectically, to the decline in slave labour. It was such that by the time it was finally outlawed by official legislation in 1933-34, up to 3,000 pawns were set free in Bida alone.⁽⁸⁷⁾ But even this figure seems quite conservative, considering the claims in several oral accounts. In Tsadu-Nkoci, for instance, it was gathered that in extreme cases, whole settlements were pawned over accumulated arrears in tax and quite often land rent. While in Kuci-Woro it was observed that pawning, like slavery in the nineteenth century Bida Emirate, became so pronounced that even women of means in the villages owned female pawns. These were used in either milling rice, an industry in which some of these women were renowned, in doing some other menial jobs and, of course, as agents in their trading activities. To this was added members of the ruling class, resident mainly in

(87) See, for instance, Nadel, *op cit*, p.311.

Bida, but in possession of tracks of land in the outlying districts. With the decline in slavery, this group is said to have turned to pawned labour, among others, for the cultivation of such land. Associated to this group were tax chiefs, resident in the localities as heads of village groupings and even village heads, most of who are acknowledged to have also owned several pawns. But even within the villages, as has also been indicated in Kuci-Woro, pawning became an important means of extra labour, to efako peasant family units who could afford it. The instances could go on, but these should serve as enough testimony to the existence and significance of pawned labour.

We may suggest that the colonial political economy itself provided the basis for pawning in the Bida Emirate. Oral accounts have in fact indicated that even when pawning was finally outlawed (by the mid 1930s), some of the pawns, like some of the slaves before them, hardly had anywhere to go. Some of them were merely absorbed into the families to which they had been attached. This, of course, had always been characteristic of pawning and even slavery in Nupe, even in the nineteenth century. It should be observed that the economic situation created by colonial domination made it quite difficult for released pawns to start an independent living. It should also be speculated, therefore, that pawning, or the social semblance of it, would not merely cease, subject to legislations of the form aimed at suppressing it in the mid 1930s.

Of the colonial political economy which created a basis for pawning, the combined effect of the monetarisation of the economy and colonial taxation may provide sufficient example. Of taxation, it is, for instance, stated that:

The incidence in the Emirate, as in the rest of Nupe is very high while the town of Bida itself paid in 1917 a higher tax than any other town in the Northern provinces with the exception of Ilorin which pays a trifle more but has a much larger population. (88)

This was often accompanied by serious shortages in the British currency, in which payment was required. While this seems to have been in result of a conscious attempt to bring down the prices of agricultural produce in the Emirate, it had adverse economic effect on the producers. The result, as indicated of 1923 in Bida, was that "this year (i.e. 1923) food is so cheap and plentiful that it is difficult to sell at any price". (89) This is corroborated by accounts collected in Kuci-Woro, indicating that it was often the case with efako units of average size, to sell their whole yield for the season, without being able to make enough money to pay the sum total of taxes levied on the taxable members of the unit.

Conclusion

We may indicate in conclusion that in spite of the changes caused by the imposition of colonial political

(88) NAK MINPROF: 4080/1918, "Nupe Province Annual Report, No.11, 1918" by Resident E.G.M. Dupigny.

(89) NAK MINPROF: 11/1924, "Bida Division Report, No.65, 1923".

economy on the Bida Emirate, social classes remained a feature of its society. One prominent characteristic of these classes, however, is their transient nature.

But classes do not exist as static, quantitative and undialectical social phenomenon. Within the aristocracy, for instance, its size and instrument of economic manifestation may have been altered, but it continued to exist as a concrete social phenomenon nevertheless. The same observation could be made of other classes, including those whose formation is located in the emergent capitalist relations, as engendered by colonial political economy.

Our justification for this distinction in classes derives from a broad polarization between groups, - one of which, by virtue of its economic and political position, appropriated the labour of the other in the course of colonial domination in the Bida Emirate.

CONCLUDING CHAPTER (SIX)

In discussing class transformation and formation and the structures which these classes evolved under the influence of colonial domination in the Bida emirate, we have identified some specific political and economic circumstances under which this development took place. Chief among these are the circumstances which necessitated the imposition of the particular form of colonial administration, with its accompanying form of political economy, over the Bida emirate.

It will be observed that the resuscitation of a precolonial ruling class, under whatever new form, would make meaning only in relation to the existence of the economic relations on which they hitherto depended for their prosperity. We have attempted to show how colonial legislation with respect to, say, slavery and later pawning, was significant in merely changing the form of relations. The phenomenon of class exploitation nevertheless continued with the aristocracy (which mediated in the process of colonial exploitation) benefitting. It is on this basis that we insist on identifying with the collaborating class, the historical category of a dominant social class.

But circumstances which, from the beginning, had necessitated the form of colonial administration and its accompanying (socio-political and economic) manifestations, were neither static nor constant. It

should be expected that changes in administration and policies would follow in the same logic. In fact, such changes were initiated and pursued in response to changing socio-political and economic realities and in constant articulation of their continuing development. Such, for instance, is the shift in education policy in Northern Nigeria, leading to the liberalization of education from the 1930s.

Throughout the period of colonial domination, the influential position which the aristocracy enjoyed within the colonial state remained phenomenally persistent. And this continued to be manifested in the course of transition to independence. In fact, this had been decisive in the evolution of a political elite to which the British handed over power in Northern Nigeria. This emergent elite seems to have evolved from a configuration of the so-called traditional ruling class and the emergent, Western-educated elite. Such a combination, in itself, was facilitated by the very nature of the latter and its relationship with the former.

It needs reminding here that our definition of classes in this thesis is centred on their economic characteristics and this has been emphatically outlined in Chapter One above. Hence, we have associated with the Bida aristocracy under colonial rule a dominant class characteristic, not merely in view of its administrative role. Beyond this, our position on the Bida aristocracy derives from the fact that this responsibility guaranteed to its members access to the surplus of the labouring

classes, far beyond and separate from what was paid to them as salaries. And even then, the (fixed) salaries were only for those who served in the Native Authority bureaucracy.

This principle applies as much to the position of the aristocracy in Bida, in the course of transition to independence from around the late 1940s.

We have articulated to some detail (in Chapter Five above) the structures which social classes evolved in the Bida emirate in the course of colonial domination. In doing this, we have implicitly avoided any approach that would see classes from a static, quantitative and undialectical perspective and thus articulate changes in them from a mechanistic point. (1) For instance, there had been efforts, backed up by legislations since the inception of colonial rule in the Bida emirate, to suppress slavery and slave labour. And in 1933/34, it was pawning - in essence another form of servile labour, which was outlawed. However, neither of these two seems to have been eradicated merely as a result of such legislations. At best, these forms of labour would only cease to exist as legal entities (if at all) while they persist as reality of the socio-economic relations in the Bida emirate. (2)

(1) See, for instance, Chapter One, particularly p.39-41 above. Marx (in Capital Vol.1, p.716) has also identified the systematic and contiguous nature of the transformation of modes of production in Europe.

(2) Nadel (A Black Byzantium, 1963, p.105), for instance, indicates that in 1936, the property of an ex-slave, at his death, was turned over "to the son of his ex-master" by a ruling in the court of the Chief Alkali of Bida.

