

RAIDERS AND TRADERS IN ADAMAWA: SLAVERY AS A REGIONAL SYSTEM*

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Judging from the volume of literature on the subject, there continues to be a marked interest in the study of the indigenous slave systems of Africa (Fisher and Fisher 1970; Meillassoux 1975; Hill 1976; Miers and Kopytoff 1977). However, far from exhausting this topic, these works are just beginning to provide the data and theories necessary for an understanding of the structure of African slave systems, and the present essay is a further contribution to this dialogue.

In the case in question, that of nineteenth-century Adamawa in what is now northern Cameroon, we are dealing with slavery on a major scale. The Fulbe states in this region were engaged in the capture and export of thousands of slaves annually to the slave markets of Hausaland and Bornu. The size of the slave populations in these receiving areas was very large. Polly Hill (1976: 396–397) believes that there were “several million” slaves out of ten million total population, and other authors also estimate that the proportion was between thirty and fifty percent (Barth 1857, II: 143–144; Robinson 1896: 127; Meillassoux 1975: 17). All authors agree that there was a constant need to replenish the stock of slaves due to substantial losses from death, escapes, manumission, and export across the Sahara. Looked at in a regional focus, one can see that this insatiable demand for slaves in Hausaland and Bornu created a centre–periphery relationship with the surrounding peoples, as an endemic pattern of slave raiding and warfare emerged on the frontiers of these large states in order to supply their requirements. Adamawa was such a peripheral area, and in the present paper, I look at the implications of slave raiding and trading for the Fulbe state of Ngaoundere and its “pagan” neighbours, the Gbaya people.¹

The Fulbe Conquest of Ngaoundere

The Adamawa jihad (religious war), an extension of Usman dan Fodio’s conquest of the Hausa states of Nigeria, was undertaken by Fulbe clans which had been resident in Bornu, the upper Benue valley, the Mandara Hills, and the Diamare region since at least the eighteenth century (Mohammadou 1981; Abubakar 1972: 72). One of

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these clans, the Wolarbe, directed its attacks toward the south and penetrated the heart of the Adamawa plateau itself in an area which had largely been beyond Fulbe influence previously. In these pioneering efforts, the Wolarbe attacked the many “pagan” tribes of this region and during the period 1815 to 1840, managed to establish a series of conquest states at Ngaoundere, Tibati, Kontcha, Tinyer (Tignere), and Banyo (see Strümpell 1912). Historians of the Adamawa jihad agree that despite the overt religious rationale for this war, political and economic motivations were more important (Mohammadou 1981; Abubakar 1972:74). To quote Eldridge Mohammadou (1981: 238, my translation):

The religious argument furnished only a supplementary motivation (for the Adamawa jihad)... The jihad (permitted the Fulbe) to systematise and organise the conquest and although the religious motive was certainly predominant for certain of the participants, for the majority the conquest of Adamawa was above all a political act. Its aim was to transform the (Fulbe) position in the area from a subordinate to a dominant one and then to engage in territorial expansion so as to consolidate their political power.

One prong of the Wolarbe conquest, led by Ardo Njobdi of Bundang, directed its principal attacks against the several Mbum groups living at Ngaoundere and other towns nearby. Although the conquest of the Mbum and their neighbours the Duru was not completed by Njobdi himself, who died in 1849 (Mohammadou 1981: 245; Froelich 1954: 14), Njobdi’s successors were able to consolidate their hold on Ngaoundere over the next decade and transform it into the most important Fulbe state of southern Adamawa. The Fulbe of Ngaoundere became more sedentary during this period, setting up a complex system of territorial administration and establishing a sizeable walled capital which counted about 11,000 inhabitants in the late nineteenth century (Ponel 1896: 207). In theory, throughout the nineteenth century, the rulers of Ngaoundere continued to stand in a relation of subordination to the Emir of Adamawa at Yola, owing him an annual tribute of 1,000 slaves, 1,000 cattle and 10 large elephant tusks (Abdoullaye and Mohammadou 1972; see also Lacroix 1952: 34). However, Ngaoundere was sufficiently strong and distant from Yola so that, in practice, it only paid this tribute when it suited Ngaoundere to do so.

By the 1850s, Ngaoundere’s desire for territorial expansion *per se* began to dim. The Fulbe state already controlled extensive tracts of lightly populated land near to home, and its emphasis progressively shifted from territorial conquest to a less direct exploitation of its peripheries via slave raiding and trade. Hemmed in on three sides by other Fulbe powers, Ngaoundere’s main attentions in this regard were aimed toward the southeast, in particular against the Gbaya and Laka peoples who lived 200 kilometres or more from Ngaoundere town in what is now the Central African Republic and Chad. This contact with peripheral “pagan” groups by the military and commercial agents of Ngaoundere, the “raiders and traders” of my title, forms the main subject of this paper and will be examined in detail after a brief discussion of the significance of slavery in the structure of the Ngaoundere state itself.

Slavery and the Ngaoundere State

The Adamawa jihad was undertaken by small groups of Fulbe who were substantially outnumbered by the autochthonous “pagan” groups of the region. Ngaoundere was certainly no exception in this regard, and the rapid integration of conquered Mbum and other peoples into the Fulbe state, which transformed large numbers of former enemies into effective elements of the state political and economic apparatus, is truly remarkable.

The limited information that we possess concerning the organisation of the Wolarbe Fulbe who first penetrated the Adamawa Plateau and attacked the Mbum of Ngaoundere suggests that they were a semi-nomadic pastoral group.² Slaves definitely formed a part of Wolarbe society prior to the jihad, and it is possible that some of these slaves were settled in fixed farming villages which served as wet-season foci and political and ceremonial centres for the transhumant families of Fulbe pastoralists. At least a rudimentary system of political offices, with titles for both free-men and slaves, was in operation prior to the jihad and had probably been adopted by the Wolarbe during their earlier period of residence in Bornu.

On analogy between the pre-jihad Wolarbe and better documented cases of similar semi-pastoral Fulbe groups composed of both free and slave elements, it is probable that the initial group of Wolarbe who took Ngaoundere did not exceed 5,000 in number, including women, children and slaves.³ But in the course of several decades of fighting against the indigenous peoples of the Ngaoundere region, the Fulbe were able to conquer and reduce to slavery or tributary status large groups of local populations who certainly outnumbered the Fulbe conquerors by several orders of magnitude. These conquests were assisted by alliances between Ngaoundere and other Fulbe states as well as by the progressive incorporation of “pagan” elements into the Ngaoundere army. Conquered “pagan” village populations located near Ngaoundere town were often allowed to remain on their traditional lands. Their chiefs were awarded titles, and the whole village unit was allocated to the *tokkal* (political following) of a titled Fulbe or slave official in the Ngaoundere court, who became responsible for collecting annual taxes and raising levies of soldiers for Fulbe war expeditions. In return, the “pagan” group’s loyalty to Ngaoundere was rewarded principally by opportunities to secure booty in war, and this incentive was probably the primary factor which allowed the Fulbe to secure the allegiance of conquered groups so rapidly.

The *tokke* units (plural of *tokkal*) which formed the basis of the Ngaoundere administrative system, had their origins in the leadership patterns of mobile pastoral society and were not discrete territorial domains ruled by resident overlords. Rather, *tokke* were sets of followers, both Fulbe and members of vassal peoples, who were

2 I wish to thank Eldridge Mohammadou for giving me access to the unpublished text of an oral history of Ngaoundere (*Taariha Ngawndere*) which he has recorded. (It has subsequently been published in Mohammadou 1978).

3 Relevant parallels for the pre-jihad Wolarbe social organisation include the Wodaabe of late nineteenth-century Bornu (Stenning 1959: 73–76) and the Jafun of the Adamawa Plateau in Cameroon after the turn of the century (Dupire 1970: 241–244).

distributed in a scattering of different rural villages or residential quarters in town and who were allocated to individual office holders living at Ngaoundere at the whim of the Fulbe ruler (*laamiido*). Such a spatially dispersed administrative organisation lessened chances of secession by parts of the Ngaoundere state and yet was an effective means of mobilising and organising an army.

