

## PART I

### MUSLIMS AND RULERS DURING THE PRECOLONIAL PERIOD





## **CHAPTER TWO: PROCESSES OF ISLAMIZATION IN THE VOLTAIC BASIN**

The formation and consolidation of states in West Africa underwent dramatic changes during the ‘era of the empires’, i.e., the first part of the second millennium of the present era. Starting with the formation of ancient Ghāna (Ghana), Takrūr (Takarur) and Kanīm (Kanem) during the tenth and eleventh centuries AD,<sup>1</sup> the large and complex political entities of Mālī and Kānīm-Borno emerged in the Western and Central Sudan savannah during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Hailed by Muslim chroniclers as Muslim kingdoms, these latter two empires were to affect not only political but also economic and religious processes in the whole region. Further political changes, namely the emergence the hegemony of Songhay in the Niger Bend and beyond, as well as the rise of several political entities in Hausaland, marked the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.<sup>2</sup>

The political and economic changes in the Sudan savannah were to have an increasing impact on societies south of the Sudan savannah during this period. This period was marked by the migration of populations and the expansion of various networks connecting the Sudanic empires with societies in the Guinea savannah, including those in the Voltaic Basin, and, eventually, the forest belt. During ‘era of empires’, the Voltaic Basin witnessed what could be defined as a ‘heroic age’, namely the creation and consolidation of a series of states. Starting with the thirteenth century, ‘Mossi’ invasions affected the Niger Bend. The invaders are believed to have entered the lands south of the Niger Bend in this period, sometimes attacking the Mālī Empire, at other times being its allies<sup>3</sup>. Subsequent attacks launched by the Songhay army during the fifteenth century put an end to the Mossi invasions. However, whether or not the activities of the Songhay Empire can be connected with the emergence of the ‘Mossi-Dagomba’ states is unclear<sup>4</sup>. Be that as it may, the ‘heroic age’ of the ‘Mossi complex’ (Wilks) led to the creation of a series of kingdoms in the late fifteenth century, a southern group including Mampurugu (Mamprusi), Dagbon (Dagomba) and Nanun (Nanumba), and a northern one including Wagadugu and Yatenga. During the heyday of the ‘heroic age’, the Voltaic Basin witnessed the creation of the First Kingdom of Dagbon which controlled much of the region. A further development occurred in the mid-sixteenth century, when a Malian/Mande cavalry force moved into the region. The subsequent creation of the Gbanya state, the Kingdom of Gonja, marked the end of the ‘heroic age’ and resulted in a crisis

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<sup>1</sup> I prefer to use the Arabic spelling of the ancient empires as not to confuse them with modern states and regions.

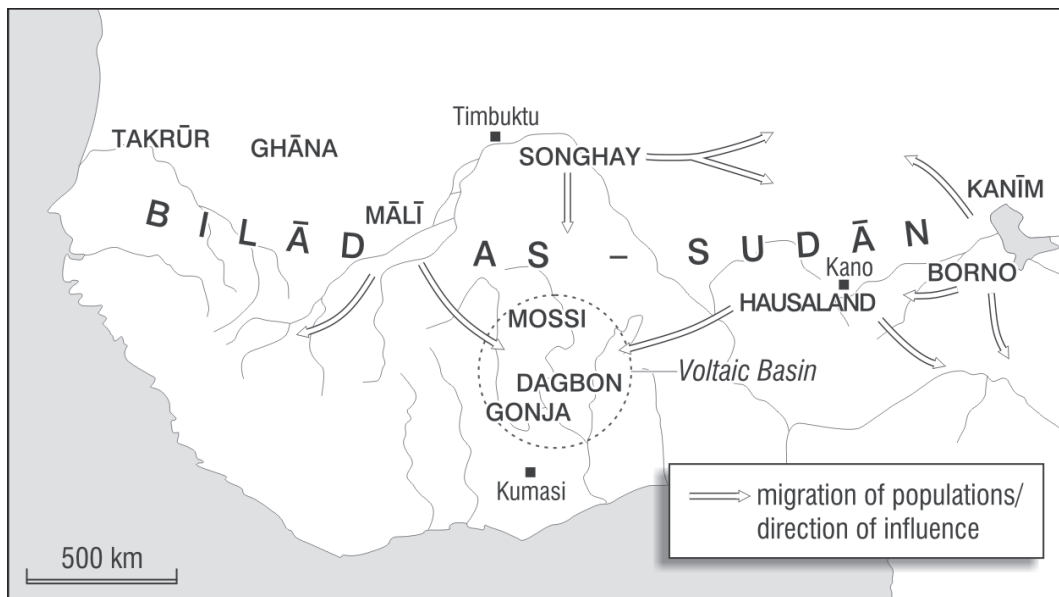
<sup>2</sup> See further Hiskett 1984 and Levtzion 2000.

<sup>3</sup> Fage 1964, 178; Hunwick 1999, 38–39.

<sup>4</sup> Wilks 1985, 469.

in the First Kingdom of Dagbon. External pressure but also internal political-cum-religious renewal led to the transformation of Dagbon and the establishment of the Second Kingdom during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century.

Apart from the invasions of warrior groups, who were to establish themselves as the ruling strata in the Mossi and Gbanya states, societies in the Voltaic Basin were to be affected by the expansion of trade networks. The first to develop were the Mande trading networks. Since the seventeenth century, Hausa trade networks extended beyond Hausaland to the Voltaic Basin. A distinctive feature of both trading networks was that the core group of traders, the Mande traders called Juula (Dyula)<sup>5</sup> as well as the Hausa traders, were Muslims. As will be discussed in this chapter, both the Juula as well as the Hausa played a major role in the societal, cultural and religious transformation of those societies where they decided to reside or were invited to stay. However, as will be argued, this process of transformation was a slow one, not to speak about the process of Islamization. One could argue that the cultural and religious transformation in the Voltaic Basin resembled that of the Sudanic savannah, which is the link between the court and the Muslim traders-cum-scholars but with limited impact on the commoners.



**Map 2.** The Precolonial Bilad al-Sudan.

<sup>5</sup> The spelling of African groups varies. One and the same group is spelled in Francophone texts as Dyula, sometimes even Joula, whereas Anglophone texts refer to them as Juula. A similar difference concerns the Hausa (Anglized version) and Houssa/Haoussa (French spelling).

## 1. JUULA (MANDE) TRADERS-CUM-SCHOLARS AND WANGARA NETWORKS

West African history is largely marked by climatic changes. Although the ‘era of empires’ appears from the larger political perspective as one continuous period, the era must be divided into at least three distinctive periods. Climatological and ecological investigations by Nicholson, Brooks and Webb have been able to establish a plausible chronological order for distinguishing the three periods between ca. 300 and 1600, namely a wet period until ca. 1100, followed by a dry period ca. 1100–1500 and a short wet period ca. 1500–1600.<sup>6</sup> Climatic shifts were to have a deep societal impact in West Africa, as George Brooks has underlined: the movement of the 300 mm isohyet marks the ecological border for agriculture whereas the 1000 mm isohyet marks the ‘tsetse fly line’, beyond which cattle herding was not possible due to trypanosomiasis and cereals could not be planted due to the wet climate. If the climatic and the historical data is combined, it seems as if the first ‘empires’ all emerged in the Sahel savannah during the first ‘wet’ period, namely Takrūr, Ghāna, Kawkaw (Gao) and Kānīm as these ‘empires’ were known by these names in medieval Arabic texts. The next period witnessed a desiccation of the climate in the Sahel savannah and the southward movement of the ‘tsetse fly line’. However, whereas living conditions in the Sahel savannah must have become constrained – apart from riverside locations – those in the Sudanic savannah were less affected. Politically, the dry period witnessed the emergence of the Mālī Empire. This dry period was followed by a short, wet period and coincided with the peak of the Songhay Empire.<sup>7</sup>

According to George Brooks, the progressive desiccation made necessary the southward movement of commercial networks from the Sahel and Sudanic savanna towards the Guinea savannah and further south. In Western Africa, the most notable group of migrants were Mandekan<sup>8</sup> traders and smiths, who settled farther and farther to the southwest, south, and southeast among populations speaking West Atlantic, Kwa, and Gur languages. At least in Western Africa – and to a lesser extent in the Voltaic Basin – Mandekan traders and smiths promoted the development of commercial and artisan centres among host societies. Further, Mandekan horse warriors raided along caravan routes to capture commercial centres and founded states extending from the Atlantic and Upper Guinea coast to the Volta River.<sup>9</sup> One of these groups of Mandekan horse warriors was to conquer Gonja and establish themselves as the new ruling stratum, the Gbanya (see below Subchapter 2.2.).