It should be observed that more significant to enhancing the transformation in some of these old forms of social and economic relations was the development of capitalist production. This, we have earlier pointed out in this thesis, evolved in objective manifestation of the imposition of British colonial domination in Nigeria. Here, colonial taxation and policies which were directed at the monetization of the economy, would serve as a strong medium for transformation. As relevant as this would have been, however, in the Bida emirate at least, the extent to which they were manifested was highly limited for two main reasons. Firstly, British colonial domination in the Bida emirate (as in the rest of the Emirates of Northern Nigeria), was founded on a pre-colonial ruling class - which served as a medium and whose authority and economic essence derived from a "non-capitalist" form of society and its social relations. These social relations which survived into the era of colonial domination and provide justification for our associating with the aristocracy a class characteristic, stand in diametrical opposition to the emergent capitalist relations. Secondly, the involvement of British merchants' capital in directly subordinating production in the Bida emirate throughout the period of colonial domination was marginal. (3)

(3) See Chapter Four above, particularly pp.203-204 (and especially footnotes 33 and 34).

Given this background, the rate at which the classes under discussion were transformed and new ones formed could, at best, only be slow. And under the colonial Bida emirate, therefore, legislations were more in reflection of a growing tendency than of the actual reality. The servile classes with their socio-economic manifestations may have been greatly transformed by the 1930s but in no way can that be taken for a sharp break from the development in the preceding and succeeding years. More so that changes in legal status hardly affected to any significant level the economic character of these classes as social entities. Among the peasants and within the aristocracy in Bida, things were hardly different. And for the aristocracy particularly, though a new role may have been charted for it in the course of transition to independence, this was not simply synonymous to the emergence of a new class or classes.

6.1 The Aristocracy and the subordinate classes in the course of transition to independence

The influential position which the aristocracy enjoyed within the colonial state continued to be manifested in the course of the transition to independence. This had been decisive in the evolution of a political elite to which the British handed over power in Northern Nigeria. This emergent elite seems to have evolved from a configuration of the so-called traditional ruling class and the emergent Western-educated elite. Such a combination in itself was facilitated by the very

nature of the latter and its relationship with the former.

If the first four decades of colonial rule in the Bida emirate (from 1901 to the end of the 1930s) and in fact the rest of the Northern Nigeria witnessed the dominant and growing influence of the Emirs and Chiefs in their localities, the 1940s, at least from the beginning, did not present a different scenario. In essence, this tendency would appear to have been increasingly enhanced with passing years, the transformation and changes in the form of its manifestation notwithstanding. This may be acknowledged in a report of an interview with Lord Lugard in 1943 by Abubakar Iman:

In the olden days an Emir was powerful only if he had the backing of the Council of Military Leaders. (4) Now, many forget their Council when they have the backing of the Resident, because they need the backing of nobody else. Many people even say that Emirs are more powerful now than before the coming of Europeans. They say that before the coming of Europeans Emirs exercised their powers recklessly. But now, as they have become wiser, they use their knowledge and skill to exercise the same power. It is commonly believed, by peasants as well as the educated, that if an Emir wants to injure you he simply tells the Resident you are a bad man, or that you do not show him respect (5)

(4) In the 19th century Bida emirate, the Etsu could only have successfully exercised effective powers over his subjects through such military leaders since defence was a collective responsibility of the military nobility. In fact, military capability in Bida determined the magnitude of administrative responsibility and fiefs allocation that could be entrusted to members of the nobility. See Nadel, op cit, p.109, and J.F. Smaldone, Warfare in the Sokoton Caliphate, London, 1977, p.140.

(5) NAK SNP 15, Acc.341, "The Problems of Northern Nigeria as the Natives See It. Account of An Interview With Lord Lugard", by Abubakar Iman, Editor of Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo and a member of the West African Press Delegation to the United Kingdom in 1943.

It will not be too much of an exaggeration to observe that the whole structure of colonial Native Authority, under the policy of "indirect rule", was essentially founded on this tradition - though with some modifications, at least since members of the nobility, by the very fact of colonial conquest, had lost the right to possess personal armies. The Native Authority system, with its hierarchical power structure, has been extensively discussed in Chapter Four above and may therefore not be repeated here.

In the 1930s, there seems to have been what would appear as an attempt in redress to an administrative arrangement in which so much power and influence had been constituted in the Etsu as a sole Native Authority. Bida town, under this new arrangement, for instance, would be:

[...] administered by a Town Council consisting of a salaried president, who was also a member of the Emir's Council; four salaried ward heads who were senior title-holders following the offices of Maiyaki and Gabi Seyedi; and two salaried headmen of the Hausawa and Yorubawa.

The offices of Maiyaki and Gabi Seyedi are those of the traditional senior military and household offices of the Emir, and title-holders under those offices are appointed from the three branches of the ruling family. (6)

In an attempt to making this council "more representative of the people of Bida Town and very much more modern in outlook", it was subsequently enlarged by the appointment of non-executive and unpaid members - made up of a representative of the craftsmen, a representative of the

(6) NAK SNP 17, 28435, MEMORANDUM, No. M.1605/31. From the Resident, Niger Province to the Secretary, Northern Provinces, 3rd May, 1937.

traders, a representative of the Mallams and women's representatives.(7) Councils of this same form were also constituted at the district and village levels, and also in other towns of the Bida emirate. Meanwhile, the Emir's Council which drew its membership from among the royal and civil title-holders, remained. Its members with most or even all the district heads included, were at the same time officials of the Native Administration and thus constituted the top hierarchy of this colonial bureaucracy.

This diversification, rather than reduce the powers which continued to be constituted in the office of the emir, seem instead to enhance it. It can be observed with little fear of contradiction that the Councils and the officials who would continue to be co-opted into them, could only serve as medium and agents for the exercise of the same powers, which otherwise would have been exercised by a small coterie of royal and civil title-holders. Thus, an American Negro, C.F. Wright, is quoted by B.J. Dudley as having observed on a visit to Northern Nigeria in 1943, that "no dictator ever had greater power than those black agents of British Colonial Rule".(8) An earlier observation made by Miss Perham in 1932 and also quoted by Dudley in his Parties and Politics in Northern Nigeria may even further our understanding of this rather intricate administrative arrangement:

(7) Ibid.

(8) B.J. Dudley, Parties and Politics in Northern Nigeria, London, 1968, p.17.

It has been said that there has been a great advance in Northern Nigeria in the last thirty years. It is, however, well to understand its nature. The form has been the concentration of responsibility in the Emir, whose autocracy, exercised through his Council, his District and Village Heads, has been preserved and even increased by a tradition which debars officers from any direct action. (9)

It should be emphasized that the powers being discussed here were not simply constituted in the Emir or individual members of the aristocracy in Bida (as in the other emirates of Northern Nigeria) as isolated entities. It should be understood as a phenomenon which evolved within the context of colonial local administration, giving the aristocracy influence in and control over diverse aspects of life in their localities. (10) This involved areas ranging from education to the judiciary, police duties, public works, and politics. The influential position which the aristocracy occupied became a decisive factor even in the course of transition

(9) Ibid.

