

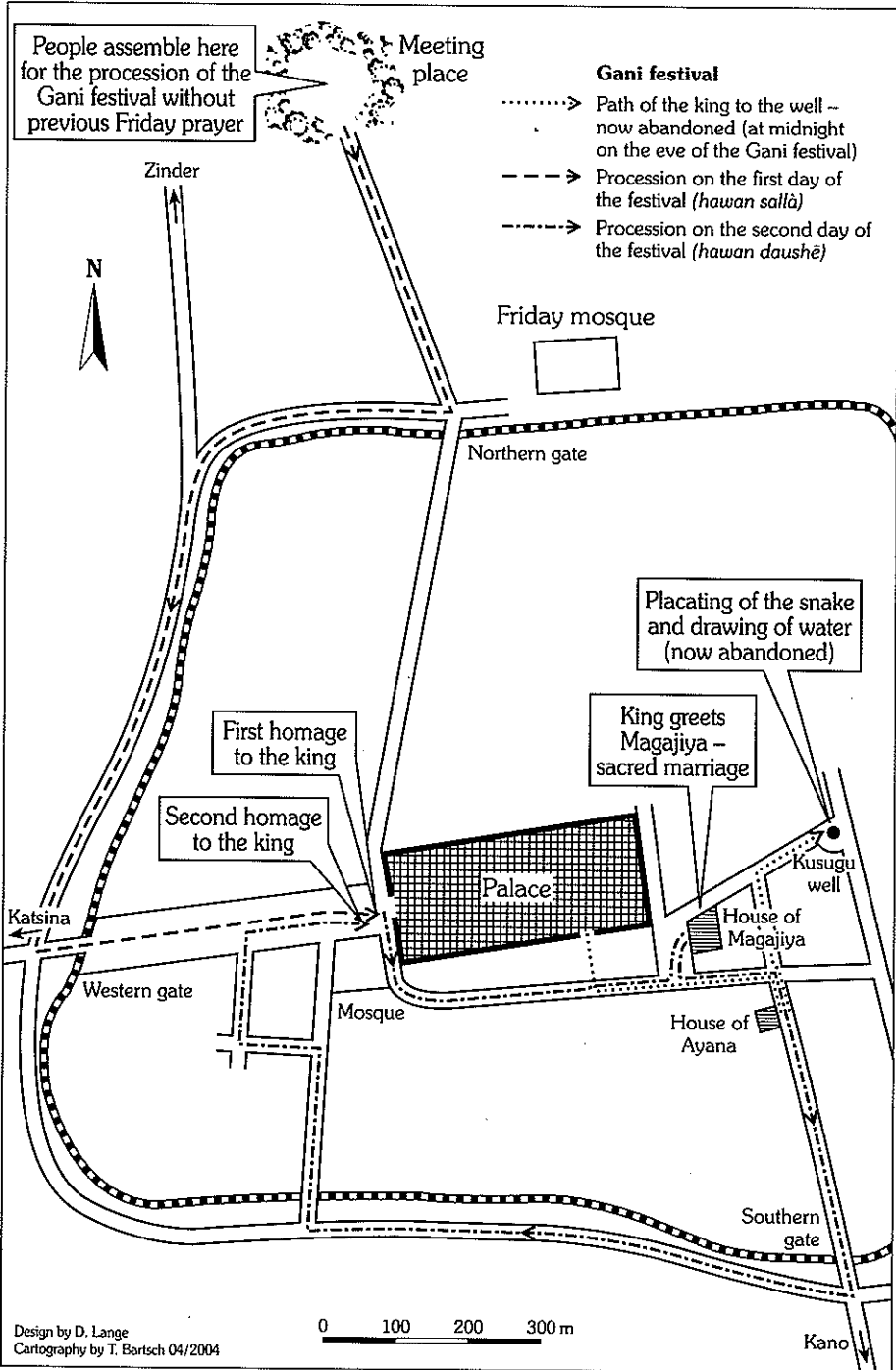
2. Cult-Dramatic Re-Enactments of the Bayajidda Legend During the New Year Festivals of Hausaland