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<sup>6</sup> Brooks 1986; McCann 1999.

<sup>7</sup> Brooks 1985. A similar model has been presented by McIntosh 1993.

<sup>8</sup> Mandekan means ‘the language of the Mande’ and people speaking Mandekan languages call themselves Mandekalu, ‘people of the Mande’, tracing their origins to the Mande ‘heartland’ (Mande Kalu) along the Upper Niger River (Brooks 1985, 140).

<sup>9</sup> Brooks 1985, 85.

However, the migration of Mandekan-speaking peoples into the Voltaic Basin started much earlier than the arrival of Gbanya horse raiders and was a much more complex phenomenon. An early group of immigrants belonged to the Mande-fu or southern Mandekan languages. Although the centre of this language cluster is found in present-day Sierra Leone, Liberia and the hinterland of (former French) Guinea, pockets of groups speaking Mande-fu languages and dialects, such as Sya, Samo, and varieties of Busa, are also to be found in the Voltaic Basin and beyond. A common feature of these languages and the groups linked to them is that they all seemed to have spread at a time when the Mandekan-speaking peoples had not yet come into touch with Islam.<sup>10</sup>

A different picture arises with the Mande-tan group of languages. Among them one finds various Vai languages in the vicinity of Bonduku (present-day Northern Ivory Coast), whose speakers, such as the Ligbi and Huela, do not seem to have come into contact with Islam when their migrations took place. The Minya, a Malinke dialect, is spoken by the ruling lineages of Mande origin among the Senufo (also present-day Northern Ivory Coast), and was noted to have been adopted even by some Senufo. However, the most important Mande-tan dialect, Juula, and its speakers, known as Juula (Dyula) and also Wangara, represent totally different characteristics. First, Juula developed into the most important lingua franca in West Africa, being spoken in numerous communities along the main trade routes. Secondly, the Juula traders were largely Muslims.<sup>11</sup>

The Juula or Wangara were and are a distinctive group of Mandekan-speaking immigrants.<sup>12</sup> In fact, Juula is a Malinke word for ‘trader’, and as Wilks has noted, those who describe themselves by it appear to be ultimately of Malinke and Soninke origin.<sup>13</sup> The difference between the Mandekan Muslim traders-cum-scholars and the Mandekan warriors were already highlighted in the *Ta’rīkh al-Fattāsh*:

If you ask what is the difference between Malinke and Wangara, know that the Wangara and the Malinke have the same origins but that Malinke is used to designate the warriors while Wangara serves to designate the traders who trade from country to country.<sup>14</sup>

These traders-cum-scholars, who at times were as much engaged in trade as in scholarly activities, had spread all over the savannah from the Atlantic to Lake Chad during the 1100–1500 West African dry period. In terms of the gold trade, for which

<sup>10</sup> Goody 1954, 18.

<sup>11</sup> Goody 1954, 18–19. However, the Mande background of the Ligbi and the Huéla is questioned by Massing (2000, 295).

<sup>12</sup> See further Massing 2000. According to him, the Wakoré/Wangara were Soninke clans specialized in trade, Islamic scholarship and law who migrated in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries from the Awkar region (contemporary Southern Mauritania) into the Upper Niger region and further east and south.

<sup>13</sup> Wilks 1968a, 162.

<sup>14</sup> Houdas & Delafosse 1913, 65; Wilks 1965, 93; quoted and English transl. in Ferguson 1972, 52.

the Wangara were to become most famous even outside West Africa, they were the first link in the chain that reached from the producers of gold in West Africa to the consumers in the Mediterranean world and beyond.<sup>15</sup> Their linkage to Islam reveals that their expansion must have started after the beginning of the Islamization of the Empire of Mālī on the Upper and Middle Niger. Although the process of Islamization of Mālī was confined to the ruling strata, the ruler and partly the royal court, the local (royal?) trade community in Mālī seems rather quickly to have embraced the new faith and became its most important propagators.<sup>16</sup> Whatever the case, the Wangara were soon to become known as both Muslims and engaged in the gold trade. Al-Bakrī (ca. 1067/68) already mentioned the Banū Naghmarāta whom he described as merchants who exported gold to other countries and who lived in a town called Yarismā and were Muslims.<sup>17</sup> In al-Idrīsī's account (written ca. 1154), one reads that Wanqāra was the country of gold,<sup>18</sup> while Ibn Saïd (ca. 1269) claimed that the Wanqāra were "Sūdān [i.e., black Africans] of the country among whom Islam has spread widely."<sup>19</sup> Ibn Battūta, who visited Mālī during the mid-fourteenth century, further noted that among the black merchants called Wanjarātan, who lived in the village of Zāgharī, there was a company of "white men [i.e., people from North Africa or perhaps Berbers, HW] who are Kharijites of the Ibādī called Saghanaghū. The whites who are Sunnīs of the Mālīkī school are called by them *tūrī*."<sup>20</sup> Ibn Battūta's information is interesting but problematic. Was he actually referring to a small surviving Ibādite community in Mālī or not? Some researchers are highly doubtful and regard Ibn Battūta's observation as questionable.<sup>21</sup> However, when discussing Wangara, it is not the Ibadi connection that is interesting in Ibn Battūta's account but his reference to the patronymics Saghanaghū [Saghanughu/Saganogo] and Tūrī [Turay/Turé/Toure].<sup>22</sup> Both of them have since become 'typical' Juula patronymics or salutation-names, others being Tarawiri (Fr. Traoré), Sissay (Cissé), Kunatay (Konaté), Kamaghatay, Jabaghatay, Watara, Klibali and Bamba.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>15</sup> For an overview of the Wangara gold trade, see Wilks 1982, 334–344.

<sup>16</sup> Levtzion 1973; Hiskett 1984, 28–32.

<sup>17</sup> Al-Bakrī 2000, 82, 453. I agree with Wilks' that a minor correction of the Arabic yields 'Banū Wangharāta', which in turn should be read 'Banū Wangharāta', that is, the tribe of the Wangara (Wilks 1982, 333). For a different interpretation, see Massing 2000, 283.

<sup>18</sup> Al-Idrīsī 2000, 111. See further S.K. McIntosh's (1981) discussion of al-Idrīsī's Western Sudanic geography. However, as Wilks has argued, al-Idrīsī's term Wanqāra (Wangara) should not designate a locality but the trading diaspora.