In addition to locally conquered “pagan” peoples, the size of the servile population at Ngaoundere was further enlarged by slaves captured at distances of 200 to 500 kilometres from Ngaoundere town itself. These captives were brought back for resettlement at Ngaoundere either as domestic slaves or as farm slaves in slave villages (*duumde*, *sing.* *ruumnde*). This long-distance raiding, which was a regular occurrence from the 1850s up until the first decade of the twentieth century, was a large-scale phenomenon, and European observers at the end of the nineteenth century estimated that as many as 8,000 to 10,000 slaves might be taken on these raids annually (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1972: 76, 204–20; Loeffler 1907: 225; Ponel 1896: 205–207). Those captives who were not settled at Ngaoundere were sold to Hausa or Kanuri traders, and Adamawa soon gained the reputation as a slave traders’ Eldorado (Passarge 1895: 480). By the second half of the nineteenth century, Adamawa had become the main source of supply for the Sokoto Caliphate (Lacroix 1952: 34).

Summing up the demographic situation at Ngaoundere in the nineteenth century, we can say that at no time following the establishment of the Fulbe state did the proportion of slaves and vassals to freemen ever fall below a one-to-one ratio and that, for most of the period, the ratio was probably more like two-to-one. Modern census figures, although they can be applied retrospectively with only the greatest of caution, tend to support this interpretation. Thus, in 1950, there were approximately 23,000 Fulbe living in the Ngaoundere state as compared with 35,000 non-Fulbe who were still identifiable as ex-slaves, vassals or servants of the Fulbe (Froelich 1954: 25). It goes without saying that in modern conditions, when all legal disabilities and constraints on movement have been removed, the proportion of servile to free would be expected to drop. But nonetheless, as late as 1950, we still encounter almost a three-to-two ratio.

Whatever the exact number and proportion of slaves in the pre-colonial period, they were not all of uniform social or legal status, and it is instructive to attempt a classification of the various forms of servitude in practice in nineteenth century Ngaoundere. The Fulbe language makes a distinction between *dimo* and *maccudo*, meaning respectively “freeman” and “slave”, a discrimination paralleling the basic one made in Koranic law. Membership in the legally free category was attainable through birth to two free parents, through birth to a slave concubine having relations with a freeman, or through manumission. A slave concubine herself, having borne a free child, would also become free on the death of her child’s father. Free offspring of slave concubines were not jurally disadvantaged and as the decades passed after the conquest, many of the Ngaoundere aristocracy and even several of the rulers had such parentage.

Manumitted slaves were known as *dimdinaado*, a term formed on the same verbal root as *dimo* but with the addition of causative and passive infixes which literally means “one who has been freed”. Although a freedman suffered no subsequent legal

disabilities, his low birth could be socially disadvantageous, particularly when it came to contracting marriage.

The term *maccuḍo*, or slave, when used in its broadest non-technical sense, referred to all subject “pagans” (or *haabe*) regardless of their exact legal or social situation. Jurally speaking, there was a clear distinction made, for taxation and other purposes, between conquered tribute-paying groups who were permitted to live on their traditional lands under the control of their traditional chiefs, and captive individuals or groups who were brought back to Ngaoundere and resettled. Vassal groups including various Mbum and Duru populations living near Ngaoundere were required to pay annually the Koranic *jizya* tribute to the state, consisting minimally of a large basket of millet of about 20 kgs. per household (Froelich 1954: 48). Slaves, on the other hand, were not taxed, since in principle all their produce belonged to their masters who in turn fed and clothed them and provided their other basic needs. However, despite the distinctions which existed between the slave and vassal categories in Koranic law, it would be an error to draw an overly sharp line between the two groups. In practice, the Fulbe clearly viewed the vassal populations as functionally similar to slaves and did not hesitate to demand extra produce or labour from them as required. Many concubines were also procured from vassal groups, and the status of these women often differed little from that of concubines of slave status. In the last analysis, the most important point with regard to vassal groups at Ngaoundere was that the Fulbe still regarded these people as potential reservoirs of slaves and if these groups and their leaders did not submit to Fulbe demands, they would be raided and reduced to total slavery (Passarge 1895: 297).

Even among the slave population at Ngaoundere itself, there were marked variations in status. Slaves could be owned by private owners or by the state. In the case of private ownership, slaves normally performed farming or herding work or could serve as domestic slaves in the master’s household. The state owned substantial numbers of farm slaves as well, but there was also a category of court slaves (a few of whom were eunuchs) linked to the office of ruler, *laamiido* (Passarge 1895: 490–491). Many of the latter performed domestic tasks in the ruler’s compound while others served as officers in the government or military. For example, the officers of *sarki lifida*, the head of the heavy cavalry, and *sarki bindiga*, the leader of the corps of musketeers, were both slave titles (Passarge 1895: 267,494 ; Froelich 1954: 79). Farm slaves settled in slave villages known as *duumde* had the hardest life, while the court slaves in certain cases could wield substantial power and live a life of ease, supported by state funds and owning their own slaves (Passarge 1895: 489–490).

One problematic issue with regard to the Fulbe system of slavery at Ngaoundere is the question of the increasing rights enjoyed by at least some of the slaves who had been born in captivity (*diimaajo*, pl. *riimaiḍe*).⁴ Some form of progressive modification of slave status was only logical in a situation where slaves might hold important public offices and where, in theory at least, masters were under the obligation to convert their slaves to Islam. Although the full details of the practice are not

4 Although superficially the terms *diimaajo* and *dimo* might appear to share the same root, they in fact have nothing in common.

clear, it appears that in the case of household and court slaves who had been raised as Muslims in their masters' households, their owners were morally, although perhaps not legally, barred from selling them.⁵ On the other hand, farm slaves in Ngaoundere were subject to a more severe regime, and they and their children were sold at their masters' will.

At first glance, the presence of numerous slave villages around Ngaoundere might lead one to the conclusion that the principal economic dynamic of the society was based on the extraction of an agricultural surplus from the servile population by the Fulbe state and private slave-owners for sale on the market. More careful consideration of the case, however, leads to the rejection of this conventional "slave mode of production" interpretation. Ngaoundere's reputation during the nineteenth century was built on the importance of its trade, and yet agricultural commodities as well as the output of Ngaoundere's rudimentary craft production played virtually no role in this commerce (Lacroix 1952: 32–33). The transport of bulky foodstuffs for long distances by human or donkey portage was uneconomical, and the lightly populated Fulbe states of southern Adamawa had few difficulties in feeding their populations in any case. The agricultural produce of the slave settlements was used to support the ruler's court and the related administrative and warfare apparatus, and the growth in the number of slave settlements around Ngaoundere during the nineteenth century was principally linked with a political and demographic strategy of increasing the manpower available to the state.

On the other hand, Ngaoundere maintained an important pastoral component in its ecology throughout the nineteenth century and slave herdsmen were often used in this activity (Passarge 1895: 261). Cattle did serve as an important form of tribute and general means of exchange between the states of Adamawa as well as between Ngaoundere and its "pagan" peripheries where cattle were exchanged for slaves.⁶ But cattle production at Ngaoundere did not require large inputs of labour and consequently cannot constitute an adequate explanation for the voracious appetite for slaves of the Ngaoundere state.