The most obvious link relating the Bayajidda narrative to Hausa tradition as a whole consists of its annual re-enactments during the festal ceremonies in the royal towns in Hausaland. However, as a result of the Fulani *jihād* at the beginning of the nineteenth century many institutions and other survivals from the pre-Islamic period were abolished. Only in the kingdoms which remained under Hausa domination have these traditions survived almost unchanged. This is particularly true for Daura, where the British colonial administration reinstated the original Hausa dynasty in 1906. It is also the case in Gobir, where the Hausa rulers were able to resist the Fulani *jihād*. In Zaria the Hausa ruling class was expelled but they founded the refugee kingdom of Abuja, the present Sulleja further south. After their conquest of the Hausa kingdoms, the Fulani specifically abolished the royal offices given to women. Apparently they recognised that these offices were of decisive significance for the pre-Islamic heritage of the Hausa states.²¹

The Gani festival of Daura as a whole consists of the systematic re-enactment of the Bayajidda legend. Today most of the participants of the festival content themselves with the idea that they are celebrating the fully Islamic *mawḷūd* or birthday of the Prophet Muḥammad. Only a few insiders with historical interests are aware that the legend and the corresponding festival belong to an ancient Hausa tradition rooted in the pre-Islamic past. Superficial observers may think that the Gani festival takes place in the same way as the two other great Islamic festivals celebrated by processions on horseback, the *bàbbar sallà* (*'id al-kabīr*) and the *kàramar sallà* (*'id al-saghīr* or *'id al-ḥīr*). In fact, the more complex and

²⁰ Frobenius, *Und Afrika*, 488, 561-563; Tremearne, *Ban of Bori*, 392-426; Hallam, "Bayajidda legend", 57-58.

²¹ Smith, *Zazzau*, 131; id., *Daura*, 276; id., *Kano*, 206, 231.



Map 2: The Gani festival of Daura



Photo 1: The king of Daura during the great procession of the Gani festival, Daura 1995

more original *sallàr Gàni* provided the original model for the other two more islamized festivals.

What then are the most important features of the Gani festival? Above all it has to be noted that the king acts on the three outstanding days of the festival as an incarnation of Bayajidda, his legendary ancestor. The first performance, which is now obsolete, was very secret. It was enacted on the eve of the festival at midnight by four persons: the king himself, his close advisor Shamaki and two Dakama singers.²² The king then went to the well of Kusugu, listened to the song placating the snake and drew holy water from the well.

The second performance is staged in the form of a great procession (*hawan sallà*) in the afternoon of the first day of the festival, leading from a place north of the town to the western gate and then to the palace. At the centre of the parade we find the king sitting on horseback holding in his hands the sword and the knife used by his ancestor to kill the snake and to cut off its head. Close to the king are, as the night before, Shamaki and the Dakama singers. All participants

²² On the functions and social background of these officials see Smith, *Daura*, 42, 137, 315.

in the festivities rejoice on this day; but only the insiders realize that they are celebrating the killing of the snake.

The third performance takes place on the second day and consists again of a great parade (*hawan daushē*). But this time, the cortège of horse riders and men on foot starts from the palace and leads to the house of the Magajiya. In commemoration of the preliminary rule of the Queen Magajiya Daurama and her subsequent marriage to the dragon-killer, the king stops at the house of the present Magajiya, enters and greets her. Next, the cavalcade moves on, passes by the house of Ayana – the old woman who once received the hero during the night and advised him on how to approach the well – crosses the former southern gate of the town and turns back by the next gate to the palace.

Both processions are patterned on the legend of Daura, the first representing the triumphal entry of the hero into Magajiya's palace and the second his subsequent marriage to the queen. In spite of the Islamic overlay of the celebrations, it is not difficult to recognise that the main ceremonies correspond to an ancient cult-drama constituting a New Year festival.²³

A major question with respect to the Gani festival of Daura concerns the incarnation of Bagwariya. There are a number of arguments in favour of the Iya. She is officially regarded as the king's sister and she presides over the ritual washings, seclusion and instruction of every prince on his first marriage. She is further in charge of selecting the three major non-Islamic – probably Aznā – titles: Magajin Bayamadi, Sarkin Masu and Dan Baroka. Particularly significant is her connection with Magajin Bayamadi since he is considered the descendant and the incarnation of Karbagari.²⁴ During the major festivals the king visited the Iya on his way to the prayer ground outside the town for a "private audience".²⁵ According to another author, during this visit the Iya produced two strips of woven white cloth and presented it with the words "here is the milk".²⁶ Earlier this "private audience" was probably seen as a re-enactment of Bayajidda's relationship with Bagwariya. In Gobir the Iya or Inna is likewise considered to be the "sister" of the king and, as we shall see, the festal cult-drama insinuates that the two have inti-

²³ Frankfort, *Kingship*, 313-333; de Moot, *New Year*, I, 4-29.