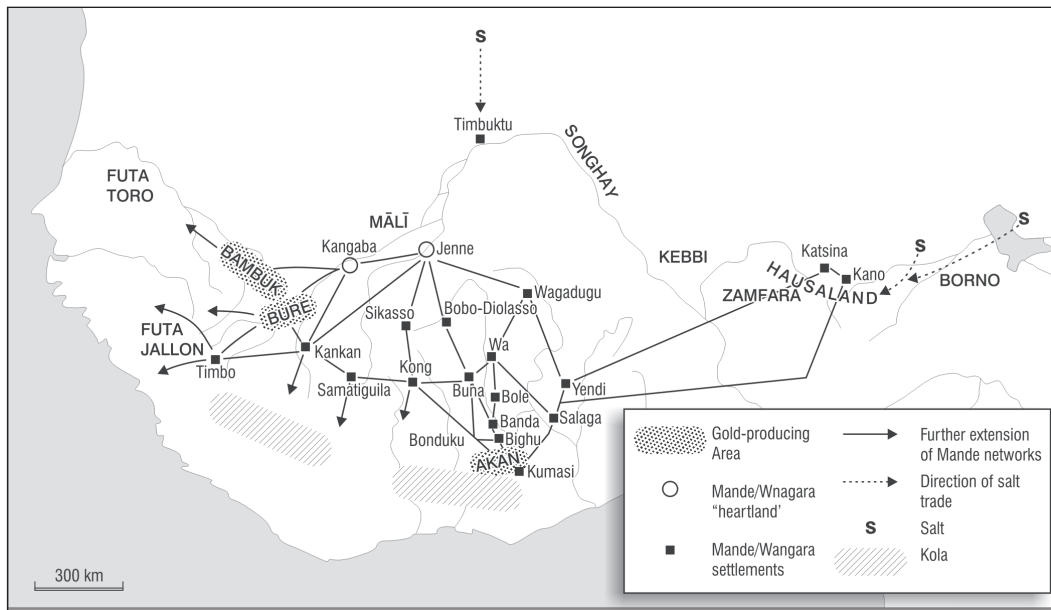
<sup>19</sup> Ibn Saïd 2000, 186.

<sup>20</sup> Ibn Battūta 2000, 287. Also Hamdun and King 1994, 41.

<sup>21</sup> Levtzion & Hopkins 2000, 415 (comment in footnotes 17 and 18). Massing (2000, 285), on the other hand, claims that there was a clear religious rift in Mālī at that time: the ruler and the Toure clan followed the Sunni/Maliki rite while others, among them the Saghanaghū/Saganogo clan, followed the Ibadi rite.

<sup>22</sup> Massing 2000, 285–286.

<sup>23</sup> Wilks 1968a, 163; Akasaka 1976, 300. What is also interesting is Wilks' notion that the Saghanughū were classed among the five original Muslim lineages of the Mande world (Wilks 1968a, 174).



**Map 3.** Mande networks.

Juula/Wangara merchants were to embark from the Mālī Empire into three different directions – easterly towards the Western Sudan and Guinea savannah, southerly towards the Volta Basin and westerly towards Hausaland. Two centres of immigration emerged, one on the Upper Niger in the Kangaba (‘Mande Kaba’) area, the other on the Middle Niger at Jenne. Both locations were connected with the two key Juula trademarks: the gold trade and Islam. The former location seems to have grown around the gold trade from Bure and Bambuk as well as the famous scholarly community in Diakha. The latter was one of, if not the most important trade and scholarly centres in the Western Sudan and had links to the scholarly community in Kābara. Through the Juula migration, new trade and scholarly centres were established, each of them having links with their old region of ‘origin’. Thus, the western Juula immigration led to the establishment of a new scholarly community at Diakhanke and the establishment of a long-distance trading network in the Western Sudan.<sup>24</sup> The southern migration contributed in similar ways to the growth of Juula communities in Kankan, Sikasso, Bobo-Diolasso, Kong, Begho, Buna, Bonduku, Wagadugu and Wa.<sup>25</sup> But whereas the migration of Juula/Wangara merchants towards the west and the south is fairly well known, the eastward migration is somewhat puzzling. Known in Hausa as Wangarawa, their arrival in the Central Sudan (present-day Northern Nigeria) was hailed by the anonymous compiler of the Kano Chronicle as a crucial event because the Wangarawa ‘brought Islam from Melle’ to Kano during the reign of Sarkin Yaji (ruled ca. 1349–1385 [Palmer]).<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> See Lamin Sanneh on the scholarly community of Diakhanke. On Juula networks in the Western Sudan, see Wright 1977 as well as Massing 1985.

<sup>25</sup> Wilks 1968a, 162; Akasaka 1976, 295.

<sup>26</sup> Kano Chronicle, transl. by H.R. Palmer [hereafter KC/Palmer] 1909/1972, 28; Lovejoy 1978;



Following the Kano Chronicle, the first arrival of the Juula/Wangarawa in Hausaland can be dated to the mid-fourteenth century. However, the eastward spread of the Mande traders-cum-scholars from the Mande heartland into Hausaland was perhaps a later, if not secondary, direction. This assumption is based on the main activity of the Mande traders, namely their connection with the gold and kola trade and the opening of a north-south trade axis between the Mālī Empire and the rainforest. According to the Kano Chronicle, the kola trade route between Gonja and Hausaland was not opened until the early decades of the fifteenth century. The chronicle states that Queen Amina<sup>27</sup> of Zaria was the first ruler to import kola from Gonja whereas Sarkin Kano Abdullahi Burja is said to have “opened the roads from Bornu to Gwanja [Gonja]”,<sup>28</sup> following which merchants from Gonja (Gwanja), presumably Wangara, arrived in Katsina during the reign of Sarkin Kano Yakubu (ca. 1452–1463 [Palmer]).<sup>29</sup> However, the Chronicle does not state that this route was yet used by Hausa traders. Instead, as Richard Kuba has maintained, the trade route linking Gonja with Hausaland was opened and for a long time dominated by Wangara traders,<sup>30</sup> a claim that is strengthened by the anonymous *Aslal-Wangariyīn*.<sup>31</sup> Hunwick further notes that political insecurity due to the Songhay expansion during the era of Sunni Ali (ca. 1464–1492) might have been the reason for Juula traders avoiding the Middle Niger area and made them look for a new route via the Voltaic Basin to Hausaland.<sup>32</sup>

One of the main areas of early Wangara settlement in Hausaland was in Northern Katsina at Zaye/Za’i, a place which, according to Murray Last, was a Wangara

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Massing 2000, 292–294.

<sup>27</sup> KC/Palmer 1909/1972, 31. According to the chronicle, Queen Amina of Zaria ruled when Dauda was Sarkin Kano (ca. 1421–1438 [Palmer]).

<sup>28</sup> KC/Palmer 1909/1972, 31.

<sup>29</sup> KC/Palmer 1909/1972, 32.

<sup>30</sup> Kuba 1996, 238.

<sup>31</sup> Al-Hajj 1968, 10.