The slave-raiding activities of Ngaoundere had their own in-built and self-perpetuating rationale. The majority of the slaves taken in raids were traded to other Fulbe states, and it was more as means of exchange than as means of production that slaves constituted the principal source of Ngaoundere's wealth. Captives who were resettled in slave villages at Ngaoundere primarily served to strengthen the

5 Ruxton (1916: 73, 351–352), in his standard text on Maliki law, notes that the "law strictly prohibits the enslaving of any Muhammadan". On the other hand, he further points out that although the freeing of a slave who has become Muslim is a source of special blessing, a slave who converts is not *ipso facto* free. Froelich (1954: 18) cites the case of certain formerly pagan peoples such as the Langui, a Bata group, who accompanied the Fulbe of Ngaoundere on their conquests as auxiliaries. Having converted to Islam, they eventually passed from slave to free status. But, Froelich (1954: 19) also notes that slave masters might sell young slave children, an indication that second-generation slave status in itself did not exempt a slave from sale.

6 As will be apparent from the preceding comments, I would reject Lacroix's contention (1952: 32; see also Goldstein 1908) that the Fulbe of the Adamawa states made little economic use of their cattle other than as a store of prestige. Most contemporary observers of the precolonial Fulbe states reported that cattle were extensively used for tribute and for exchanges for slaves. The situation was different among nomadic Fulani pastoralists, but they are not relevant to the present topic.

slave-raiding machinery, by producing food to feed more warriors and/or by serving as warriors themselves. The continued existence of the Ngaoundere state in its nineteenth century form clearly depended on its slave raiding and trading, activities which implied a continuing integral relationship within a regional system between Ngaoundere and its “pagan” peripheries. It is this relationship which I shall concentrate upon in the remainder of the paper – in particular the impact of Ngaoundere’s activities on the Gbaya, a people among whom I carried out field research.

The Fulbe and the Gbaya

Dropping back to pick up the thread of our history of Ngaoundere, the 1830s and 1840s were spent by Njobdi and his successor, Lawan Haman, in establishing and consolidating their control over Ngaoundere and its immediate environs. By the 1850s, however, sufficient local control had been established around Ngaoundere so that the Fulbe could turn their attentions further afield. Until major Fulbe raiding parties began to range the western Gbaya region at this time, infrequent long-distance trade carried out by daring individuals appears to have provided the only significant link between the Gbaya and the Muslim world, and we have no evidence of substantial Muslim penetration beyond the few trading centres on the western margins of Gbaya territory (Flegel 1885: 15). This trade, which was in the hands of traders from Hausaland and Bornu, was very perilous and focused on low-volume, high-profit items, particularly ivory (Flegel 1885: 15, 21; Lacroix 1952: 34–36). But when sizeable Fulbe military expeditions began to be launched against the Gbaya by Ardo Issa, who reigned from 1854 to 1878, we start to get evidence of significant political and religious accommodations on the part of the Gbaya to the Fulbe presence, and the volume and complexity of trade, especially in slaves, increased markedly (Flegel 1885: 15–21; Mohammadou 1981; Charreau 1905: 74–76; Froelich 1954: 14).

Most Fulbe expeditions against the Gbaya took place during the dry season and normally lasted for several months, although in some cases they stretched over several years (Passarge 1895: 275; Charreau 1905: 78–79; Strümpell 1912: 84). A sizeable proportion of Ngaoundere would participate in these major raids and one French traveller reported that when he visited the town in 1893, 3,000 out of the total town population of 11,000 were absent for such a purpose (Cholet 1896: 207). Once the war party, complete with women and domestic slaves to look after the warriors’ needs, had travelled to within striking range of the enemy, a fortified military camp (*sanyeere*) was established to serve as a safe base (Ponel 1896: 205). The *sanyeere* also served as a slave market after captives had been taken. The ruler of Ngaoundere profited heavily from these raids, since he claimed a minimum of fifty percent of the slaves taken. When the ruler’s titled slaves commanded such a slaving expedition, he had first choice from the whole take, although he of course would reward his officers well. The bulk of the slaves taken were sold by the successful warriors to Hausa traders who visited the *sanyeere* for this purpose, and

these captives were then exported for resale in the large slave markets of Hausaland and Bornu.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, several Gbaya towns on the western margins of Gbaya territory, in particular Kounde, Baboua, and Gaza, which were conquered early in the Fulbe attacks on the Gbaya, began to serve as regular bases for Fulbe military forces and entrepôts for Hausa traders (Charreau 1905: 12, 24, 76–77, 139; Strümpell 1912: 83–84; Froelich 1954: 14; Burnham 1981).

During the half-century of Fulbe contact with the Gbaya prior to the European arrival in 1892, the political situation ebbed and flowed, depending mainly upon the extent of Fulbe military presence among the Gbaya at the moment. When a full-scale Fulbe raiding party, complete with the mailed horsemen on which Fulbe military superiority was based, actually travelled the two hundred or more kilometres from Ngaoundere to the western Gbaya area, they were more or less assured of military success (Passarge 1895: 484). Some Gbaya clans and their leaders submitted with little or no fighting, accepting to pay tribute, to conduct slave raids on behalf of Ngaoundere, and to allow Muslim traders free access to their territory (Charreau 1905: 10–30 Mizon 1895: 365; Brussaux 1908: 82–83). Other Gbaya fled in the face of the Fulbe, scattered in the bush, and thus evaded Fulbe control (Mizon 1895: 365).⁷ Still others, particularly those with strong leadership, offered a stout resistance and were sometimes sufficiently successful to escape Fulbe conquest (Charreau 1905: 77, Tessmann 1937: 165). In any case, once the Fulbe forces returned home, even the subjugated groups were apt not to live up to their pledges of tribute (Charreau 1905: 77; Ponel 1896: 193, 202; Anon. 1893; Anon. 1895: 134–135).⁸ And on various occasions, Ngaoundere was prevented from sending a new military force against such recalcitrant Gbaya for several years due to more pressing military requirements nearer home.

Ngaoundere never succeeded in directly administering most of the Gbaya territories it raided, since the several hundred kilometres separating Ngaoundere from the Gbaya rendered continuous effective Fulbe control very difficult.⁹ It must be remembered that the Adamawa jihad had been accomplished by quite a small number of Fulbe and despite the remarkable incorporative tendencies of the Fulbe state system, which had managed to transform enemy groups like the Mbum of Ngaoundere into vassal allies in less than a generation, it was too much to expect that a state with the logistic and manpower limitations of Ngaoundere could effectively administer the tens of thousands of square kilometres of thinly populated Gbaya territory. True, the Fulbe were able to establish one of their Mbum vassals at the important Gbaya village of Kounde, probably during the late 1870s (Charreau 1905: 74–76; Burnham 1981), but there is no indication that the Mbum of Kounde ever

7 See also Rapport de M. de Brazza à M. le Sous-Sécretaire d'Etat aux Colonies, Gaza, 23 April 1892; Section Outre-Mer des Archives Nationales, Paris, Dossier Gabon–Congo III 13 (henceforth referred to as Arch. 1).

8 Arch. 1, *op. cit.* and Rapport de Mission Ponel 1892–93; Section Outre-Mer des Archives Nationales, Paris, Dossier Gabon–Congo III 14 (henceforth referred to as Arch. 2).

9 An amusing anecdote about an altercation over gambling (Flegel 1885: 19) indicates, however, that the ruler did manage to exercise some indirect authority in the Gbaya region.

treated the Gbaya region as anything more than a frontier area ripe for slave raiding. The Gbaya at Kounde were never incorporated into the internal administrative and fiscal system of the Ngaoundere state. In fact, the Hausa and other Muslims living as traders in the Gbaya region were governed separately by their own leaders appointed by Ngaoundere and paid tax to the Fulbe state, while the sources speak only of tribute, not tax, being levied on conquered Gbaya groups (Charreau 1905: 21, 28; Mizon 1895: 358–359; Burnham 1981).

As already explained, it is by no means certain that the Fulbe of Ngaoundere really wished fully to incorporate the Gbaya into their state as they had done with the Mbum. The vast unconquered lands to the east of the Adamawa states interested the Fulbe more as a source of valued commodities such as ivory and kola nuts and as a reservoir of slaves than as a potential increment to their territory. The Ngaoundere state already controlled large tracts of very lightly populated territory nearer home on which slaves captured on its eastern frontiers could be settled in slave villages (*duumde*) to increase agricultural production and animal husbandry.