²⁴ Smith, *Daura*, 133; FN 97, 16-22.

²⁵ Smith, *Daura*, 35, 39, 93, 123-124. This information places the meeting between the king and the Iya on the first day of the Gani festival before the great procession (*hawan sallā*). It supports the validity of those versions of the Bayajidda legend which claim that Bagwariya came with the hero from Bornu and that she was pregnant before she arrived in Daura (Palmer, *Memoirs*, III, 133). Alhasan mentions that Bayajidda came with a slave (FN 95, 81).

²⁶ Palmer, *Memoirs*, III, 145. Because of its pre-Islamic implications, the Iya office is now purely honorific.

mate relations.²⁷ In Bornu the Magira performed similar functions as the Magajiya of Daura, while another female official corresponded to the Bagwariya.²⁸ The second female official held in the Kanuri kingdom of Musune the title of Luwa. During the rituals of coronation the king chose a mate from among the girls of the Ngalaga (Duguwa?) clan with whom he spent his seven days of seclusion. By this choice and the subsequent concubinage during the period of seclusion, the girl received the title and position of Luwa.²⁹ Recent attempts to reach greater conformity to Islam have most likely contributed to obscuring the role of the Luwa of Musune in the installation ceremonies and of the Iya of Daura in the Gani festival.

Similar processions based on a common cult-mythological pattern take place in the other royal towns of Hausaland during the great Islamic festivals. In Zaria the procession of the first day (*hawan sallà*) starts likewise from the prayer ground north of the town, then it moves outside the town to the northwest and enters from the west heading east to the palace. On the third day (*hawan daushè*) the people start from the palace and turn south – in pre-Fulani times probably to the southeast to the house of Magajiya – and cross the southern gate. After a short while they return by the same gate but they then join the main road to the palace.³⁰ On both occasions the cavalcade passes by the square called *Bàbban Dòdò* “the great Dodo” at a distance of one kilometer from the palace. Here the king and the warrior groups from the head of the cortege stop for a few minutes. When a distant drum is sounded they continue. Hidden under the hood of his burnous the king is supposed to be invisible until he reaches the palace.³¹ Most likely his warriors used to perform mock fights at this spot thus re-enacting the killing of Dodo by the mythical hero.

Certain pre-Islamic practices are better preserved in Abuja/Sulleja than in Zaria. With respect to the royal festivals some details supplement the information available for Zaria: the existence of a Gani festival corresponding to the Islamic *mawlūd*, the visits of the king to a male and two female officials, the Turaki, the Sarauniya and the Iya (who each have their own royal household with titleholders corresponding to those of the king), a special song making it clear that Gani

²⁷ Kühme, *Königtum*, 82-88; 123-124; Nicolas, *Dynamique*, 340-342; 389.

²⁸ By indicating that the hero married Magira in Bornu, most versions of the Bayajidda legend suggest the parallel position of Magira and Magajiya (cf. Arnett, “Hausa chronicle”, 162; Palmer, *Memoirs*, III, 133; Salifou, *Damagaram*, 233; Smith, *Daura*, 54). For the female offices in Bornu see Platte, *Frauen*, 163-242.

²⁹ In Dikwa, this corresponds to the title of Tauda and in Ndufu to that of Zamzam (Platte, *Frauen*, 183, 186-192).

³⁰ Both processions follow a similar route as those of Daura (see above map 2 p. 222).

³¹ Garba, Abu Bakr Shantali, Saddiq FN 00, 1, 28-32.

is a New Year festival, and the custom of finishing the festival after twenty days by dancing to the end of the town with two branches of a certain tree and then throwing the branches over the town wall. Further, it is noteworthy that the king on the eve of the Gani festival goes by foot to the house of the Turaki where he sits down with his host between two lampstands each holding twelve receptacles for oil.³² The next day he greets, one after the other, the two women officials by the respectful address “*mā*” signifying “mama, mother” before entering with his officials into their house and dancing with them.³³ All these elements point to the now largely forgotten former cultic significance of the Gani festival of Abuja/Zaria. The night vigil can be associated with the killing of the dragon, the honorific “mother” with a title given to a priestess, and the dancing with a sacred marriage. Therefore these features appear to belong to the cult-dramatic underpinning of the myth lying behind the Bayajidda legend.