<sup>32</sup> Hunwick 1999, xxxiv, xxxvi–xxxvii. The Mālī Empire had established its hegemony over the Niger Bend during the fourteenth century, controlling Timbuktu and Kawkaw (Gao) among others and had made Songhay a vassal state. Internal troubles led Mālī to lose its grip over the region and in 1438 Mālī had lost its control over Timbuktu. The establishment of the (Second) Songhay Empire started with the fifteenth ruler, Ali Kolon, who made himself independent from Mālī. Lovejoy believes that the expansion of the Wangara into Hausaland was related to the economic growth of the Songhay Empire. According to him, the Wangara merchants linked the Hausa cities with the commercial sector of the Songhay economy and provided a market for many Central Sudan products. The situation changed after the fall of Songhay in 1591 and by 1600, the interests of the eastern Wangara became more committed to the economies of their adopted homes in Borgu and the Hausa cities. Whereas Wangara remained the term for the commercial sector, including merchants, craftsmen and Muslim clerics in Borgu, a different pattern emerged in Hausaland. Here Wangara settlers became Hausa citizens who retained their corporate name as a local surname, Wangarawa, but more specific terms were dropped and Wangara residents became part of the larger Central Sudan commercial class. This Hausanized commercial class, who included both Hausa and former Wangara, thereafter dominated long-distance trade between Hausaland and Gonja (Lovejoy 1978, 185, 189–190).

settlement and the first location of Birnin Katsina or Katsina town.<sup>33</sup> According to Last, this region was most probably the so-called ‘Guangara’ mentioned in the ‘Description of Africa’ by al-Hasan b. Muhammad al-Wazzān az-Zayyāti or Leo Africanus (ca. 1489 or 1496–ca. 1550),<sup>34</sup> whose inhabitants Leo claimed were “very rich, because they go with their merchandise to distant lands, and because in a southerly direction they are in the neighbourhood of the land where very large quantities of gold are found.”<sup>35</sup> Although gold is not found south of Hausaland, Last’s identification of Leo’s ‘Guangara’ as a region where Wangara gold traders had settled in Hausaland, namely Katsina, is probable for two reasons. First, Leo’s description of the inhabitants of ‘Guangara’ points towards a rather well-established and blooming community of merchants that were trading in merchandise – gold – which was very valuable. Second, Leo’s description of the travels of the merchants of ‘Guangara’ to the land of gold mentions that they had to pass high mountains which their pack animals could not cross. There are no such natural barriers to the south of Hausaland apart from the Jos plateau, but one would find no gold in that direction. However, if Leo’s note is taken as an early description of the route from Hausaland to Gonja and beyond to the Akan gold fields, the high mountains could be the Atakora Mountains in present-day Northern Benin.

It can be argued that long before the opening of the Gonja trade route, the north-south trade route was in existence. Wilks, for example, stated in an early paper that the movement of Wangara groups into the Voltaic Basin would have gathered momentum only as late as the late fourteenth century.<sup>36</sup> However, if the arrival of the Wangara in Hausaland occurred at a later stage than their opening of the north-south route, then the arrival of the Wangara in the Voltaic Basin must have occurred not later than the mid-fourteenth century. Linguistic evidence for the spread of Mandekan languages and dialects points towards this assumption: before the spread of the Juula traders-cum-scholars, other Mandekan-speaking groups had already opened the connection between the Mande heartland and the savannah-rainforest societies. Some of these groups were blacksmiths; others seemed to have been engaged in establishing inter-regional trade networks. Techniques of gold production seemed to have spread with these Mande groups, either as a sort of early import of technological know-how or perhaps some members were themselves miners. Global economic changes also influenced these changes: West Africa emerged during the late fourteenth century as the most important supplier of gold for the (Western) Islamic world as well as Europe. The Mālī Empire controlled its

<sup>33</sup> Hunwick (1999, 288 fn 85) recognizes Last’s assumption of Guangara being Wangara and claims that a community of Wangara settled in Katsina in the fourteenth century.

<sup>34</sup> Last 1989, 129–131, 133–135. A detailed account of Leo Africanus and his ‘Description’ is provided in Masonen 2000, Chapter 4 as well as in Masonen 2000–2001 and Davis 2006.

<sup>35</sup> Leo Africanus in Hunwick 1999, 288.

<sup>36</sup> Wilks 1963, 410.

flow and the sources of the Bambuk and Bure goldfields and the Mande traders its supply to the markets in Jenne and Timbuktu.<sup>37</sup>

A third area of gold production was opened in the Akan forest region during the fourteenth century. Wilks and others have convincingly argued that the opening of the Akan goldfields has to be linked with the southward expansion of Mande traders and, equally important, Mande techniques of gold mining. Kuba notes that the knowledge of the north-south trade network was later used by Mande/Wangara traders in Hausaland to open the east-west kola trade route.<sup>38</sup> In the Northern Akan region, a Mande Muslim settlement emerged at Bono Manso at the southern terminus of the north-south trade axis. Archaeological data indicate that Bono Manso, the capital of the northernmost Akan state of Bono, was founded during the fourteenth century, and following local oral traditions, Wilks claims that the Muslim, i.e., Mande/Juula, settlement in the town dates from the second ruler (fourteenth/fifteenth century).<sup>39</sup> By the time of the eighth and ninth rulers, perhaps during the earlier part of the sixteenth century, sections of the Bono people are said to have adopted Islam.<sup>40</sup>

However, despite Islam making some inroads into the northern Akan region, the influence of the Mande Muslims was rather limited, the main reason for this being their position as strangers. In the Bono state, the alien as well as the local Muslims would sometimes constitute a distinctive faction within the state, the aspirations of whom were not always compatible with those of the rulers. However, according to Levtzion, Islam left little impression on the religion and customs of the Akan people of Bono. Not surprisingly, therefore, the Muslim faction did not gain much political influence in Bono, and with the conquest and destruction of Bono by Asante in 1722/23, the Muslim population dispersed throughout the region.<sup>41</sup>

### **1.1. The North-South Axis: Bighu and Buna**

The key importance of the Juula/Wangara migration was the establishment of a traders-cum-scholars network which connected West African centres of learning and trade with the wider world. The network enabled scholars to disseminate

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<sup>37</sup> See further Wilks 1985.

<sup>38</sup> Kuba 1996, 245.

<sup>39</sup> According to Insoll (2003, 340), archaeological excavations show that the foreigners' settlement, known as Kramokrom, was located about 4 km west of Bono Manso and formed a separate unit. The location of the town benefited from trade on both the north-south axis to Jenne as well as to Hausaland. Archaeological evidence for craft production, weaving, brass-casting and iron working has been found, spanning a period from the fifteenth to the late seventeenth–early eighteenth century. See further Stahl 1994.

<sup>40</sup> Wilks 1985, 482.

<sup>41</sup> Levtzion 1968, 8; Wilks 1985, 482. One of these dispersed Muslim Mande groups from Bono Manso was the Timite patronymic group, to whom the appellation 'Muslims of the Akan' had been given (Levtzion 1968, 7).

information and ideas, merchants to establish links of communication and trust, and students to embark on a lifelong search for knowledge in the Islamic sciences. It was to emerge as one of the major lines for the spread of Islam and Muslim learning into the Voltaic Basin, but it was also a key avenue for the introduction of new cultural and social values.

The Juula expansion resulted in the establishment of Juula settlements along the trade routes. Usually, the Juula would establish communities in already existing villages or towns and in some of these, the Juula formed the majority of the population. In others, the Juula inhabited the traders' quarter whereas other quarters of a town might include the quarter of the ruling elite, the artisans' quarter and so on. In the Voltaic Basin along the north-south trade axis, Bighu<sup>42</sup> emerged during the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century as a regional trading entrepôt and an important Juula town and collecting point of gold where Juula caravans brought salt, textiles and brassware from the markets of the Western Sudan.<sup>43</sup> According to oral traditions, Bighu was settled by nine Wangara groups.<sup>44</sup> Not only those in Bighu but elsewhere along the north-south trade axis, the various Juula/Wangara groups claim common Malian origin and assert that their ancestors had come from 'Mande Kaba'. This 'Mande Kaba' has been identified by Wilks as Kangaba on the Upper Niger, which remained for centuries one of the most sacred centres of the

<sup>42</sup> Massing (2000, 294) lists the following variations for the spelling of Bighu: Bigou, Bitugu, Bigu, Bitu, Bi'u, Bew, Beawu, Beho, Begho, Biégo. For a discussion about the relationship between Bighu and Bonduku, see Perinbam 1986.