(10) In this regard, the observation made by A.D. Yahaya (The Native Authority System in Northern Nigeria, Zaria, 1980, p.3) on the evolution of the powers of emirs and chiefs since the inception of colonial rule is instructive:

From the early days of British administration the emirates were developed into units of local government based on emirs and chiefs and, by the end of the Second World War, had evolved into powerful political forces. A.N.A. as the unit of local government, was supported by a bureaucratic organization known as the Native Administration. Since the N.A. was constituted under a chief, the legal authority for local government in the emirates during British rule was vested in the office of emir, and the emirs thus became recognized as the authority responsible for local government.

to independence. But it may be re-emphasized that this did not unfold in its manifestation as a new class phenomenon.

6.2 The Western-educated elite in the nationalist movement

In the interview with Lord Lugard in London (in 1943), Abubakar Imam attempts a broad polarization of the social trend in Northern Nigeria:

The people are now dividing into three classes: the "sarakuna" (rulers) the unhappy "ma'akata" (salaried officials), and the helpless "talakawa" (peasantry). (11)

In essence, however, the distinction between the Sarakuna (the aristocracy in a wider sense) and the ma'aikata is not a fundamental one, at least as far as the Bida emirate is concerned. For, the Western-educated elite who were at the forefront of nationalist agitation were

(11) NAK SNP 15, Acc.341, Abubakar Imam, op cit. J.S. Coleman (Nigeria: Background to Nationalism, Benin City, 1986, p.354) in his case provides a broader polarization. He identifies four general categories:

1. "The traditional ruling class (Filani gida - "House Fulani") which constitutes the political elite in all but two or three of the northern emirates and includes all officials in the traditional political structures, ranging from the emir to district head, and, in some instances, even to village head. Entrance into this class is mainly hereditary within titled families, but commoners, including slaves, can also achieve titles.
2. The Western-educated class (Ma'aikata) of clerks, teachers of secular subjects, and skilled artisans, which constitutes the "crisis stratum" of the Muslim North.
3. The Merchant Class.
4. The peasant masses (talakawa), who constitute the overwhelming bulk of the population and were, until the early 1950s, politically inert and fully accommodated to the overlordship of the Fulani gida."

mainly a product of the colonial Native Authority education system in the Northern Nigeria. By convention, this elite seem to have emerged mainly as an integral part of the aristocracy and logically played a complementary role to it. Moreover that the very limited opportunities offered under colonial N.A. education were strictly reserved for the nobility. While for the few others from outside the nobility to whom this rare opportunity was extended, it became an instrument of social mobility and elevation in status.

It has been indicated in this study that colonial education in the Bida Emirate (as in the rest of the Emirates of Northern Nigeria) was initially meant to serve the immediate manpower needs of the N.A. which required very limited literacy and skills. The later upgrading in school curriculum notwithstanding, the circumstances made these elites mere instruments of colonial N.A. bureaucracy and, by implication, subject to the local rulers. Besides, the N.A. was their only source of employment, at least up till the liberalisation of education in the 1930s. Thus, in the same manner as the commercial and other elites, the educated elite owed their elevation in social status to the aristocracy. And we have cited in testimony to this the practice of conferring titles as a means of ennobling officials of non-royal descent.

For the elites, the marginal role and positions of secondary political responsibility to which they were mainly confined behind the local rulers logically became

a source for grievances. And for the majority of them, at least from the Emirates of Northern Nigeria, it is this that was topmost in their struggles during the process of British political disengagement in the run off to independence. When, therefore, in 1943, Abubakar Imam drew a distinction between "the Sarakuna" (rulers) and the unhappy "ma'aikata" (salaried officials), it would have been the secondary contradictions which were manifesting in the grievances that were implied.

This, of course, is not of the same content as of the distinction which could be drawn between these two groups and the emerging wage labour class, or "the helpless talakawa" - which Imam adds as the third category in his classification. Our position is that the differences were mainly a manifestation of intra-class contradictions and were thus settled in the mutual interest of the two contending forces.

These differences had started being manifested by 1939, at the formation of "The College Old Boys Union" of the Kaduna College. Interestingly, the origin of the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) has also been traced to this association.⁽¹²⁾ Indicating the apprehension which the ruling aristocracy showed at the formation of the association, hence the contradiction between the two political forces, Imam states:

Everything went smoothly for the first three years and after that the whole thing collapsed ... Some

(12) See for instance J.N. Paden, Ahmadu Bello: Sadauna of Sokoto. Values and Leadership in Nigeria (Zaria, 1986), p.140 (also fn. 5, p.140).

of the Emirs began to suspect the Union and those who are at their mercy were afraid and so found it safer to withdraw. This is an example of the suppression of free discussion. So Europeans must not expect that the obedience of Northern Nigerians [in the ranks of this emerging elite] will continue indefinitely while it is imposed by force and not good will. The pot is boiling and if no outlet is given to the steam, one may wake up one night and find it broken. (13)

Nevertheless, the Jam'iyyar Mutanen Arewa (J.M.A.), otherwise known as the Northern Nigeria Congress (NNC), had been founded by about 1949 as a cultural association, bringing under an umbrella in the course the various sections of the Northern intelligentsia. This would remain until 1951 when, as its offshoot, the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) was founded as a full-fledged political party.

This development did not however remove the underlying contradictions which had characterised the relationship between the ruling aristocracy and the emergent elite that formed the bedrock of the J.M.A. Generally, though, the dominant tendency within the association would appear too conservative, at best reformist, in the manner it addressed the existing colonial Native Authority system and the position of the ruling aristocracy within it. For instance, at the inauguration of the J.M.A. in 1949, the leaders (Fr. A.E.B. Dikko and Mallam Yahaya Gusau) have been quoted in Coleman as having assured the emirs:

Jam'iyyar does not intend to usurp the authority of our natural rulers; on the contrary, it is our

(13) Op cit, NAK SNF 15, Acc.341, Abubakar Iman, op cit.

ardent desire to enhance such authority wherever and whenever possible(14)

While this would seem to have had a determining influence in the development leading to the formation of the N.F.C. in 1951, the configuration of social forces dominant in it and hence its political disposition in the run up to independence, it was not without differences in opinion and manifestation. Thus, secondary as the differences would have been, the declared position in the J.M.A. and by extension the N.F.C., seems to have been implicitly taken in articulation of the emerging reality of the changing nature of the dominant classes. In fact, this emergent socio-political configuration had within it, a group whose disposition was towards a reform of the dominant political leadership position of the Emirs and Chiefs. (15) Another group, which, like the other, constituted a significant part of the configuration, was in support of a maintenance of the status quo. This second was the position pursued by the rulers themselves who, although they may not have belonged as partisan

(14) Coleman, op cit, p.358.

