

To Article XI (1995a: “Pre-Islamic dimension”)

Based on field research in Daura, this article shows that the Bayajidda legend is more than a purely oral narrative since its most significant features are related to

ceremonial re-enactments during the pre-Islamic Gani festival. On account of the tight connection between incidents in the oral narrative and cult-dramatic actions performed during New Year festivals, I argue in this article that traditions of origin are less amenable to modifications than earlier thought (1998b; 1999b). By pointing out that the main figures of the Bayajidda legend survive as former deities within the Bori cult, the article suggests that prior to its legendary form the Hausa story was a myth (see also 1999b: 133-145). In fact, primordial mythology provides the best explanation for the on-going cult-dramatic performances by former priests and priestesses acting on behalf of their former deities. Methodologically, the attempt to relate mythical incidents to ritual performances comes close to the approach adopted by scholars of the well-known myth and ritual school in the field of ancient Near Eastern studies.

The shortcomings of the article consist mainly in haphazardous etymologies and in the reference to isolated culture traits. Furthermore, by restricting itself to the study of parallel phenomena in Hausa and in Canaanite-Israelite societies, it does not provide any historical explanation for the spread of Semitic influences to the societies south of the Sahara. A comprehensive study setting the comparative approach systematically into an historical perspective – without however taking full account of trans-Saharan trade in classical times and related state building processes – is now available with Walter Kühme's doctoral study on the kingdom of Gobir.³⁶