<sup>43</sup> Archaeological investigations have shown that the site of Bighu was occupied from about the thirteenth to the eighteenth century and the period of flourishing of the town occurred between the fifteenth/sixteenth and early eighteenth century. The site was composed of some 1,500 mounds, probably the remnants of former compounds, which were clustered in four areas representing the four former quarters of the town. The earliest quarter was Nyarko, which pre-dated the arrival of Juula traders by some 200–300 years. The Juula themselves occupied the Kramo Quarter, a name which seems to indicate a Muslim presence. The third quarter Dwinfour, was the artisanal area, while the fourth and largest quarter, Brong, has been interpreted as the ritual centre of the town. Two markedly different types of burials in the Kramo Quarter give further strength to the hypothesis of Kramo ("people of the book"; Akan: *Nkramo* = Muslim) being a Muslim quarter, as is the presence of ceramic drainpipes which were used in a certain type of flat-roofed architecture resembling that found in the Sudan savannah, i.e., the Mande homelands. Other evidence found in the excavations of a 'northern' influence in Bighu include spindle whorls which were identical to both those used in the area today and to those from Jenne as well as brass vessels. Perhaps the most interesting items found were objects for weighting and measuring, including 'chipped, shaped potsherds' (Stahl 1994, 87) which conform closely to the Islamic *mithqal* and *wakia* standards. See further Insoll 2003, 334–336.

<sup>44</sup> Wilks 1965, 93. These nine groups were the Banba [Bamba], the Kamaghatay, the Timitay, the Gbani, the Jabaghatay, the Tarawiri, the Kuribari, the Watara, the Kawtay [Kamara] (Wilks 1982, 348; Perinbam 1986, 298; Massing 2000, 296). Massing (2000, 294; also Massing 2004, 893) gives another explanation for the foundation of Bighu, namely that the town was founded by emigrants from Walata. His hypothesis rests on phonetical considerations since Bighu/Bigou is close to Bighu, the commercial section of Walata. The town was situated in the Sahel savannah and was raided several times by the Mossi in the fifteenth century, after which it declined. According to Massing, refugees from Walata/Bighu came to the Guinea savannah and established a 'New Bighu' when the old was abandoned.

Mandekan-speaking peoples. However, many of the Juula of the Akan hinterland also identify themselves as ‘Bighu Juula’. They claim that their ancestors had first settled in Bighu but had been forced to move on after the destruction of the town and had dispersed as far as Kong in the west and to Buna, Bonduku, Namasa, Banda and Mengye in the Western Voltaic Basin.<sup>45</sup>

Bighu was an important Juula trading centre until its abandonment during the early eighteenth century. Wilks and others have identified Bighu with the ‘gold town’ Bitu of the Arabic texts. In fact, Bitu was the Western Sudanese name for the place known to the Southern Wangara as Bighu.<sup>46</sup> The town itself was inhabited by local Bron, and Hwela people as well as immigrant Mandekan-speaking groups, namely Numu, who were non-Muslim blacksmiths of Mande origin (called *tomfo* in Akan), Ligbi and Juula, all of them living in separate wards.<sup>47</sup> Bighu was first and foremost a centre of trade rather than scholarship and Muslim scholars seemed to have little influence. At least one scholar, Muhammad Sāquwā al-Wankarī (Wilks: Muhammad Saghanughu the Wangara) left the town because of troubles there during the late fifteenth century, indicating perhaps that Bighu was not a place for a pious and learned man.<sup>48</sup>

Bighu, or at least the Juula section, was a ‘Muslim’ community that included at least some Muslim scholars.<sup>49</sup> One of these scholars was to play a crucial role during the sixteenth century when the ruler of Mālī tried to strengthen his control over the north-south gold trade.<sup>50</sup> According to local chronicles, the *Amr Ajdādinā* (Concerning our Ancestors)<sup>51</sup> and the ‘Bole manuscript’,<sup>52</sup> the Mālī ruler Jighi Jarra,<sup>53</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Wilks 1982, 344.

<sup>46</sup> The town was known to the Akan as Bew and to the Muslim savants in Gonja as Biku or Bi‘u (Wilks 1985, 477).

<sup>47</sup> Goody 1966b, 18; Goody 1964, 194–195. According to Levtzion (1968, 8–9), the Ligbi and the Numu were proto-Juula. The Ligbi had migrated towards the forest region of modern Guinea, Liberia and the Ivory Coast where they seemed to have been engaged in the kola trade. Their arrival at Bighu was due to the prospects in the gold trade. For a different interpretation, see Massing 2000, 295–296.

<sup>48</sup> Wilks 1982, 345, 348. He later became the first *qadi* of Jenne under Askia al-Hajj Muhammad of Songhay (ca. 1493–1528).

<sup>49</sup> According to Wilks (1985, 478), the position of head of the Juula, Dyulamansa or Shehu Wangara, rotated among the nine original Wangara groups whereas the imamate was held by the Bamba patronymic group. Massing (2000, 297 fn 35), on the other hand, claims that the Kama(gh)atē held the imamate in Bighu and in settlements with close links to the town, such as Salaga, Kintampo, Wenchi, Banda, Buna, Bole and Bonduku.

<sup>50</sup> In 1477, Mālī lost its main gold trading centre Jenne to Songhay. A little earlier, the Portuguese had entered the gold trade. Thereafter, the West African gold trade was no longer the monopoly of the Wangara or the Malian ruler.

<sup>51</sup> *Amr Ajdādinā*, translation and commentary in Wilks/Levtzion/Haight 1986, 44–46 (hereafter AA/WLH 1986).

<sup>52</sup> *Bole Manuscript*, translated by Duncan-Johnstone and reproduced in Goody 1954, Appendix VI (hereafter BM/Goody 1954). The manuscript is another version of the *Amr Ajdādinā* (AA/WLH 1986).

<sup>53</sup> Goody 1954, 54: Giji, nicknamed Jarra; AA/WLH 1986, 44: Jighi Jarā or Jighi whose *laqab* (title) was Jarrā.

who is identified by Wilks as presumably Mūsā Jata,<sup>54</sup> sent a request to the ruler of Bighu<sup>55</sup> to send him gold, but the ruler refused. Thereafter, the king raised a cavalry force led by two princes, ‘Umar and Naba‘a,<sup>56</sup> and sent it against Bighu. The town was conquered and ‘Umar assumed the governorship of the town whereas Nāba‘a was sent to occupy Buna, another Juula town nearby.<sup>57</sup> This he did, but instead of returning, Nāba‘a crossed the Black Volta, conquered the land, settled at Yagbum and founded the ruling dynasty of the Gonja state. According to the *Kitāb Ghanjā*, an eighteenth-century Gonja chronicle, two Bighu Muslims, Ismā‘īl (Kamaghatay) and his son Muhammad al-Abyad, provided crucial spiritual assistance to Naba‘a and his successors in the conquest of Gonja (see further Subchapter 2.2).<sup>58</sup>

The Mālī occupation of Bighu occurred during the mid-sixteenth century.<sup>59</sup> For a time, at least, the ruler of Mālī gained access to that part of the Akan gold trade which the Wangara traders controlled. The attitude of the Bighu Juula community seems to have shifted: at first, they rejected the demand of the ruler of Mālī, but after the Mālī occupation, at least some groups seemed to have joined the Mande (Gbanya) horse warriors in their further conquests. Bighu thereafter became the principal trading centre in the trade between Gonja and the Akan countries during the seventeenth century: gold flowing northward and slaves going to the south.<sup>60</sup>

Internal disputes, external pressure and changes in the trade patterns resulted in the decline of the town at the end of the seventeenth century and the early eighteenth century. The Moroccan conquest of the Niger Bend as well as the chaotic rule of the Pashas in Timbuktu caused much harm to the northbound gold trade. At the same time, an increasing demand for gold on the coast increased the southbound gold trade. However, the end of the town came with the rise of Asante.<sup>61</sup> As the Ligbi and Juula were strangers in the town, their existence was not tied to the locality and therefore they migrated, establishing themselves in new trading centres such as Bonduku in the Gyaman Kingdom and Banda.<sup>62</sup> However, their long-term presence

<sup>54</sup> Wilks 1985, 483.