(15) Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello, Sardauna of Sokoto, My Life, Zaria, 1986, p.73, quoting from a motion by Abubakar Tafawa Balewa in the Legislative Council in August 1950 (calling for modernization and reform of the system of Native Administration in the Northern Provinces) has observed:

The Chiefs had, he [i.e. Balewa] thought, no well-defined place and no one in the hierarchy knew his rights, obligations or powers. The people, on the other hand, were still ruled by might and little effort was made to win their confidence either by the black superior or white officials. The Chief's Councillors were often too frightened to give him unpalatable advice or to take a line which did not agree with his ...

members of the J.M.A. and then the N.F.C. in succession, were nevertheless part of it unofficially. This difference however did not affect the symbiotic relationship between the two factions. In fact, the Western-educated elite in the emirates of Northern Nigeria, owing, as it were, its origin, emergence and existence to the aristocracy, (16) could hardly afford the luxury of a radical break, given the circumstances of the transition to independence particularly. This would clearly manifest in the 1951 elections and the development after it. But even before then, the emirs, through their control of the N.A., had had some very significant influence over the emergent educated elite. And the example given by Abubakar Imam of why the Western-educated elite preferred administrative jobs in the N.A. (being more under the direct control of the emir) to teaching (which was more under the immediate control of the European education officers) is

(16) According to Coleman (op cit, pp.355-356):

A substantial number of those northerners who were so educated in the inter war period [i.e. 1919 and c 1939] were sons of titled families or high-ranking officials in the native administrations. This was particularly true of the secondary level of education. Their future careers and status were assured. For the rest, there was no dearth of career openings in the native administrations, and strong social and political forces compelled them to accommodate themselves to the status quo.

This contrasts with the circular development in Southern Nigeria where, for instance, an attempt to revive the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) in June 1940 was inspired by "a group of young Yoruba intellectuals, cocoa traders and lorry owners" led by Obafemi Awolowo, himself not only of the intellectual category but in addition "an Ijebu cocoa trader and Secretary of the Nigerian Motor Transport Union" (Coleman, op cit. p.261).

instructive in understanding the relationship between the ruling aristocracy and the Western-educated elite in this period.

For as a teacher, he feels he has little hope of getting promotion to an administrative post, but in any other department he is more under the emir's control, and more dependent on the emir's verbal recommendation, so it seems to him an easy matter to obtain promotion, if he understands the tricks. (17)

While the internal contradictions continued to manifest with varying intensity, the socio-economic and political cohesiveness of this social configuration continued to be perpetrated however. And it is this nature that informed the manner in which they would settle their political differences with the oppressed classes and any section of the intelligentsia that would not identify with their cause.

With relevance to the Bida emirate in particular, the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) would provide a representation of this latter cause. This is particularly so if we are to specifically articulate the context from which the unique nature of the political economy of the colonial N.A. system was addressed in the course of the nationalist agitation.

The N.E.P.U. was founded in 1950 as a result of a major split from the J.M.A. of a relatively small radical group. Central to the differences which led to this split was the position of the Emirs and Chiefs and thus the political economy of the colonial N.A. The idea of reform

(17) NAK SNP 15, Acc.341, Abubakar Imam, op cit.

and other such half measures which in reality would fall short of upsetting the "autocratic" rule by the aristocracy, was viewed by these radical members of the intelligentsia as being too conservative. First, they had insisted on the founding of a political party which would provide the platform for the intelligentsia to address the pressing political issues in Northern Nigeria, chief among which they indentified as the outright abolition of the political leadership position of the Emirs and Chiefs. And in a meeting of the N.N.C., convened in Zaria on the 26th of June, 1949, Sa'ad Zungur (a founding and leading member of N.E.P.U.) had backed with rigorous polemics a proposition by delegates from Kaduna that the House of Chiefs be abolished. (18) This was, of course, to the embarassment of the conservatives (who were in majority) and the officials.

In Bida, NEPU presence was as significant (as in other Emirates) in spearheading the political assault on the position of the Emir and the N.A. (19) Organised

(18) Baskiya ta fi Kwabo, 26th July, 1949. The circumstances leading to the formation of NEPU has also been narrated in some detail by J.S. Coleman, op cit, pp.353-368, and Faden, op cit, p.180.

(19) Though other political parties and organizations, mainly southern-based, were not altogether absent on the northern political scene, their significance with regards the form of local politics under discussion was very marginal. For example, according to Coleman (op cit, p.353), though

Both the Nigerian Youth Movement (1938-1941) and the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (1945-) established branches in the urban centers of the north, but, with certain exceptions [...], membership was confined to southerners.

If this is an observation derived from the experiences of centers such as Kano, Zaria, Kaduna, etc., it is logical to speculate that it would have been less so in the case

around Abubakar Zukogi as its leading figure, the party had addressed specific issues such as forced labour and the arbitrary imposts on the peasantry by the nobility. Of the political activities of Zukogi which is no less a symbol of a more general sentiment among the oppressed classes, a 1949 official account states:

Bida Emirate, although not experiencing such a disturbed year as last, has not been without its alarms and excursions chiefly caused by the intransigence of the Masaba faction. In July, what amounted to an attempt to undermine the authority of the Emir was launched by Zukogi, a notorious scion of Masaba. A grave view of this was taken and a prosecution initiated. In the event, however, the prosecution failed to establish their case, owing to the "volte face" of the chief witness, and counsel entered a plea of "non possumus". (20)

Thus, NEPU activities in Bida (and in other areas) were met with suppression. This was mainly perpetrated through the Emir, using the N.A. apparatus under his control. This, in itself, is self-indicative of the relationship which existed between the Emir and his Chiefs and the NEPU, with the strong backing of the British. Meanwhile, the same N.A. with its structures, especially the various councils, had been instituted as more or less an

of the Bida emirate, with her relatively lower level of urbanization and a predominantly local population.

(20) NAK B.1750, "Annual Report Bida Division, 1949". Abubakar Zukogi was, of course, of the royal house of Masaba. But for a man whose political disposition was in direct opposition to the class privileges of the nobility into which he was born, placing instead his sympathy for the course of the oppressed classes, his political activities can hardly be contextualised within the framework of the intra-dynastic rivalry which had been characteristic of the relations between Bida ruling houses. Such an official position, cited in this case, may therefore be understood as an attempt to diminish the social significance of NEPU and that of Zukogi with it.

electoral college. And this was not all, as for instance, it was even decreed that "the Emir and his council would alone decide whether to grant permits for N.E.F.U. meetings". (21) Against this background, Zukogi was charged and "sentenced to 14 days imprisonment for contempt" in the court of the Emir of Bida, after the 1951 elections. Such form of persecution against Zukogi and in fact other officials of the NEPU, abound. (22) Not even villagers, suspected of loyalty to NEPU, were spared the ordeal of physical harrassment which, of course, was the order of the day. Such was the viciousness and arrogance with which NEPU was suppressed in Bida that Zukogi himself summed up in a 1959 complaint to the British overlords:

I would like to point out to you as the Senior Executive Officer in charge of the [Niger] Province that there is a seeming unwillingness to post a team of the Nigerian police to Bida and Kontagora ... If the N.A.s of Bida and Kontagora are left to be the accusers and judges over political matters and, at the same time using the N.A. police to handle all these political cases with open partiality and malice, there would hardly be peace in these two areas ...

(21) NAK B.1079, "Resident's Inspection Notes, Bida Division, 1952".

(22) NAK PREMIER'S OFFICE: 918, "NORTHERN ELEMENTS PROGRESSIVE UNION" to Etsu Nupe, Mallam Mohamadu Ndayako, C.B.E., 11th January 1960. It was been stated in this petition that:

We may mention your strongly partisan political campaigns in favour of a certain political organisation which had emboldened the thugs in Bida to greater acts of lawlessness and barbarism ... [Besides the Etsu himself is said to have, in addition, driven] personally to Zukogi's compound on 8th January, 1960, to stop repair work on the walls of his compound and ordered the tools to be left on the spot indefinitely.