It was in conjunction with this strategy of indirect exploitation of the Gbaya region that the rulers of Ngaoundere supported the establishment and maintenance of permanent colonies of Muslim traders among the Gbaya (Mizon 1895: 358–359; Flegel 1885; Passarge 1895: 275).¹⁰ The activities of these colonies of traders under the leadership of former caravan leaders entitled *madugu*, served to funnel the lucrative trade of the Gbaya region toward Ngaoundere and bolstered the effectiveness of the uncertain tribute relations with various Gbaya groups (Burnham 1981). As a result, several Gbaya villages including Kounde, Baboua (Doka), and Gaza grew in size and importance, their leaders expanded their power, and these centres served as foci of Fulbe political influence and Muslim conversion (Tessmann 1937: 175–176).

Looking at a map, the political situation in the Gbaya region by 1890 can be summarised as follows. The villages of Kounde, Baboua, and Gaza on the extreme western margins of the Gbaya region were quite firmly submitted to Fulbe influence, but Gbaya groups only a few hours march to the east were much less sure (Tessmann 1937: 169). Nonetheless, beyond the immediate environs of these three centres, it is possible to trace, in a fairly rough fashion, a zone of relatively strong Fulbe influence which stretched from the headwaters of the Lom and Nana rivers in the north, to the Nana and Mambere river valleys in the east, and down to the level of Gaza in the south (Charreau 1905: 10–30; Mizon 1895: 360–365; Tessmann 1937: 174). In this zone, the Fulbe presence was visible in a number of areas of Gbaya life including warfare technology, the adoption of Islam by some, familiarity with the Fulfulde language, styles of dress, and various other elements of material culture and economy (Brussaux 1908: 82–83; Hartmann 1927). This was an area of heavy Fulbe military activity in the second half of the nineteenth century, and many of these Gbaya groups had entered into tribute and trade relations with the Fulbe. Warfare continued to be prevalent in this area in the 1890s, but conditions were usually stable enough for Hausa traders to operate there with some regularity, although they still travelled in armed caravans (Charreau 1905: 10–12; Ponel 1896: 204).

10 Arch. 1 and Arch. 2, *op. cit.*

Beyond the Nana and Mambere rivers to the east and north and in the area south of Gaza, Fulbe military forces penetrated only infrequently and when they did, they encountered considerable resistance from a number of Gbaya groups as well as from peoples like the Kare, the Yangere, and the Kaka (Mkako). Right up to the early colonial period, these continued to be dangerous frontier areas which were frequently raided for slaves (Loefer 1907: 225 *et seq.*; Charreau 1905: 12, 22, 74 *et seq.*).¹¹

These gradations in Ngaoundere's influence on neighbouring Gbaya groups map out in a synchronic fashion the centre-periphery relationship that I have already mentioned. But in reality, this was a dynamic process spanning more than a half century, through which certain Gbaya groups were mobilised as agents for the Fulbe designs in the area. In addition, as we shall now see, the Fulbe influence had a marked centralising effect on many Gbaya groups, both those collaborating with the Fulbe and those who contested Fulbe penetration.

Gbaya Political Structures in the Mid-Nineteenth Century

When first contacted by the Fulbe in the mid-nineteenth century, the Gbaya were organised in clan territory groupings, which consisted of a number of small hamlets scattered over five to ten square kilometres of wooded savanna and surrounded by much larger expanses of uninhabited hunting grounds. These clan territories normally housed populations of several hundred people. A clan territory had a leader, usually termed "*chef*" in French sources. Clan territories had recognised boundaries and were defended by their inhabitants against encroachments by other similar groups (Tessmann 1937: 143, 161). Clan territories occasionally entered into short-term military alliances but were usually the largest units of collective political action.

Ideally speaking, the Gbaya thought of the membership of such a clan territory as being composed solely of men drawn from a single patriclan (*zu duk*) along with their wives and children (Tessmann 1937: 120–124). However, this ideal of clan homogeneity was rarely achieved in practice and although many of the inhabitants of such a territory were members of one dominant clan, the rest of the adult male population would be drawn from several other clans. When a number of clans inhabited one territory in this way, Gbaya cultural idiom held that the politically dominant clan was the founding clan of the territory and on this basis had the right to provide the "chief" of the group as well as to practise various rituals associated with the control of the territory.

11 Arch. 1 and Arch. 2, *op. cit.* See also Rapport général sur l'expédition de 1896, A. Goujon à M. de Brazza à Libreville, Nola 23 December 1896: Section Outre-Mer des Archives Nationales, Paris, Dossier Gabon-Congo IV 13 (henceforth referred to as Arch. 3). And also Rapport de Mission Pedrizet 1897: Section Outre-Mer des Archives Nationales, Paris, Dossier Gabon-Congo III 18 (henceforth referred to as Arch. 4). And also Trois Itinéraires entre la Haute-Sangha, le Haut-Logone et Lai, Lt. Lancrenon, April 1906: Section Outre-Mer, Dépôt d'Archives d'Aix-en-Provence, Dossier 2 D 33 (henceforth referred to as Arch. 5).

Men from subordinate clans were willing to ally themselves with a dominant clan for a number of reasons, the principal one being that unless a Gbaya hamlet formed a part of a clan territory large enough to defend itself from its neighbours, it was at grave risk of attack and enslavement (Tessmann 1937: 120). Consequently, a clan which had lost membership through war or an epidemic had to seek an alliance with a dominant clan. Likewise, if a segment of a clan quarrelled with its fellow agnates, it could leave its home clan territory and join another. Thus, although a clan territory grouping acted as a more-or-less cohesive unit in external political affairs, at least on the shorter term, the dispersed settlement pattern within the territory as well as a substantial rate of residential mobility betrayed tendencies toward individualism and competitiveness in local level politics over the longer term.

Gbaya geographical mobility also had important implications in the sphere of political leadership. When a small collection of clansmen moved away from their fellows to found a new hamlet, the senior man of the new hamlet was recognised by his co-residents as hamlet headman (Tessmann 1934: 88–89, 1937: 125). This easy multiplication of leadership roles at the hamlet level was another index of fluidity in the Gbaya political system.

The role of clan territory leader among the Gbaya prior to Fulbe contact was not formalised into a corporate office but was a position of considerable uncertainty that was largely reliant on continued military success. As just mentioned, such a war leader's influence could wane and his followers would tend to reallocate their allegiances. The clan-leader role was not characterised by a well-defined rule of succession – any adult male member of the locally dominant clan being eligible to assume the position.

Although Gbaya might well recognise the existence of a powerful leader in their clan territory, they would give him support only to the extent that it suited them. If the disadvantages, in the form of reduced local group autonomy, degree of success in warfare, and access to booty from raiding or to external trade, appeared to outweigh the advantages of continued support, a subordinate group could “vote with its feet” and relocate its hamlet further away from the hamlet of the clan leader. Depending on the degree to which such dissidents wished to withdraw from a “chief's” sphere of influence, they could either simply move their hamlet to a site further from his settlement but still within the same clan territory or they could secede altogether by going to live on the territory of another clan. A strong leader sometimes opposed such secessions with force, using warriors drawn from his own clan plus other dependents such as slaves to attempt to impose his will upon the dissenters (Tessmann 1937: 122–128). We do not have extensive data on the leader's probability of success in such an undertaking, but the general tone of our sources seems to indicate that in most cases it would not be high.

Gbaya “chiefs”, in addition to their duties as war leaders, also arranged inter-clan trading expeditions, which were organised in much the same manner as war parties (Tessmann 1937: 109–110). In addition to trade, marriages would also be arranged on these visits. Omaha-type rules of exogamy, combined with shallow genealogies and fluid local group composition, precluded regular patterns of marriage exchange and forced many men to look for wives outside their own clan territory. As a result,

Gbaya frequently “married their enemies”, marrying women from clans with whom they had only tenuous relations (Tessmann 1937: 162–163).