<sup>55</sup> The original text of the BM/Goody and AA/WLH reads Shīghu (i.e., Segu), but Wilks and others suggest that this is a recent change by the copyist of the Gonja chronicle who was systematically changing references to Bighu to ones to Segu. See further Wilks 1982, 469, Wilks 1985, 483 fn 77.

<sup>56</sup> BM/Goody 1954, 54: Imoru and Naba‘a; AA/WLH 1986, 56: ‘Umar and Nāba‘a; *Tariyon Asalin Gonjava da Chumbulawa da Nawurawa* in Goody 1954, 49: Ndawura Jakpa. Wilks was notified by several of his informants that Nāba‘a is not a proper name but a nick-name meaning ‘the one who arrived’ (WLH 1986, 48).

<sup>57</sup> BM/Goody 1954, 54: Gwona; AA/WLH 1986, 46: Ghūna.

<sup>58</sup> *Kitāb Ghanjā*, translation and commentary in Wilks/Levtzion/Haight 1986, 91 (hereafter KG/WLH 1986). See further Wilks 1982, 469–470.

<sup>59</sup> The date for the invasion is based on a backward extrapolation of dates given in the *Kitāb Ghanjā*.

<sup>60</sup> Wilks 1982, 471.

<sup>61</sup> According to Wilks (1985, 478), Bighu was already abandoned by the end of the eighteenth century. The Asante conquest of the area occurred during the early 1720s.

<sup>62</sup> Different sources point towards the same direction, namely that Sudanese merchants, Juula or Hausa, did not regard Bonduku as a new foundation but a continuation of Bighu (Akasaka 1976,

at Bighu had a cultural impact on the local Huela inhabitants: About half of the Huela adopted Islam and the Ligbi language.<sup>63</sup>

At least two Muslim Mande centres emerged in the Western Voltaic Basin during the era of the Juula expansion, one in the Nasa-Visi region, the other at Buna (Ghūna, Bouna). Muslim Mande known as the Kantusi settled in Nasa, Visi and Palewogho before the creation of the Wa state by Mampurugu and Dagbamba exiles. The Kantusi settlement of Visi developed into a local centre of learning with the arrival of the Timbuktu notable Abū Bakr b. ‘Alī Kunatay (Konate), and his followers during the sixteenth/seventeenth [?] century.<sup>64</sup> Nasa, too, emerged as an autonomous Muslim village with intimate links to the ruling elite of Wa.<sup>65</sup> Apart from being Muslim centres, both Buna and Wa were to be tied to the ‘Mossi-complex’ through their ruling elite as the rulers of both towns claim origin from Dagbon (see further Subchapter 2.4).

Buna was also a Juula town that had probably been founded during the fifteenth century.<sup>66</sup> Like Bighu, it was located on the north-south gold trade axis, but in contrast to Bighu, Buna developed into a regional scholarly centre. With the dispersion of the Bighu Wangara, Buna gained further momentum as one of the leading Mande settlements in the Western Voltaic Basin.<sup>67</sup> At the end of the eighteenth century, the Muslim community at Buna consisted of scholars from many parts of the Western Sudan savannah. Abū Bakr al-Siddīq of Timbuktu, who was a pupil there around 1800, listed in his biography the leading scholars of the town, including Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir Sankarī from Futa Jallon, Ibrāhīm ibn Yūsuf from Futa Toro and Ibrāhīm ibn Abī’l-Hasan from Dyara.<sup>68</sup> The community was led by a local Juula of the Watara patronymic, ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Hājj Muhammad Watarāwī.<sup>69</sup> Although Buna was affected by Asante retaliations against a revolt in Gyaman and Western Gonja during the early nineteenth century – these areas, supported by Kong and probably Buna, revolted against the deposition of the pro-Muslim Asantehene Osei Kwame in 1803. Buna was still regarded as an important scholarly centre during the mid-nineteenth century, as Heinrich Barth was told by his informants.<sup>70</sup> However, as in the case of Bighu, the Juula in Buna remained strangers and outsiders in the local society. Although both were Juula towns, the Juula element was a late

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313–315; Wilks 1982, 345; Massing 2000, 297).

<sup>63</sup> Levtzion 1968, 10.

<sup>64</sup> Wilks 1985, 475; Wilks 1989, 55–56; Davies 1997, 46.

<sup>65</sup> Levtzion 1968, 139–140; Wilks 1989, 56–57.

<sup>66</sup> Wilks 1963, 413.

<sup>67</sup> According to Massing’s informant, the present Cissé imam of the Friday Mosque in Buna, the Kamaghaté family at first held the imamate but were later replaced by the Cissé family (Massing 2000, 300).

<sup>68</sup> Wilks 1967, 157. Other scholars in Buna mentioned by Abū Bakr al-Siddīq were Muhammad al-Mustafā and Fātik al-Abyad. The scholars from Futa Jallon and Futa Toro were presumably FulBe or Torodbe.

<sup>69</sup> Wilks 1963, 413–414; Wilks 1968a, 176.

<sup>70</sup> Wilks 1975, 316.

addition to both local societies. In Buna, the indigenous population consisted of the Kulango, but the ruling elite, on the other hand, were of the offspring of ‘Mossi’ horsemen. Militant ‘Mossi’ cavalry groups from Mampurugu and Dagbon had created pluralistic political systems in Buna and Wa similar to those in Gonja during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The cavalry people seemed to have made arrangements with the Juula community, or, just as likely, the Juula engaged in a working alliance with the new political power to strengthen their own economic position and interests. Be that as it may, as in Gonja, these petty chiefdoms included three ‘estates’, namely the ruling elite, i.e., the cavalry people, the Juula and the autochthonous people. However, although the relationship between the ruling class and the Juula was one of interconnection and interdependence, the influence of the Juula on the indigenous people was minimal.<sup>71</sup>

## 1.2. Merchant-Scholarly Communities and the Suvarian Tradition

A distinctive feature of the Juula/Wangara settlements and towns was the contrast between the Muslim urban space and the non-Muslim rural one. The Juula/Wangara were Muslims and by and large remained so despite their dispersion throughout West Africa. Thus, whenever they settled, their community became a Muslim microcosm which was surrounded by non-Muslims. As traders, they needed to create and uphold good relations with the local rulers, be they Muslim or – in most cases – non-Muslims. This situation resembled that of the early Muslim trade communities in the Sahel and Sudan savannah before the emergence of the two leading Muslim empires, Mālī and the Saifawa dynasty in Kānīm-Barnū (Borno). Early Arabic accounts of the political and religious conditions in the Bilād as-Sūdān usually referred to a situation where the Muslim traders lived in a separate settlement or ward whereas the court and the local urban (non-Muslim) inhabitants would live in another. However, the existence of ‘twin-cities’ was not limited to ancient Ghānā, but seemed to have emerged as a general feature throughout the Sudanic savannah and beyond. These ‘twin-cities’ were useful for both the Muslim traders as well as the local, non-Muslim court as the Muslims would be given a kind of internal autonomy and consequently would be able to handle their own affairs according to Islamic Law, whereas they would not be allowed to interfere in local politics and thus would not threaten the rulers. The position of the ruler was that of an intermediary. He was the benefactor of the Muslims and could sometimes even regard himself to be a Muslim, as was the case with the Mālī and Saifawa rulers and also the rulers in Songhay and Hausaland. From the rulers’ perspective, Islam could be preferred to local beliefs since it functioned as a buttress for the power of the ruling class and reinforced the social boundary between the rulers and the commoners. At the