The NPC members always like to treat the Alkalis and the Yandokas as their partymen and even in the court it is common sight to see an NPC member calling the N.A. police aside or even the Alkali to discuss how he would want his case to be handled. (23)

One significant lesson may be drawn from the activities of the intelligentsia which led NEPU and particularly the activities of Zukogi in Bida. It is the fact that, in spite of the nature of its evolution, the intelligentsia has exhibited some features which show its lack of independent class identity. This is in further testimony to the fact that descent may be an instrument of class identity, but it is not fundamentally all that it takes to belong in a class or to identify with it. What is of primary significance in this regard is the economic interests and identity. It is interesting, and this has been acknowledged by James Coleman, that the NEPU leadership assaulted the dominant classes from the understanding that politics cannot be divorced from class interests as its underlying motive. Thus, while members of the elite, of non-royal descent, joined those of the royalty and the Emirs and Chiefs to struggle in defence of identical and dominant class privileges, figures like Zukogi, born into the royalty, had struggled from the opposite side, within NEPU. For the lower classes, where they stood in this equation was objectively determined by the subordinate socio-economic position which they occupied in society.

(23) Ibid, Sadiq G.A. Zukogi, to the Resident Niger Province, Minna, 27th July, 1959.

6.3 The social classes by 1951 and after

It should be re-emphasized that the social configurations which evolved in the emirates of Northern Nigeria in the course of the transition to self rule did not simply amount to the emergence of new classes in any significantly distinct way. And the discussion so far in this concluding chapter has been in attempt to unfold the intricacies of a political project in which, under changing circumstances, the dominant classes for instance took on a new but more complex form. In the process, rather than being marginalized, the aristocracy phenomenally continued to be entrenched. We are supported in this argument by the fact that the aristocracy continued to be possessed of the socio-political and economic instruments which, hitherto, warranted our categorization of it as a social class. The 1951 elections in Northern Nigeria at least saw this development taking form.

The J.M.A., as we have already indicated, had existed from 1948 as a cultural association, that is, an umbrella association for northern elites, but particularly of the aristocratic disposition. By implication, it had neither the structures nor the organization of a strong political party, capable of any serious electoral contest. Or, rather, with a ruling aristocracy (backed by the British) that was highly apprehensive of this elite, the idea of forming a political party was considered a no go area, as this

would deepen the differences within the fragile configuration. That the two potentially competing forces had to operate in mutual co-existence was necessitated by political circumstances which they were not quite capable of handling perfectly. At least, if the emirs under cover from the British and the N.A. apparatus in their possession could suppress N.E.P.U. activities to some extent, less so would be expected of the influence of parties such as the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) and the Action Group (AG), led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and Chief Obafemi Awolowo respectively. In Bida, to be particular, sentiments related to this were implied in colonial official reports. Thus, it is reported, for instance, that:

At informal meeting with the senior English-speaking N.A. officials the Resident [Niger Province] drew attention to the trend of political development and to the claims of certain persons in the Southern Provinces. The intensions of these demagogic politicians were clearly demonstrated in the alternative proposals to the Richards Constitution made by the late Herbert Macaulay ... It was now of the utmost importance that the authorities and educated classes in the Northern Provinces should both read, study, think and, as occasion required, express their views on such matters, or there was the danger that people ignorant of the political traditions in the Northern Emirates might interpret silence as consent. (24)

Then, given the very weak numerical strength of the northern intelligentsia, there was the fear of domination, to the extent that the idea of self government, at least by 1956, was being strongly objected

(24) NAK B 1076, "Resident's Inspection Notes, Bida Division", Notes on Visit, for May 23rd-26th, 1946.

to. (25) Under such circumstances, a division or break within the configuration would have predictably made either of the political forces too vulnerable.

By the time the NPC was formed in October 1951, from a conversion of the JMA, the first elections to the new Northern House of Assembly had been held in September. This however did not mean much to the NPC in terms of its fortunes. Of these elections in Bida, it was reported that:

Elections were held without incident and the results confirmed that traditional form of Local Government still enjoys public confidence. Two Bida Native Authority officials were among the four members elected from the province to the House of Assembly. Mallam Abubakar Zukogi, the local representative of Northern Elements Progressive Union, was elected by one of the Wards of Bida Town but failed at the intermediate level ... (26)

That two of the members elected from Bida were N.A. officials was no coincidence, nor was this peculiar to Bida. Of the 90 members who, according to B.J. Dudley, were elected to the Northern House of Assembly in 1951, 18.7% were sons, brothers, cousins and nephews of ruling emirs, 30% District Heads; 26% District Alkalis; 6% Chief

(25) NAK GEN/81, VOL. II, "Speech of Minister of Health, Northern Provinces, at a Conference at Ilorin, on 30th May, 1953". The Minister had, in the speech, stated that:

At the end of our meetings, a private member proposed a motion in the full House of Assembly to the effect that the Northern Region is not ready for self government in 1956. A resolution was also drawn up. The same motion and resolution were also made in the House of Chiefs. After a discussion the resolution and the motion were passed by both Houses.

(26) NAK B 1845, "Annual Report Bida Division, 1951".

Alkalis, and 69% N.A. functionaries with high rank. (27)

When, soon after the elections, therefore, all these members assumed the membership of the NPC, it was not as if they "declared their support for the NPC" (28), as Dudley would put it. And semantics notwithstanding, the members themselves did not seem to see it Dudley's way. This has been implied in a 1952 address by the Minister of Health, Northern Provinces:

The Northern Peoples' Congress is not the government of the Northern Region. Owing to unavoidable circumstances the party was not able to contest the General Election. But despite this, its claim to be the leading political party and one most trusted by the masses is justified. Its members form the majority of the elected Members of the Northern House of Assembly and all the Northern Ministers at the Centre and the Regional Ministers are members of the N.P.C., with the exception of four who are Emirs, and as such are not members of any political party. (29)

Nor could such an electoral success be attributed to any much trust "by the masses" in the aristocracy, or is it indicative of any much public confidence, in the true sense of it. The outcome of the elections was most significantly determined by the balance of forces -

(27) Dudley, op cit, p.134. See also Yahaya, op cit, p.29, and Coleman, op cit, p.379. Coleman particularly contrasts this with the case of Southern Nigeria. According to him, of the House of Representatives in 1952,

More than two-third of the Southern members started their careers either as employees of Christian missionary societies ... or as members of the Junior Civil Service in the government of Nigeria.

(28) Dudley, op cit, pp.81 and 134.

(29) NAK GEN/81, VOL.II, "Address by Minister of Health, Northern Region, to Members of the Labour Party Fact Finding Mission, 1952".

social, political, and economic, which was predominantly in favour of the aristocracy. Not only did the aristocracy, with its NFC, enjoy the strong backing of the British colonial authorities, but had at its exclusive disposal the N.A. apparatus which it used at its discretion. In the Bida emirate, the aristocracy had in the various Councils, which as late as 1946 were still being put in place(30), one strong medium through which candidates were carefully and systematically drafted for electoral contest. Moreover, these elections were supposed to have been organized and supervised using the N.A. apparatus, with the Emir presiding as a Chief Electoral Officer. In principle, it was simply assumed that the Emir was non-partisan and thus an impartial judge. But in a political contest with strong class motivations, the position of any member of the aristocracy could have been anything but impartial. Thus, the 1951 election and its outcome was a manifestation in the continuing class assertion of the aristocracy, no matter its changing form and composition.