Although such external marriage links had their dangers, they also could provide potential avenues of political attraction and readjustment through residential relocation of clan segments, since the mother’s brother’s village was considered to be the next-best choice of residence if residence with one’s own clan became impossible or unwise. It was therefore structurally feasible for leaders of strong clan territories to build up larger followings on the basis of marriage alliances. In this connection, clan leaders were usually polygamists, making use of the extra wives to create such alliances as well as to provide a larger domestic and agricultural labour supply (Charreau 1905: 95, 149; Tessmann 1934: 53).

However, such a political expansionist strategy also contained the seeds of its own destruction, since the larger a clan territory got, the greater the possibility for the group to subdivide into two viable military units. In addition, ramifying external marriage alliances did not necessarily work in favour of a unified clan territory since they might just as well provide avenues for the secession of the various subordinate clans from the unit. A Gbaya clan leader appears to have had no effective means at his disposal to control the patterns of marriage alliance of the members of his clan territory groups since marriages were contracted between the two partners and their immediate senior kin co-resident in the same hamlets and were not subject to corporate regulation by the clan as a whole or by the clan territory grouping.

Tendencies toward Political Centralisation in Gbaya Society

Prior to the impact of the Fulbe, then, Gbaya political structures and leadership patterns were quite fluid. But throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, the political organisation of those Gbaya groups in contact with the Fulbe began to firm up, and the roles of certain important Gbaya war leaders took on more of the attributes of corporate political office. The progressive centralisation of Gbaya political structure was intimately linked with the increasing demand for slaves from Ngaoundere and the Hausa–Fulani states beyond, and this process had as its essential pre-condition the threat or fact of large-scale Fulbe raids.

As already noted, this continual military activity by the Ngaoundere state against the Gbaya owed little to a desire for further territorial conquests *per se* and was rather an expression of the commercial and demographic expansionism which was the principal dynamic of this political system. After 1850, Ngaoundere’s main problem was to ensure a regular flow from its peripheries of slaves, ivory, and other desired commodities such as kola nuts, without having to completely dominate and incorporate distant groups like the Gbaya. Effective exploitation of politically acephalous peoples like the Gbaya in the absence of total military control posed particular problems for Ngaoundere and, in response, the Fulbe adopted a policy of support for selected Gbaya war leaders. According to de Brazza who commented on the situation in 1892, Gbaya clans that submitted to the Fulbe without a fight were respected and “their chiefs go to Ngaoundere, receiving there the investiture in the

name of Abbo (the ruler of Ngaoundere), who sends them back to their country". On the other hand, "populations that put up resistance are raided (for slaves) and the sons of chiefs and other important young men are taken to Ngaoundere and brought up in contact with the Fulbe and Hausa. Then, after several years, they are sent back to their homeland where they rule the country in the name of Abbo".¹²

The primary obligations of a Gbaya leader whose clan territory had submitted to the Fulbe were to assure the security of Hausa traders working in his area and to pay regular tribute to the ruler of Ngaoundere. We have no record of the exact amount of tribute levied on Gbaya clan territories annually, but this does not appear to have been too burdensome. For example, Charreau (1905: 28) reports that the village of Bingue near Baboua paid an annual tribute to the ruler of Ngaoundere consisting of slaves, salt, mats, and ivory, but received a return gift of cattle from the ruler which was often of equal local value to the tribute. From the Fulbe point of view, of course, tribute received from the Gbaya was still an important source of wealth even when the Fulbe returned cattle to the Gbaya, because of the very high prices that commodities such as ivory and slaves would bring when traded westwards to Hausaland (Flegel 1885).

Ngaoundere's insistence that Hausa traders be protected reflected the fact that much of the trade in slaves and ivory, the two most important commodities, passed through the hands of these men. A method used by the Fulbe to deal with subjugated Gbaya groups was the settlement of Hausa traders in important Gbaya villages to act as resident representatives of Fulbe interests (Tessmann 1937: 175; Charreau 1905: 11–13, Mizon 1895: 358–359; Burnham 1981).¹³ These Hausa served a number of functions including overseeing Gbaya leaders to try to ensure that tribute payments continued to flow to the ruler, collecting caravan taxes on all long-distance traders passing through the area, welcoming strangers and emissaries, disseminating Islam, and acting as leader of the local non-Gbaya Muslim community. The resident leader of such a colony of traders held the title *madugu*, the Hausa term for the leader of a long-distance caravan, and Mizon (1895: 358–359) explains that this title was a holdover from the earlier careers of these men who had formerly served as caravan leaders (see also Flegel 1885). These *madugai* (plural of *madugu*) along with the many other Hausa and Kanuri traders in the Gbaya regions, also traded for their private benefit and would buy slaves and ivory from Gbaya warriors for cloth, cattle (for butchering), cowries, horses, military equipment, natron, salt, beads, soap, tobacco, leather goods, and silver thalers. Hausa traders also purchased mats, locust bean cake, kola, African pepper (*Xylopiya aethiopica*), and parrot feathers from the Gbaya (Burnham 1981). Firearms did not form a part of this trade, since the Hausa traders in this region had no source of supply prior to direct European contact in the 1890s (cf. Charreau 1905: 140; Mizon 1895: 367).

Not only was the flow of trade and tribute between the Gbaya region and Ngaoundere significant to the Fulbe but it was also of great importance to Gbaya leaders interested in consolidating their positions in their own clan territories. It is

12 Arch. 1 and Arch. 4, *op. cit.*

13 Arch. 1 and Arch. 2, *op. cit.*

difficult to determine just how important the redistributive role of Gbaya clan leaders had been prior to Fulbe contact. Although wealth does not appear to have been a necessary prerequisite for selection as clan leader even in protocolonial times, the assumption of this role implied that the incumbent would take an active part in the patterns of wealth accumulation and exchange in his group and would probably grow relatively wealthy in the process (Charreau 1905: 92, 152; Harttmann 1927: 45–47). The organisation of collective hunts within the clan territory was another of the responsibilities of a clan leader, and he had the right to a share of the meat of any large animals killed by his men. In return, the leader would organise feasts, providing the manioc porridge and possibly beer for consumption with the meat (Charreau 1905: 95; Harttmann 1927: 31, 47). As already mentioned, clan leaders normally became polygamists so as to have sufficient wives to cultivate larger fields and to undertake extra cooking duties in connection with this feasting (Charreau 1905: 144; Tessmann 1934: 53).

The redistributive aspect of the war-leader role must have been enhanced through contact with the Fulbe/Hausa tribute and trade network. By the late nineteenth century, at least some Gbaya war leaders around Kounde and Baboua claimed a right to a portion of the slaves captured by individual Gbaya warriors during a raid, despite the fact that Gbaya custom normally gave an individual the right to any booty he personally captured (Charreau 1905: 138). When a Gbaya leader sent such slaves to Ngaoundere, or traded them to Hausa traders, he gained access to a superior military technology including horses, horse equipment, chain mail, and swords as well as to high-prestige trade goods such as cattle and cloth (Harttmann 1927: 46; Tessmann 1937: 168–172; Charreau 1905: 20, 28).¹⁴ When a Gbaya clan territory stood in a tributary relation with the Fulbe, this tribute was also funnelled through the clan leader who might take it personally to Ngaoundere and who received gifts from the ruler in return. Judicious distribution and control of such wealth and warfare objects could then be used to enhance the clan leader's position in his own group. As long as a clan leader continued to enjoy success in warfare and/or could maintain advantageous relations with the Fulbe, these patterns of exchange combined and mutually reinforced one another to shore up his power and give added cohesiveness and stability to his clan territory and his own leadership role (Tessmann 1937: 175). As a result, his position as leader became less dependent on fleeting charismatic qualities. By the beginning of the colonial period, such successful Gbaya leaders could mount miniature court displays in the Fulbe style to impress visiting Europeans, complete with a few cavalry and a well-equipped escort of retainers and musicians (Tessmann 1937: 168–170, 174–178; Harttmann 1927: 20, 46). Harttmann (1927: 47) mentions as well that in some areas of strong Fulbe influence, "chiefs" were able to require their followers to build houses and cultivate fields on their behalf – obligations which Tessmann (1937: 125) considered to be uncharacteristic of most Gbaya groups.