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<sup>71</sup> Wilks 1968a, 163–164; Akasaka 1976, 318.



same time, however, the ruler was also the guardian of local non-Muslim customs and beliefs. From the perspective of many Muslim scholars, therefore, the position of the ruler was problematic. How was the Muslim community to act, especially when the ruler, his court and the surrounding society all were non-Muslims? If the Muslim community followed the rigorous interpretation that Muslims should avoid interaction with non-Muslims and were obliged to emigrate from a non-Muslim country to a Muslim one, then the position of the Muslim traders would have been virtually impossible. It can be argued that, for most Muslim scholars up until the late eighteenth century, a rejectionalist approach was seldom applied or even propagated. True, some Muslim scholars would emigrate if they found local religious circumstances to have become too problematic in a certain location, but in most cases, one has to regard such an act as a criticism of the internal affairs of a particular Muslim community.

The Juula/Wangara community was among those Muslim communities in West Africa that generally chose an accommodationalist approach towards local societies, at least before the nineteenth century. Their accommodation was first and foremost a political one: they did not challenge the position of the local rulers and the local ruling elite nor did they propagate for the conversion of the court, not to speak about the commoners. Instead, they moved from being outsiders to becoming strangers within a particular society. This stranger-position gave particular benefits to the Muslim community, the most important one being an internal cultural and religious autonomy.

A crucial matter for all stranger communities, whether Juula or other, was the tension between assimilation and the fear of losing their Muslim identity and the continuous renewal and reinvigoration of the Muslim content of their identity and culture. The struggle of Abū Bakr al-Siddīq to keep his faith while he was a slave in the West Indies gives an analogous situation to that of a Juula among non-Muslims in the Voltaic Basin. In fact, he himself was brought up in the Western Sudanic Muslim tradition:

The faith of our families is the faith of Islam. They circumcise the foreskin; say the five prayers; fast every year in the month of Ramadan; give alms as ordained in the law; marry four free women – a fifth is forbidden to them except she be their slave; they fight for the faith of God; perform the pilgrimage to Mecca; [...] they do not keep company with those whose faith is contrary to theirs, such as worshippers of idols [...], they teach their children to read, and instruct them in the different parts of knowledge [...].<sup>72</sup>

Abū Bakr al-Siddīq's testimony is interesting as it summarizes the Five Pillars of Islam as well as reveals two important problems, namely how to interact with non-Muslims and how to transmit one's faith to the next generation. Although he seems to take a rejectionalist standpoint by focussing on *jihad* (the fight for the faith of God)

<sup>72</sup> Wilks 1967, 162–163.

and avoiding interaction with non-believers, the Western Sudanic Islamic standpoint was rather different before the era of the militant Muslim reform movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The two FulBe/Torodbe scholars in Buna might indicate that echoes of these movements – the Torodbe-led militant reform movements in the Western Sudanic savannah starting with Futa Jallon and Futa Toro in the 1720s and 1770s – were to be felt in the Muslim scholarly centres in the Voltaic Basin. However, whereas the Torodbe scholars were to propagate for an active engagement, if not open clash, with the surrounding local society, the Juula scholars were slow to follow. The reason for this was what Wilks has termed the ‘Suwarian tradition’ to which most Juula scholars belonged. This tradition had a different approach towards the non-Muslim society, namely a quietist one (see below). Thus, when Abū Bakr al-Siddīq was referring to the fight for the faith of God, he might have had a ‘Juula interpretation’ in mind, where one would ‘fight’ with one’s heart, mind and tongue, not with the sword.

Even more important than the question of fighting or avoidance was the need to teach and educate the members of the community. Literacy was the most important means to guarantee Muslim identity and the key persons for enabling and ensuring it were the professional scholars, the ‘*ulama*’, who constituted the educated elite. The task of the ‘*ulama*’ was to ensure the transfer of Islamic knowledge by organizing Quran schools and higher education within the community and establishing and maintaining links with the wider Muslim community (*umma*). To study and to continuously interpret the basic expositions of the Islamic sciences was crucial as it gave the means to both an ordinary Muslim as well as a Muslim community to preserve conformity between local practice and the general precepts of Islam.<sup>73</sup>

Peaceful coexistence with one’s non-Muslim neighbours was of key importance for the Juula traders. Therefore, a Muslim Juula scholar would not highlight the rejectionalist aspects of Islam – at least not before the nineteenth century. Instead, he would underline the ways of how to interact with non-Muslims without losing one’s faith and Muslim identity. This norm of so-called ‘*pacifist clericalism*’ was initially established by the late fifteenth-century Mande Muslim scholar al-Hājj Sālim Sūwarī,<sup>74</sup> who based his teaching on a principled disavowal of *jihād*. Instead, he stressed the necessity of solidarity among the Muslims, pointing out that intra-community rivalry and fragmentation were two of the factors which eventually could be exploited in *jihād*.<sup>75</sup> However, if peaceful coexistence was a politically justifiable strategy, it also was an ambiguous decision and often led to a contradiction between a more rigorous interpretation of the religious norms

<sup>73</sup> Wilks 1968a, 165–166.

<sup>74</sup> On al-Hājj Sālim Sūwarī and the Mālī background, see Wilks 1968a, 176–181. Al-Hājj Sālim Sūwarī is regarded among both the Juula and the Jakhanke, Mandekan-speaking Muslim traders and scholars in the Senegambia, to be the architect of their similar ways of life. See further Sanneh 1976; Sanneh 1979; Wilks 1995; Wilks 2000; Wilks 2002.

<sup>75</sup> Sanneh 1976, 63.

and the practical accommodation between the interests of the believers and those of the unbelievers. A normative Islamic perspective made a clear distinction between Muslim and *kafir*, believer and unbeliever, enlightened and benighted, and condemned the ‘mixing’ of traditions. Furthermore, the legalistic distinction between *Dar al-Islam* and *Dar al-Harb*, the domains of Islam and those of warfare, would compel Muslims in the Voltaic Basin either to emigrate or to actively transform the political setup. The Suwarian tradition, following Wilks, addressed such problems and contradictions but gave it an accommodationalist interpretation. The main emphasis of the Suwarian tradition did not regard the outward *jihād* as the solution for maintaining the inner cohesion of the community, but the inward *jihād*. Thus, scholars following a Suwarian tradition emphasized the importance of learning in maintaining the correctness of the *sunna* (norm) of the believers. In their interpretation, *kufir* (unbelief) was due to ignorance (*jahl*) rather than wickedness and that, according to God’s grand design for the world, some people would remain longer in the state of ignorance than others. Therefore, true conversion could only occur in God’s time. As a consequence of this postulate, active proselytization through *jihād* was inappropriate as enlightenment and conversion of the unbelievers would happen eventually. The role of the Muslims, therefore, was to guarantee the internal cohesion and religious norms of the community of believers. Only when the very existence of the community of believers was threatened by the unbelievers, was a call for *jihād* justified. It was, in Wilks’ words, an alternative to the ideology of *hijra* and *jihād*. Muslims might accept the authority of non-Muslim rulers, and even support them insofar as it enabled them to follow their own way of life in accordance with the Islamic ideal.<sup>76</sup> Wilks further notes that those ‘*ulama*’ who followed the Suwarian tradition saw themselves as presenting the unbelievers with an example (*qudwā*) and as making possible emulation (*iqitida*) in sustaining their *sunna* and the visible signs of their Muslimness, i.e., the mosques and the Quran schools. However, equally important was their commitment to education and learning in order to ensure that their own religious and ritual observance was in accordance with Islamic Law and free from error.<sup>77</sup>