The emerging political arrangement and the dominant position of the aristocracy in it was not without one

(30) District Councils were in fact first formed in Bida in 1946. NAK B/640, "1947-53 Annual Report on the general progress of Development and Welfare Schemes".

It should be observed that each district council was constituted around the District Head as president, with his village village-group heads, and such other members of the village councils and communities as the emir and the District Head deemed fit. The District Head himself was in turn a member of the Emir's Council. It should be pointed out that it was some of these same District Heads who contested in and of course won the 1951 election.

great significance to the aristocracy as a socio-economic category. Dudley has elaborated on some of the economic advantages to some detail:

Besides the possibilities of appointments to various Board memberships, there are the opportunities of obtaining loans from the many development agencies. Thus of the total membership of 144 of the Provincial Loans Boards existing in 1958 in the twelve provinces of the North, 8% were Emirs and Chiefs, 17.5% were district and village heads, 37.6% were Native Authority Councillors and Officials, 15% Legislators, 14% traders and 8% were auctioneers, pastors and "others". And of the 20 people who at one time or the other were members of the Northern Region Production and Development Board (1950-55) 40% were Emirs, 55% legislators of which 25% were district heads, and 5% employees of the Native Authority. Similarly, of the 23 people who in one year or the other formed the Board of the Northern Region Development Corporation (Loans) (1950-58), 26% were Emirs, 69.5% were legislators of which 17% were district heads and only 4.5% traders. (31)

This development serves a very significant socio-economic indicator - that is the implicit tendency to shift exploitation from its hitherto predominantly direct feudal form and relations to exploitation through market relations. This, of course, would be the most likely possibility, whether such credits were expended on direct agricultural production (in which case the tendency would be more towards hired labour), or expended on the purchase of peasant produce, or whichever. The peasant producer or the hired labourer would end up being expropriated all the same. And it is objectively in this regard that the reforms being demanded by the Western-educated elite of the aristocratic disposition makes some

(31) Dudley, op cit, p.142. The fact that some of the beneficiaries of these loans did not repay at all is another thing entirely, anyway.

real social and economic sense. It is also at this level that NEPU's radical demand for an absolute change was diametrically in opposition to the other.

In furtherance of this condition which, we may suggest, had the potentials to enhance an intensification in the evolution of the emergent capitalist (market) relations, was a complementarily "crushing" taxation system. That the taxes were crushing on the subordinate classes has been testified to in a NEPU petition on "A Proper reassessment of poll tax in the Region", addressed to the Premier, Northern Region:

[...] it is eminent today that the present system [of poll tax] is crushing on the peasants. Figures at our disposal reveal a shocking state of affairs in matters of tax assessment in this Region and it is vital that the system be reviewed. Along with this review the taxing of under-aged children, the blind, the crippled and lepers should be abolished. (32)

But the process which is implied here did not amount to an abrupt or clean break in existing forms of social relations. It was however significant in enhancing a process that has its origin rooted in the imposition of British colonial political economy. And the fact that "land rents have survived in some form", even after independence, at least, is one important manifestation of this and, this has already been discussed in Chapter Five above. Besides, it seems forced labour continued to be of some prominence even in the 1950s. This was so particularly in Bida where, in a letter to the Divisional

(32) NAK PREMIER'S OFFICE, THIRD COLLECTION, AS 1/918, "NORTHERN ELEMENTS PROGRESSIVE UNION (1957-62)".

Officer in April 1953, the NEPU protested against the enforced settlement of Nupe farmers at the "Ndayako Agricultural Forced Settlement" in Mokwa:

All the people settled there are being treated like slaves and detailed to work like Jackass from morning till night despite rain or sun without any compensation other than one third of guinea corn and millet raised by themselves; they are not entitled to any portion of the groundnuts since that is the precious crop for which the scheme is launched so as to recover the losses of Nyasaland and Tanganyika of over 90,000 [pound] by using the poor Nupes. (33)

In fact, oral accounts testify to the keremi (forced labour) of Mokwa and others, even though NEPU had to face trial over this letter for supposedly "telling lies against the authorities".

It should be observed that these socio-economic contradictions were important motivating factors in the political process in the Bida emirate during the period of transition. Thus, far from being a manifestation of the economic and political will of the colonised people of Bida, without distinction of classes, the political struggle in the run off to independence had clear evidence of class contradictions. Not even the convergence of interests which the common struggle against colonialism was supposed to have inspired, could overshadow this. In fact, the aristocracy, in manifestation of their position as mediators for colonial exploitation, were aligned to and even given protection by the British. Meanwhile, this is not a development

(33) NAK, PREMIER'S OFFICE, 2nd COLLECTION, AS 1/918, "Northern Elements Progressive Union".

which started merely with the politics of transition to self rule. It was rooted in the very nature of the colonial political economy in the Emirates of Northern Nigeria, and the fact that the aristocracy retained its privileged class position, whatever the level of marginalisation.

While the class manifestation of the politics of "nationalist movement" in Bida (as in the rest of the Emirates) could be traced in the socio-economic developments since the imposition of colonial rule, the basis for post independence development in social relations and the classes inherent in them, were in turn also being laid during this period. And throughout, the obstinacy of the aristocracy reared its head prominently. We may observe too that the development in Bida throughout the period covered by this study was neither peculiar nor unique. So also is the analytical tool used for its study in the course of this research.