These major Gbaya "chiefs" relied heavily on slave raiding to sustain their position of power. So common was this large-scale raiding in the northwestern margins

14 Arch. 1 and Arch. 4, *op. cit.*

of the Gbaya country that a special trail was opened to convey the slaves directly to Ngaoundere. Ponel, one of de Brazza's lieutenants who travelled to Ngaoundere in 1893 along this route, called it the "Laka road" and mentioned that he regularly saw "human debris" along it – the remains of slaves who were too feeble to reach Ngaoundere.¹⁵ Raiding provided slaves, and trade or tribute in slaves gave access to wealth and superior armament (Charreau 1905: 22, 182; Tessmann 1937: 126–128; Hartmann 1927: 48).¹⁶ Success thus bred success, and the several more important Gbaya leaders of the late nineteenth century were occasionally able to bring about short-lived but extensive inter-clan alliances that, according to contemporary accounts, could field as many as one thousand warriors, at least some of whom were mounted.¹⁷ On the other hand, the various Gbaya groups that offered a sustained opposition to the Fulbe and their Mbum and Gbaya tributaries also had to field large forces, and certain well-known Gbaya leaders emerged in this context (Tessmann 1927: 165; Anon. 1895: 134–135; Ponel 1896: 193; Mizon 1895: 360; Charreau 1905: 77).¹⁸ In other words, tribute relations with the Fulbe were not the only means by which political cohesiveness was enhanced in Gbaya society.

Although the bulk of the slaves taken in Gbaya raids were sold to Hausa traders for cattle, cowries, cloth, and other trade goods, when Gbaya captured other Gbaya, the captives were sometimes ransomed by their relatives (Charreau 1905: 139, 167).¹⁹ Tessmann (1937: 127) quotes ransom rates of ten goats for young people and twenty goats for adults. As another alternative, slaves could be kept by their captor, eventually to be incorporated into his clan. A female slave would be taken as a wife. Young male captives served as agricultural workers and when they had matured, they would be given a wife by their master and would enjoy more freedom. They could normally be expected to serve their master throughout their lives and were valuable supporters in local political struggles. But Gbaya slavery never developed beyond this domestic form, with slaves enjoying a pseudo-kinship or clientage relation with their masters, which led to the progressive incorporation of their descendants into the master's clan (Tessmann 1937: 126–128; Hartmann 1927: 48). This contrasted with the practice of the Muslim traders at Kounde and Gaza and the Mbum vassal chief at Kounde, who owned substantial numbers of slaves whom they settled in separate slave settlements and used both as agricultural labourers and as a corps of trusted warriors.²⁰

15 Arch. 2, *op. cit.*

16 Arch. 1, Arch. 2, Arch. 3, Arch. 4, *op. cit.* See also CCCCFF Dossier: Rapport No. 5 de M. l'Administrateur Danvin sur les incidents de la 4CF, Affaires Gaboriaud et Denizart, no date (*circa* 1902–1902): Section Outre-Mer des Archives Nationales, Paris, AEF Concessions Carton XXX (hereafter referred to as Arch. 6).

17 Arch. 1 and Arch. 6, *op. cit.*

18 Arch. 3, *op. cit.*

19 Arch. 3, *op. cit.*

20 Arch. 3, *op. cit.*

The Traders' Role in the Regional System

Thus far, this paper has focused primarily on the “raiders”, and the political implications of Ngaoundere’s military activities and tribute collection among the Gbaya groups on its periphery. I now want to turn to the other part of my title and consider in more detail the activities of the long-distance traders in this regional system.

As we have already seen, long-distance traders began to operate in the Gbaya regions in earnest in the second half of the nineteenth century, after the advent of large-scale Fulbe raiding had provided the conditions of military control necessary for effective trading. From the accounts of Barth (1857, II: 613–621; see also Burnham 1981) and Mai Gashin Baki (Flegel 1885), it seems that a few Hausa traders had made contact with the westernmost Gbaya groups at least a decade before 1850, but this commerce was limited only to those daring enough to take great risks in order to secure the potentially high profits that were available.

After 1850, large caravans of 200 to 300 traders accompanied by their wives and slaves visited the western Gbaya groups on a regular basis. The traders did their trading on an individual basis but travelled in armed caravans for mutual protection. Some of the traders were mounted on horseback and wore chain mail. But the actual transport of merchandise appears to have been accomplished primarily by head carrying, although donkeys were also sometimes used. These caravans were led by a *madugu* (caravan leader) and operated according to a well-defined set of customary rules. The caravan leader and his lieutenants (*ubandawaki* and *jangaba*) regulated conflicts internal to the caravan and represented the caravan’s interests in negotiations with local chiefs. The caravan leader paid tolls and tribute on behalf of the whole group and then would recoup these outlays from the caravan members according to the number of loads of merchandise each trader was transporting (Flegel 1885: 15–17).

The relatively safe trading entrepôts which developed among the Gbaya, particularly at the towns of Kounde, Baboua, and Gaza, attracted some of these traders to settle on a more permanent basis and act as bulk makers. These men accumulated stocks of kola nuts, ivory and other commodities through regular trade with the Gbaya, and these stocks were later exported when caravans visited the towns. As already mentioned, although these resident traders did not explicitly form a part of the administrative system of the Ngaoundere state, their presence in the Gbaya region did contribute to the effectiveness of the Fulbe economic exploitation of their “pagan” peripheries. In addition, these communities of Muslim traders also constituted an important source of Islamic influence (Tessmann 1937: 175–176), since some of their leaders and other prominent traders had made the pilgrimage to Mecca, were literate in Arabic, and gave instruction in the Koran. This influence mainly made itself felt on Gbaya leaders who, as Tessmann (1937: 174–175) and others note (Mizon 1895: 358–359), saw in Islam a new road to power.²¹ The mass of the Gbaya people remained unconverted and little influenced by Islam.

21 Arch. 1, *op. cit.*

These long-distance and locally resident traders were not natives of Ngaoundere and although they are often referred to in the literature as “Hausa” traders and used the Hausa language in their trading, they were not necessarily Hausa either. Their ethnic origins were diverse and included Kanuri, Jukun, Nupe, Wangarawa, Mandara, and Choa Arab as well as Hausa. These traders displayed weak political allegiances and constituted a floating population which circulated widely throughout the Muslim societies of West Africa. They would trade wherever it seemed most profitable, and the great concentration of these men in Ngaoundere and the Gbaya regions in the latter half of the nineteenth century is good evidence for the high profitability of the trading opportunities available in this area at that time. Indeed, one of the principal economic correlates of the centre–periphery relations in a regional system of slavery is the relatively low cost of slaves procured on the periphery in comparison with the selling price of slaves in the centre. Even with little trading capital, the long-distance trader who was willing to assume the risks of trading among the Gbaya in the nineteenth century stood the chance of amassing a fortune after only a few visits (Flegel 1885: 9).

The presence of large numbers of long-distance traders was very advantageous for the finances of the Ngaoundere state. The state treasury collected taxes from each caravan in the form of gate taxes, river-crossing taxes, and taxes levied on all traders seeking the right to trade in Ngaoundere’s dominions. In this way, revenues accrued to Ngaoundere from its peripheries without the necessity of establishing complete domination over the Gbaya borderlands. Yet despite Ngaoundere’s vital interest in these revenues and the fact that traders of various ethnic groups including the Hausa and Kanuri had titled representatives at the ruler’s court to defend their interests, this trade never became a full-fledged state trade. In most cases, the profits from the export of slaves, ivory, and other commodities from Ngaoundere accrued to the traders as private individuals. On the other hand, particularly in the case of slaves taken by Gbaya groups which had submitted to Ngaoundere, the ruler expected that all of these captives would be given to him for sale to the traders or for other form of disposal, and failure to follow this practice was taken as a sign of revolt.