In Gobir the Canaanite cult-mythological pattern of the New Year festival is re-enacted quite differently. On one of the days preceding the festival, the *Sarkin Annā*, the “king of the Annā people”, goes to see the king in his palace. He brings with him a golden and a silver bangle and also a ram. The meeting between him and the king consists of a ritual combat: he puts the golden bangle on the right arm of the king and keeps the silver one for himself, then both pretend to engage in a short fight; finally Sarkin Annā removes the silver bangle and places it on the left arm of the king. After that both protagonists carress the ram from its tail to its head.³⁴ The ram, handed over by the first official to the second, symbolically represents the primordial being of which Sarkin Annā is the descendant and living representative. The ritual combat fight in turn can be interpreted as a symbolic confrontation between the forces of the moon and those of the sun. Indeed, since Sarkin Annā represents Karbagari/Ishmael and the king Bawo/Isaac-Jacob, the antagonism refers not only back to the distinction between the Aznā/Annā and the Hausā clans but also to the ancestral division between the Hausā and Banzā states and thus to the difference between the Israelites and the Arabs.³⁵ Beyond the legendary level, the ritual combat between incarnations of the sun and the moon also has vast mythological implications: apparently the forces behind Bawo/Isaac-Jacob were the deities of the upperworld and those behind Karbagari/Ishmael were the deities of the netherworld. Hence, it may be supposed that the

³² In Feske/Kebbi, Turaka is the name of the hut of Dango used at the festival of *watān bakwāi* (Sheku, Mai Bori FN 95 130).

³³ Tanko Turaki, Bisalla Sata FN 97, 78-82. See also Hassan/Shuaibu, *Chronicle*, 65-66, 68.

³⁴ Nicolas, “Fondements”, 223; id., *Dynamique*, 362; id., *Question*, 13; Kühme, *Königtum*, 79, 93.

³⁵ Lange, “Ursprung des Bösen”, 6-26.

biblical dichotomy between the sons of Jacob/Israel and those of Ishmael is based on the astral dualism of the Semitic pantheon distinguishing between societies with prevalent upperworld and netherworld deities. Descent from Jacob is therefore the legendary aspect of the prevalence of the sun, i.e. the upperworld deities, in Israel and descent from Ishmael the legendary aspect of the prominent position of the moon, i. e. the netherworld deities, among the pre-Islamic Arabs.³⁶

On the eve of the festival, the king of Gobir walks to the house of *Sarkin Makèrà* "king of the blacksmiths" and strikes twelve times upon one of the twelve drums of the kingdom.³⁷ As a descendant of Bayajidda he apparently begins a cycle of cult-dramatic performances commemorating the killing of the primordial snake and its splitting up into twelve parts.³⁸ On the cult-mythological level he incarnates – as in Daura – the god of creation, while the chief of the blacksmiths stands apparently for an allied god of handicraft. According to the Baal Cycle of Ugarit, the god of handicraft Kothar wa-Khasis forged for the god of creation Baal the powerful weapons used by the latter to kill the primordial deity Yamm, which in Babylon was called Tiamat.³⁹ The comparison suggests that, acting out the cult drama of the New Year festival, the Baal-like king meets the chief blacksmith in Gobir in order to prepare himself for his subsequent fight with primeval chaos.

On the following day, the people of Gobir celebrate the sacrifice of the ram in such an original way that only minor elements of the cult-dramatic performance can possibly have been borrowed from Islam. The main ceremony takes place on the communal prayer ground at the southeast of the town. During the prayers the king stays in the middle of the congregation in an enclosed temporary shelter built for the occasion. After the prayers the donated ram is slaughtered in front of the assembly. Then the king himself changes his ordinary dress for those of his crowning ceremony. When he comes out of his shelter the sober mood of the congregation turns to joyfulness and jubilation.⁴⁰ For the interpretation of this scene

³⁶ For the importance of the moon deity among the pre-Islamic Arabs see Fahd, *Pantheon*, 18-24; Höfner, "Stammesgruppen", 467, 492-494, 549. Day distinguishes between astral deities – thus bringing the sun and the moon together – and underworld deities (*Yahweh*, 151-225).

³⁷ Nicolas, *Dynamique*, 363; Boyd, "Sallah in Gobir", 593-594; Lange FN 01, 51-52; Kühme, *Königtum*, 187-188.

³⁸ For the seven or twelve heaps remaining from the snake killed by Bayajidda see Nicolas, *Dynamique*, 63, 227, 347, and Krieger, *Geschichte*, 19.

³⁹ KTU 1.2 IV 11-24, VI 50-53; Wyatt, *Religious Texts*, 65-67, 144-145; Pritchard, *Texts*, 61-68; Kühme, *Königtum*, 188-189.