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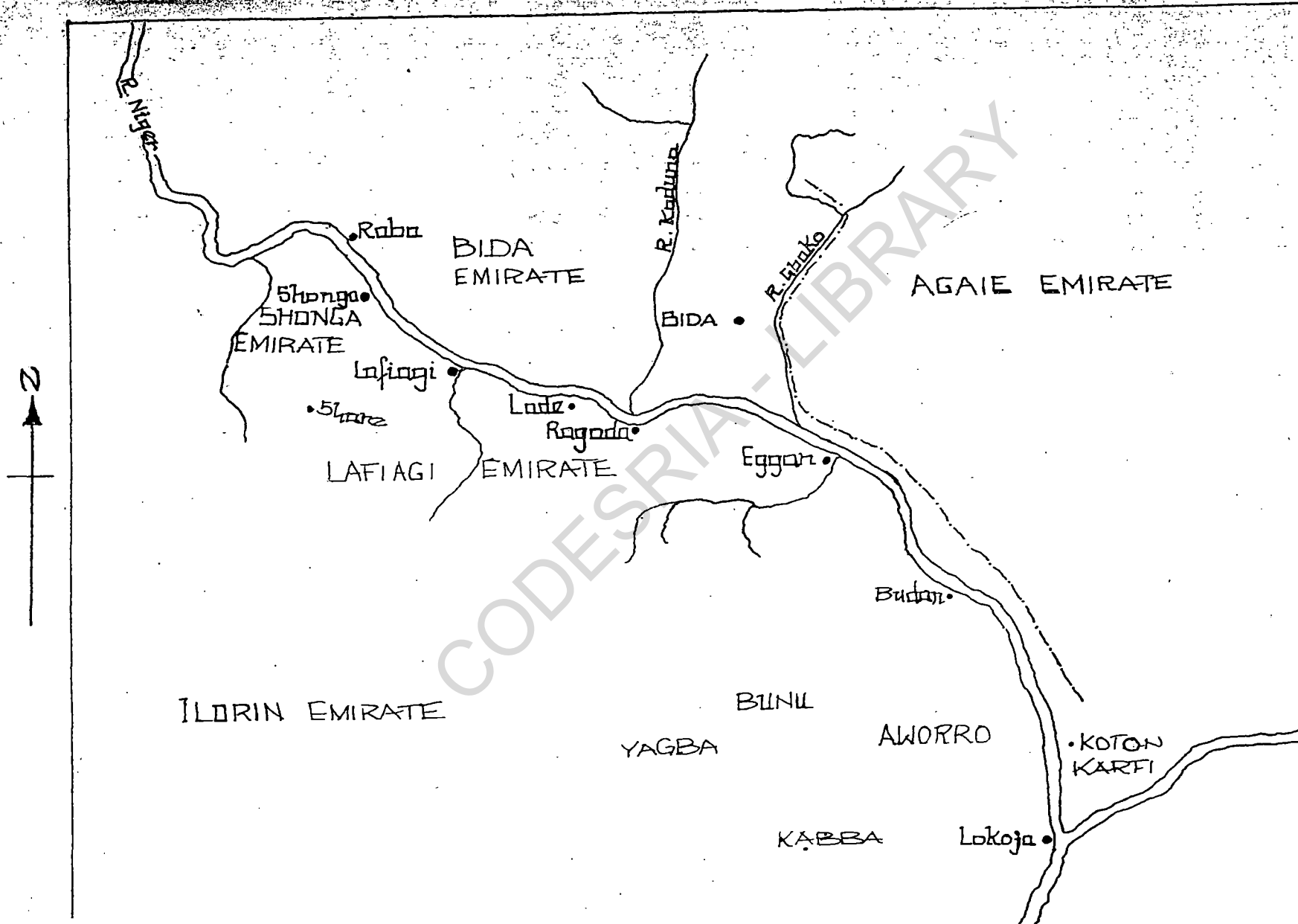
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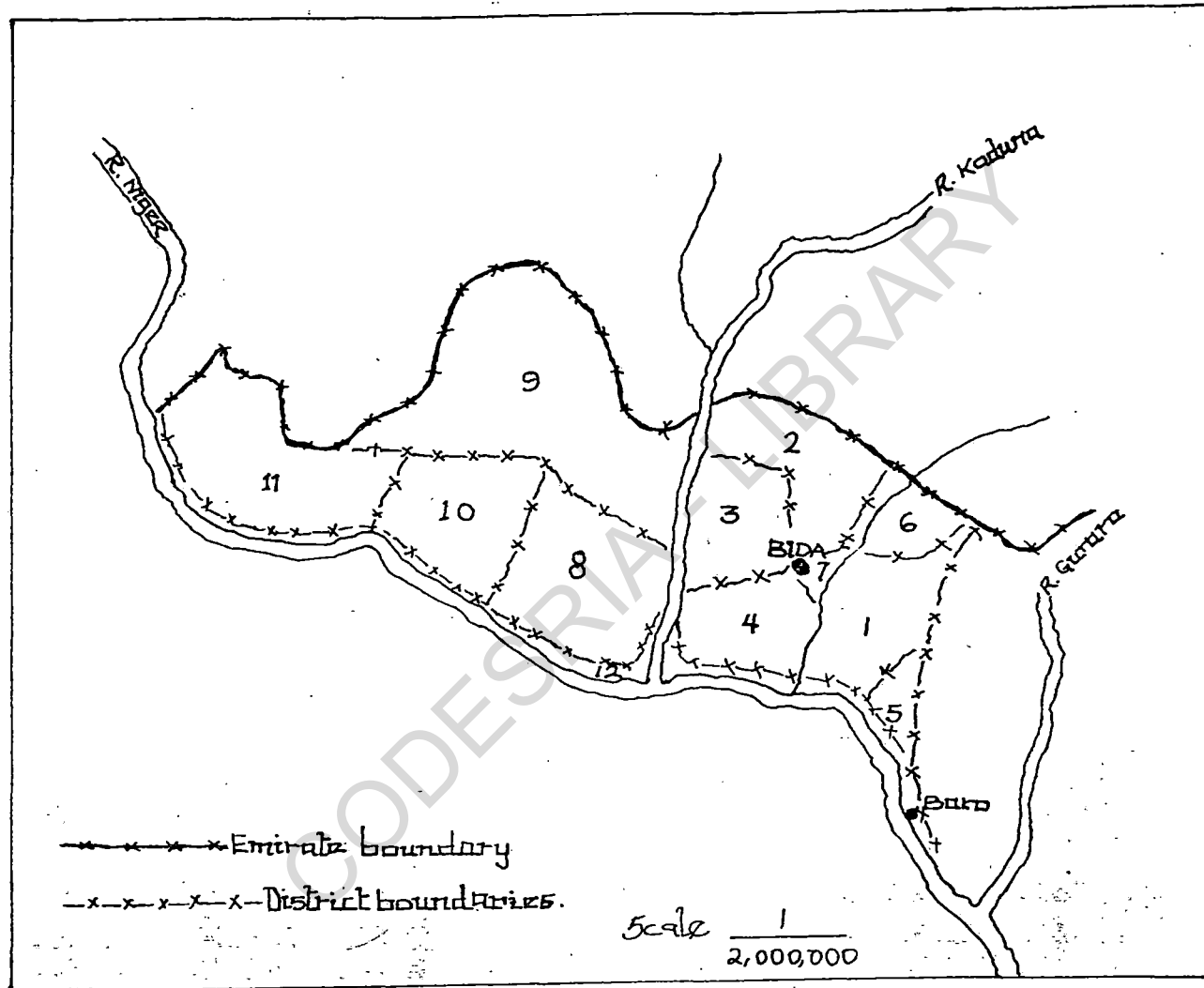
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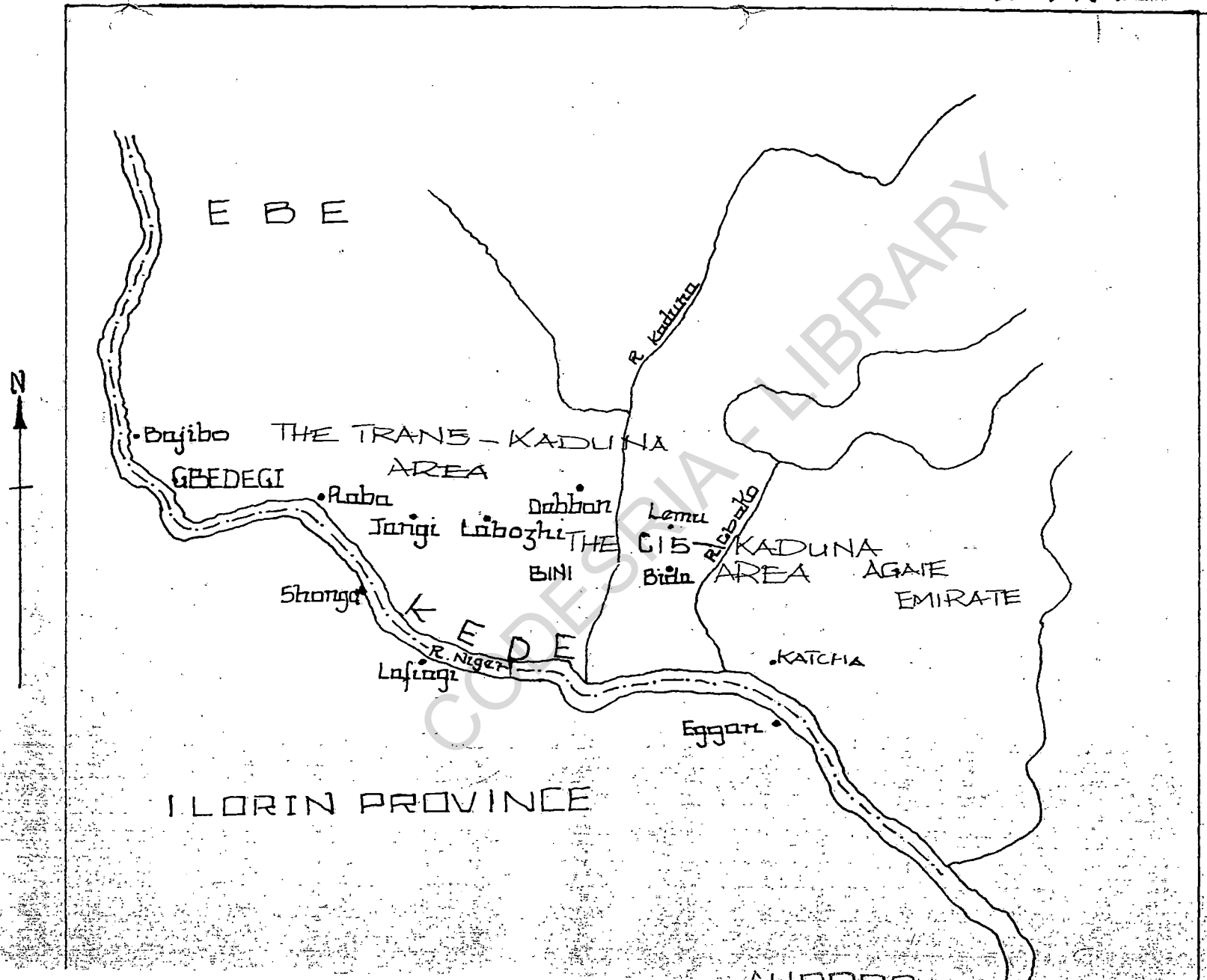
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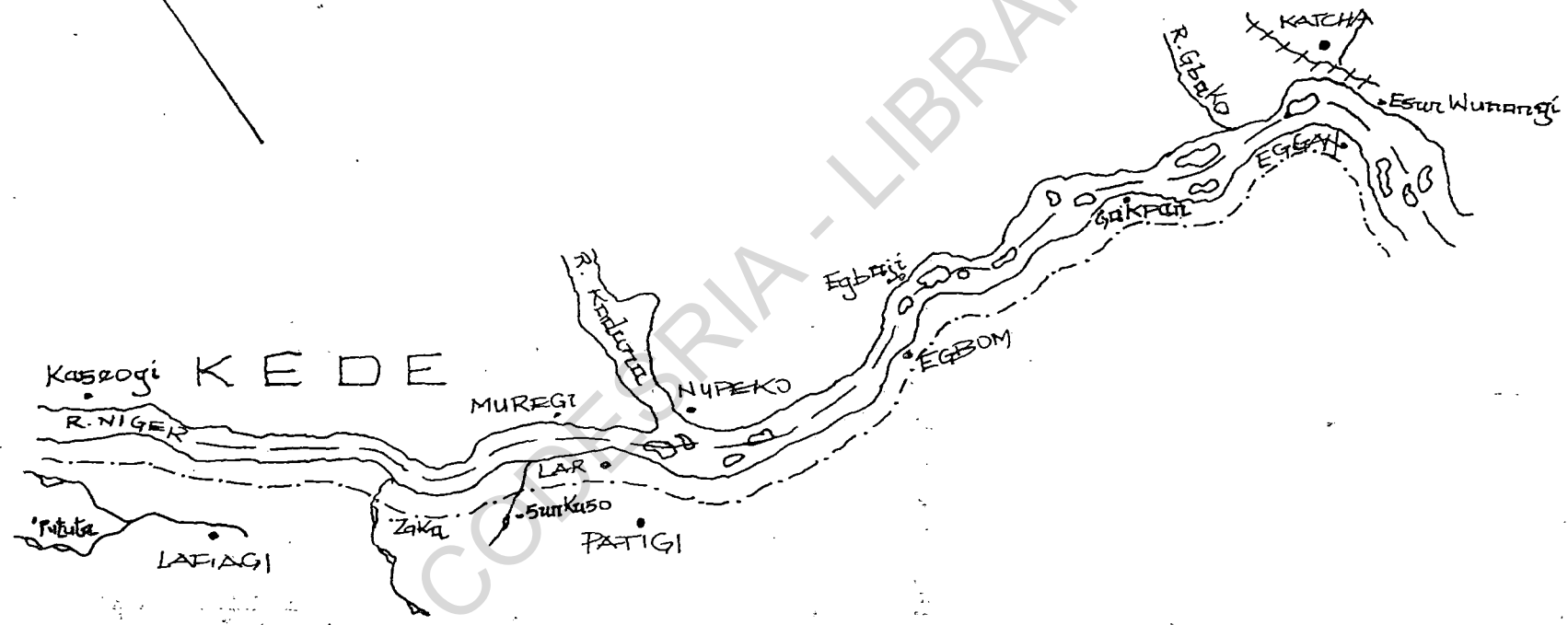
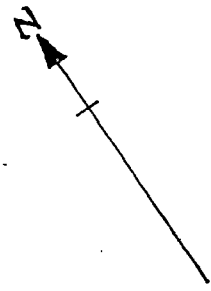
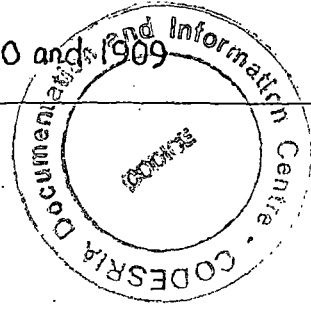
THE TWELVE (12) DISTRICTS OF THE BIDA EMIRATE

- | | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------|------------------|
| 1. Bakokma | 4. Jima | 7. Wunangi | 10. Bete Labozhi |
| 2. Bangba | 5. Katcha | 8. Sakpe | 11. Mokwa |
| 3. Magwe/Dakmon | 6. Bishita-wagi | 9. Yeti | 12. Riverain |

A MAP OF THE BIDA EMIRATE SHOWING THE TRANS KADUNA AND THE CIS KADUNA AREAS



THE KEDE DISTRICT SHOWING ITS BOUNDARIES BY 1900 and 1909



----- Boundary by 1900
----- Boundary by 1909

Scale $\frac{1}{500,000}$