Conclusion

The structure of the system of slavery in Adamawa in the nineteenth century was determined primarily by military and commercial factors. The involvement of slaves in production activities in Adamawa, while undoubtedly the source of much of the food on which the Fulbe states subsisted, was of relatively minor structural importance. In this regard, the Adamawa case is hardly unique in Africa and bears close comparison with several of the studies presented in the symposium *L’Esclavage en Afrique Précoloniale* (Meillassoux 1975: 17). Such cases, as Meillassoux (1975: 21, my translation) notes in his introduction, do not lend themselves to an analysis based on the classic Marxist concept of slave mode of production and rather “lead one to reject the slapping on of prefabricated modes of production, summarily borrowed from a few remarks or writings of Marx and Engels.”

A good example of the Marxist dogmatism that Meillassoux probably has in mind is provided by Büttner's study of slavery in nineteenth-century Adamawa which analyses Fulbe state structures as being based on the extraction by the ruling class of an agricultural surplus produced by a servile population. At first glance, the presence of substantial numbers of slave agricultural settlements in Adamawa would appear to support Büttner's case, but she (1967: 57) is forced to admit that craft production, commerce, and transport were not sufficiently developed in Adamawa to permit the Fulbe rulers directly to convert any agricultural "surplus" which might accrue into other forms of wealth (cf. Terray 1975: 429). On the contrary, a military and demographic strategy was pursued in which slave capture and slave production of foodstuffs were used to create and support larger and larger armies (composed mainly of slaves) to permit the further expansion of raiding activities (cf. Büttner 1967: 53). The cattle production of slave villages, to the extent that it entered into commercial circulation rather than being used for household dairy production, bridewealth or other ceremonial exchanges, could only be exploited by using the cattle as a quasi-monetary means of exchange to reward the "pagan" vassals of the Fulbe for securing slaves, ivory or other commodities. In the last analysis, therefore, I would argue that the slave systems of the Adamawa states were primarily oriented toward the production of more slaves, who were easily traded to the states of the Sokoto Caliphate and Bornu in return for luxury goods. Faced with the fact that Adamawa states were not primarily oriented toward slave agricultural production, Büttner (1967: 48, 53) is ultimately forced to put forward the grossly teleological argument that the Fulbe polities would inevitably evolve in this direction.

Other Marxist writers, although not as wedded to the classical schema as Büttner, still attempt to preserve the primary analytical importance of the production concept with equally poor results. Coquery-Vidrovitch, for example, in her writings on the "African" mode of production, engages in a ridiculous metaphorical extension of the term "production" in order to include in this category the "production" of slaves by military activities (see also Goody 1971: 36). Thus she writes (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1975: 54),

We should not be criticized here for emphasising too strongly the mode of circulation of goods over the mode of production; the basic problem was not that of transporting goods but indeed getting hold of them, in some way to "produce" them. The activity in question was obviously a bastardised form of production, one both immediate and apparent, but in fact contradictory and predatory; because in the long term it laid waste the countryside rather than enriching it. There were two avenues open: war (in the form of slave raiding) or peaceful exchange with neighbouring peoples...; an external circulation which can be reduced to a form of production in contrast to the internal circulation within a given society.

Only a nervous Marxist with her eyes on the ancestors rather than on the data could have concocted such a tortuous argument.

Althusserian Marxist formulations (Althusser and Balibar 1970), which attempt to preserve the primary role of the production concept as "determinant-in-the-last-instance" while allowing for temporary "dominance" of other institutional "instances" such as politics, religion, or kinship cannot adequately deal with cases of the Adamawa type either. Demonstrably, it was the military and distributional structures themselves, and not any hidden influence of the forces and relations of

production or any of the other elements of the Althusserian *combinatoire* (Althusser and Balibar 1970: 215, 311), which effected the transformations toward greater political centralisation both in the Ngaoundere state itself and among its Gbaya tributaries. In broader terms, the Althusserian concept of “determination-in-the-last-instance” must be seen for what it is: a definitional trick of the same order as Coquery-Vidrovitch’s metaphorical extension of the production concept which has no real analytical value.

Another unfortunate effect of the Marxist preoccupation with the internal dynamics of the production process is that it tends to obscure the regional nature of these systems. In contrast with the more orthodox Marxist position, writers such as Meillassoux (1975: 22–24), Friedman (1976: 9–10) and Kopytoff and Miers (1977: 65) have argued for the value of a regional focus on the grounds that the structural requisites for the persistence (“reproduction” in Marxist terminology) of these systems are inter-societal in character. The necessity of such regional interlinkage in Adamawa is evident: the dominant slave-holding society needed continually to replenish its stock of slaves, given that the rate of reproduction of already captured slaves was not sufficient to replace losses from escape, export, manumission, and death. The term “necessity” in the preceding sentence is to be understood in a logical or structural manner, rather than in a functionalist one, in the sense that the resupply of slaves from the peripheries was, by definition, requisite for the persistence of the regional system in an unchanged form.

The structural zoning effect produced by this replenishment process, which I have referred to as a centre–periphery relation, is primarily a function of political and military factors which determine who will be the raider and who will be the raided. At the centre is the militarily secure, dominant group with its demands for slaves. On the peripheries are the groups being raided at the effective limit of the centre’s direct or indirect military influence. In between these two extremes are to be found various forms of intermediary structure, including groups ensuring the continued flow of slaves toward the centre via trading, tribute collection and payment, and raiding activities. In Adamawa, both Ngaoundere and the western Gbaya groups around Koude, Baboua, and Gaza functioned in such an intermediary capacity, funnelling slaves from Gbaya and Laka groups on the extreme margins of the system in toward the states of the Sokoto Caliphate and Bornu at the centre. The multi-ethnic corps of traders functioned in such an intermediary capacity as well, being attracted to points of supply and demand within the system with little regard for societal boundaries or allegiances.

In the light of the Adamawa case, I cannot agree with Kopytoff and Miers’ (1977: 64) contention that, “in the larger societies and the larger regional economic systems, trafficking in people must always have been but a minor part of the total entrepreneurial activity.” These authors seem to believe that the middleman role in a regional system of slavery would inevitably be the occupation of individuals or small groups of traders who engaged in slave trading almost as a side-line, rather than a function of the military hegemonies of state structures themselves as in the Adamawa region. As we have seen, the Fulbe states of Adamawa placed primary emphasis on the development and maintenance of a strong slave-raiding force, recruited through

slave raiding itself or mobilisation of vassal groups. As Terray (1975: 446–448) has noted in his discussion of Abron slavery, states that depend in this way on the military services of their subject peoples tend to minimise the level of tribute demanded from these same people. Ngaoundere was similar to the Abron in this regard, extracting small agricultural tributes from subject groups and offering the chance of substantial rewards of booty to slave officers and warriors and to subject “pagan” groups who participated in Ngaoundere raids. On the other hand, the Ngaoundere state was strict in its insistence that the great bulk of slaves taken during these raids be passed through official state channels, a further indication of the central importance of the slave trade for Ngaoundere’s fortunes.

At the same time, Meillassoux’s (1971: 24) portrayal of such systems in terms of an alien military class progressively dominating and exploiting an indigenous “peasantry” is misleading because it overdraws the division between rulers and ruled. Moreover, Meillassoux does not give sufficient recognition to the fact that the stability and remarkable incorporative tendencies of states like Ngaoundere, whose population was composed in the majority by vassals and slaves, were based on the possibility for the subject peoples to participate in and profit from slave raiding themselves.