⁴⁰ Nicolas, *Dynamique*, 363-365; Boyd, "Sallah in Gobir", 594; Lange, FN 01, 53-54; Kühme, *Königtum*, 194-197.

it has to be remembered that the ram was provided by Sarkin Annā and that both Sarkin Annā and the king consecrated it for sacrifice. Just as Sarkin Makera forges the weapons, Sarkin Annā provides an animal symbolising his own deity for the creation combat. On the cult-mythological level the sacrifice of the ram parallels Marduk's killing of Tiamat, which was likewise re-enacted in the Babylonian New Year festival.⁴¹ But while, according to the Babylonian creation epos *Enuma elish*, the splitting of her body gave rise to heaven and earth and the dissection of the various portions of her corpse to clouds, rivers, springs and mountains, the cutting-up of the ram only provides blessings to the believers without further explanations. Apparently up to the present day the people of Gobir perform a cult-dramatic creation combat of which the Muslims, by just slaughtering a ram or a camel during the pilgrimage of Mecca, preserve only the final act.⁴² On the basis of the biblical Isaac story (Gen 22: 2-14) and the parallel *iwo* sacrifice during the Itapa festival of Ife⁴³ – where the high priest of Obameri/Môt consecrates the victim immolated by the high priest of Obatala/Baal in the netherworld grove of Obarala⁴⁴ – it can be assumed that earlier the sacrificial animal was a human being. By merging their own traditions with the injunctions of Islam, the Gobirawa perpetuate the original cultic context out of which the main ritual of Islam drew its prime inspiration.

Subsequently the procession moves around the town by the east and the north, enters it from the north and reaches the palace from the west. During the king's absence the Priestess Inna and her followers from the Bori cult take possession of the palace. When the king returns to the central place of the town, several ceremonies are performed there before he enters the palace.⁴⁵ Then the Inna arrives with her Bori followers and does homage to the king before sitting down in the front room. The officials pass by her and do homage to her before they do the same to the king. Next the king retires to his harem with his wives. After some time he comes back to the throne hall, receiving again the homage of his people. Subsequently the Inna and her lady followers come and in successive small groups join the newly withdrawn king.⁴⁶ At this point the cultic performance of the sacred marriage becomes realistic: the king having first been alone with his wives, later stays with the high priestess Inna and her followers. Certain characteristics of the Inna of Gobir should be noted in order to understand the mythological

⁴¹ Frankfort, *Kingship*, 327-329; Moortgat, *Tammuz*, 134-142.

⁴² Wensinck, "Hädjdj", *EI*², III, 34-38; Daum, *Religion*, 128.

⁴³ Cf. Stevens, "Orisha-nla", 193-197; FN 00, 93-95 (own observations).

⁴⁴ It should be noted that in Ife and in Gobir the victim is handed over by the cult party of the netherworld to the cult party of the upperworld.

⁴⁵ Kühme, *Königtum*, 201-202.

⁴⁶ Kühme, *Königtum*, 196-203. See also Nicolas, *Dynamique*, 263-265.

significance of her cult-dramatic behaviour: she represents Takurabow or *Innà Bakā* “the Black Inna”, the dynastic goddess of Gobir, she often wears male dresses and she is considered to be the sister and consort of the king.⁴⁷ Although nothing precise is known about the earthly incarnation of Anat, similar features are known to have characterized the consort of Baal.⁴⁸ In the absence of the Baal-like king, the Inna is the one who reigns over the country. When the king comes back from the chaos combat, the incarnated goddess offers herself in a sacred marriage to the victorious hero, thus ensuring the deification of her partner.

Apparently the cult-drama of Gobir refers to cult-mythological features similar to those lying behind the ancient Near Eastern New Year festival: the hero leaves his palace and enters into the netherworld, he arms himself with special weapons, kills the chaos monster, is resurrected from the netherworld and celebrates a sacred marriage. Like the divine kings of the ancient Near East, the king of Gobir thus ensured the annual renewal of his deification. The perpetuation of this Semitic cult-mythological pattern is not restricted to Africa. It can likewise be detected in the mythology that gave rise to the Christian celebrations of Easter and in the cult-dramatic performances of the Muslims during the pilgrimage at Mecca.⁴⁹ In one way or another all these festivities are derived from the concept of a violent act of creation. This act had to be repeated year after year in order to guarantee not only the rule of particular divine kings, but also in order to ensure the continuity of the cosmic order.