In a like manner, Ngaoundere’s relatively open attitude to foreign traders can also be understood as a function of their overall strategy of wealth extraction from the peripheral regions. It was not in Ngaoundere’s interest to impose too rigid a system of state controls on the activities of these long-distance traders, who collected valuable commodities such as ivory and kola from the Gbaya and other groups without the necessity of a formal state trading apparatus. As long as the trading conditions were reasonably safe and highly profitable, Ngaoundere could be assured of a large influx of these traders and a satisfactory profit would accrue to the state via moderate market taxes, gifts and tolls.

The military and commercial strategy of the Ngaoundere state resulted in a progressive development and extension of Fulbe political and economic structures toward the peripheries. This extension, however, did not necessarily involve the conquest and total incorporation of neighbouring “pagan” groups. Many Fulbe cultural and social influences penetrated ahead of the expanding frontiers of the Ngaoundere state via contacts with Hausa traders and the efforts of Gbaya war leaders, who wished to enhance their control over their followers by channelling desired trade goods and Fulbe military equipment through their own hands. Only at a later date might the Fulbe succeed in establishing more direct control and begin to reorganise peripheral groups. This was the case of the Mbum and Gbaya villages of Mboula and Kounde which were at least partially incorporated into Ngaoundere’s *tokkal* form of administrative structure by the late nineteenth century. At the same period, slave villages (*duum de*) housing the Laka retainers of the Mbum vassal chief were established at Kounde. These diffused effects are best understood as structural entailments of the “inflationary” demand for slaves at the centre of the regional system, a dynamic that was only checked by the advent of colonial rule.

1994 Epilogue

The decision to reprint my 1980 article in the present *Paideuma* volume has afforded me the opportunity of revising and updating the text to reflect research and publications relating to this theme which I have carried out, sometimes in collaboration with colleagues, subsequent to 1980. However, rather than tampering with the original text, I decided to republish it in its original form (with only the “in press” references updated, several typographical errors corrected, and the transcriptions of the Fulfulde words improved by the addition of the symbols 6 and d') and to write this epilogue, giving a short account of more recent relevant work. In fact, the research I have carried out on this theme over the past thirteen years has not caused me to modify my views on any of the basic arguments in the 1980 paper but has provided considerable additional material which can serve to amplify our understanding of the restructuring effects of slave raiding and trading on the societies of Adamawa during the nineteenth century. As a framework for summarising this new material, I have divided it into two parts – that relating to the societies on the system's peripheries versus that relating to the societies at the core.

Relations on the Periphery

As discussed above, the penetration of the Fulbe of Ngaoundere into the southern and western marches of their territory from the 1840s onward led to the establishment of a series of tributary political formations in these marginal areas. In towns such as Kounde, Baboua and Gaza, Mbum and/or Gbaya leaders acted as allies of the Fulbe state, while facilitating the activities of the Hausa traders who exported slaves, ivory, and other commodities back toward the major cities of the Sokoto Caliphate. Thanks to additional field and archival research since 1980 by Elisabeth Copet-Rougier and myself, we now possess more detailed information on another such tributary political formation – the town of Gamane (as written in the German documents, more correctly *Gaimɔna* in the Gbaya language), which later came to be called Bertoua (*Mbartua* in Gbaya).

This material provides an excellent illustration of the processes of political centralisation engendered in such peripheral societies by their incorporation in the regional “raiding and trading” system. Thus not only do we find that, through their links of political alliance and trade with Ngaoundere, the Gbaya war leader Ndiba and his son and successor Mbartua were able to consolidate their position at the head of their own clan territory grouping but they were also able to dominate and incorporate elements from several neighbouring peoples, including the Gbaya Mbodomo, the Akpwakum, the Mkako Ngwendje, Mborong and Mbogendi, and certain Mkako Mbobutu and Mbondjo, Yangere and Maka (see Copet-Rougier 1987: 354). The Gbaya under Mbartua required such subordinated, tribute-paying groups to resettle in assigned territories surrounding Gamane, an arrangement that can still be reconstructed on maps today on the basis of the frequent occurrence of the village name *ndem nam* (which in Gbaya means “gather the kin groups together”)

(Burnham, Copet-Rougier and Noss 1986; Copet-Rougier 1987). This local tributary arrangement replicated on a small scale the relations of alliance and domination which operated on a much larger scale between Ngaoundere and its neighbouring non-Fulbe populations, although the degree of control exercised by Mbartua over these *ndem nam* apparently was not so oppressive as to be qualifiable as slavery. Although the political formation at Gamane (modern Bertoua) was shattered by the German colonial conquest and many of the subordinated groups dispersed, the nucleating effects of this historical experience are still visible today in the form of a greater degree of corporate social organisation of groups like the Mkako Mbogendi, who participated in the Gamane events, in contrast to other Mkako groups that were not involved (Copet-Rougier 1987: 352; Copet-Rougier 1990).

In addition to these new data on the emergence of the political formation at Gamane/Bertoua, we are also fortunate to now have Elisabeth Rabut's excellent analysis (Rabut 1989) of the key set of archival materials relating to Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza's Haute-Sangha expedition of 1892–1894. Although I had made use of several of these archival sources in the original version of this article, it is very convenient to have such an extensive collection available for interested readers to consult in published form.

In numerous passages in these documents, notably in de Brazza's reports relating to Gbaya leaders such as Djambala or Bafio, or to the Fulbe vassal Ngouachobo, it is possible to detect the operation of political nucleating mechanisms similar to those documented for Gamane/Bertoua. Likewise, the reports of one of de Brazza's lieutenants, F.J. Clozel, concerning his expedition to the Ouham river (sometimes spelled Ouahm) in 1894 (Rabut 1989: 254–263), also give valuable insights on the relations between the Fulbe and Hausa raiders and traders, on the one hand, and the Gbaya and other non-Muslim peoples inhabiting the extreme peripheries of the Fulbe zone of influence. As is apparent from these archival materials (and contrary to Coquery-Vidrovitch's interpretation [1965; 1972: 201–9] that Gbaya/Fulbe relations had reached a state of "precarious equilibrium" by the late nineteenth century), political structures in these peripheral zones were in a fluid state as Fulbe influences ebbed and flowed (Burnham in press). Indeed, at the time of de Brazza's arrival on the Haute-Sangha, local vassal chiefs and slave officers linked with the Ngaoundere court were barely holding out against substantial alliances of Gbaya clans, under leaders like Bafio, who were seeking to expel them from the region. Thus, several decades after the original Fulbe conquests, the peripheries of this system were still characterised by on-going processes of political restructuration. These areas continued to be zones of contestation, as the politically nucleating influences of the raiding and trading system touched allies of the Fulbe and foes of the Fulbe alike.

Relations at the Centre

The original version of this article, while conceptualising the system of raiding and trading in Adamawa as part of an even larger regional system linked to the states of the Sokoto Caliphate, Bornu and beyond, was able to devote relatively little at-

attention to these more far-flung relations. The article does note that as Ngaoundere's wealth and power grew, a process that was closely linked with its ability to exploit its vast peripheries via the raiding and trading system, its ties of subordination to Yola, the capital of Adamawa, diminished (although they never were fully broken). While it is not possible for me to analyse such changing patterns of political dependency within the confines of this epilogue, some more recently published work (Bassoro and Mohammadou 1980: 70–88; Lovejoy 1981; Burnham and Last in press) does provide numerous elements that permit us to assess the variable significance of slavery, both in commerce and in politics, within the centres of state power in this region. In this broad comparative perspective, the overwhelming importance of slave raiding and trading in the growth of the Ngaoundere state is most striking. In contrast, the Yola state, despite its prestige as the leader of the Adamawa *jihād*, did not have such extensive domains in which to raid for slaves. Slave officials in the emir's household at Yola did not exercise as much power as at Ngaoundere, reflecting the smaller size of Yola's own territory and the lesser use made of slave officials to administer conquered territories and to counterbalance the influence of Fulbe title holders (Burnham and Last in press).

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