The importance of the Suwarian tradition cannot be overemphasized when one traces the dissemination and impact of Wangara scholars in the Voltaic Basin. In fact, it seems as if more or less all of the known Wangara scholars that were to establish imamate in the various chiefdoms and states were linked to this scholarly tradition. Wilks suggests that sixteenth-century Bighu scholars, such as Ismā‘īl Kamaghatay and his son Muhammad al-Abyad, the founders of the Gonja imamate, belonged to this tradition. Others were Ya’murru and Yūsuf Tarawirī, who reputedly had come from Dya during the seventeenth century and founded the Wa imamate, Sharīf

<sup>76</sup> This postulate is important as it enabled Muslims to engage in the political life of the society they were living in without being marked as ‘mixers’ or ‘apostates’.

<sup>77</sup> Wilks 1989a, 99, 202; Wilks 1995, 61; Wilks 2000, 98.

Abū Bakr Kunatay from Timbuktu who founded the Kantonsi imamate in Visi, and Sulaymān b. ‘Abdallāh Baghayughu, also from Timbuktu, who founded the Sabari-Yendi imamate in Dagbon.<sup>78</sup>

An interesting explanation for the diffusion of Wangara scholars in the Voltaic Basin is suggested by Massing. According to him, the dissemination of the sixteenth-century Wangara scholars was part of a conscious plan for a *jihad* against the southern ‘pagans’. Massing argues that the plan was first developed by Askia Muhammad in his fight – identified by Massing as a *jihad* – against the Kharijite dynasty of Sunni Ali, the ruling house of Songhay. Askia Muhammad and his Muslim advisors are believed to have designed a strategy to convert the animists which was further elaborated during and after his pilgrimage to Mecca in ca. 1496/7. The strategy established what Massing terms ‘maraboutic Islam’ and was based on the century-old Wangara long-distance trade network and their establishment of Muslim colonies in the south together with the conversion and adoption of traditional Komo ritual practitions, i.e., resting on a peaceful integration. Massing’s main argument is that the so-called ‘Legend of the Twelve Saints’ is a reflection of this plan: the story lists twelve Muslim scholars, among them al-Hājj Sālim Sūwarī and Muhammad Baghayughu, who all participated in Askia Muhammad’s pilgrimage and on their return, were sent to different places in West Africa, e.g., Timbuktu, Kankan, Jenne, Segou, Vamala and Bonduku.<sup>79</sup> Though Massing’s hypothesis of a conscious plan is rather weak, the link between the Suwarian tradition and the Songhay Empire is interesting and can perhaps be understood as being part of Askia al-Hājj Muhammad’s policy to transform the empire into an Islamic one.<sup>80</sup>

It is evident that the position of the scholars in Western Sudanic Muslim communities and societies was a crucial and an influential one. Until the changes brought forward by the various Torodbe-led militant reform movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that swept over the Sudanic savannah, approaches similar to the Suwarian tradition marked the ‘mainstream’ approach towards non-Muslim societies and rulers. Scholarly communities and especially the networks of individual scholars, created an ‘Islamic space’ where Islam could be practiced and deeper knowledge about the faith could be acquired. Therefore, a Wangara scholar’s social position and status was not defined through his ethnic or family background but through his reputation as a scholar and ones educational background, which is reflected in a Juula saying: “A man is a karamoko because of his chain [*isnad*] for

<sup>78</sup> Wilks 1989a, 99; Wilks 2002, 218–219. Wangara scholars of the Saghanughū patronymic also settled further west in Kong, where they established an important Suwarian centre. The family was descended from al-Hājj ‘Uthmān Saghanughū, a seventeenth-century scholar who is said to have left ‘Mande Kaba’ because of ‘pagan practices’ there and to have resettled at Mafarru, a village or town nowadays vanished. His descendents later moved to Kong and other trading centres in the Western Sudan, including Wagadugu in the Mossi country. See further Wilks 1968a, 173–176.

<sup>79</sup> Massing 2004, 887, 906–907.

<sup>80</sup> See further Weiss 2003a, 69–78.

learning, not for his chain for birth.”<sup>81</sup> The aim of continuous advanced study was to become a member of the professional learned class as a *karamoko* (Muslim scholar, Arabic: *‘ālim*; Songhay: *alfa*), and to become a teacher or function as an imam, a *qadi* or a *mufti*.<sup>82</sup> Higher knowledge in the Islamic sciences could be acquired through lifelong study by moving from one scholar to another. Of key importance were the written certificates or *isnad* (pl. *asanid*) a student would receive from his teacher after having completed his advanced studies.<sup>83</sup> Apart from al-Hājj Sālim Sūwarī, who has been identified as being the key Malian scholar from whom almost all later “chains” of (Juula) teachers start, Wilks highlights the key position of some Juula scholars in Samatiguila, Boron and Kong (all present-day La Côte d’Ivoire), such as Muhammad al-Mustafā b. al-‘Abbās Saghanughū (Saganogo, died ca. 1776/77) and his son ‘Abbās b. Muhammad al-Mustafā (also known as Imām ‘Abbās of Kong, died ca. 1801) – in fact, Wilks even claims that almost all of the *asanid* owned by Muslim scholars of Ghana, La Côte d’Ivoire and Burkina Faso converge on Imam Abbas, whose own teaching-chain goes back to al-Hājj Sālim Sūwarī.<sup>84</sup>

Last, but not least, a distinctive feature of the class of Muslim scholars was their multi-ethnic composition. An individual *karamoko* may be a non-Juula although he would have taken his teacher’s patronymic.<sup>85</sup> In this respect, the Juula scholars were no different from other Muslim scholars in the Western Sudan. The well-known group of Torodbe or Turudīya was a similar case: the Torodbe FulBe clerisy was not an ethnic category but rather a metier, being of eclectic social and ethnic origins.<sup>86</sup> Islam and the career of a Muslim scholar were therefore a means for some individuals overcome ethnic and social boundaries. At the same time, the Muslim community marked a new social cosmos for those individuals who left their own non-Muslim backgrounds. Through the teaching-chains and the scholarly networks, a Muslim community in a non-Muslim society would be able to maintain the internal Islamic order but at the same time distinguish itself as ‘different’ and ‘deviating’ from the local society and the local court as long as the both court and society were markedly non-Muslim. The challenge for the both the Muslim as well as the non-Muslim section in the societies and states of the Voltaic Basin was how to deal in the long run with such a situation. Was Islam to gain a stronger influence

<sup>81</sup> Wilks 1968a, 170.

<sup>82</sup> Wilks 1968a, 167.

<sup>83</sup> *Asanid* were only awarded for the study of the three central Maliki corpuses, namely the *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* of al-Mahallī and as-Suyūṭī, the *al-Shifā’ fī ta’rīf huqūq al-Mustafā* by ‘Iyād b. Mūsā b. ‘Iyād al-Sabtī, and the *Muwattā’* of Imām Mālik b. Anas, in the Western Sudan. An *isnad*, which often is referred to as a *silsila*, is produced by adding the name of the student to the *isnad* of his teacher. Apart from being awarded a written certificate, one is also authorized to wear a turban. After the completion of further travel and studies, one is entitled to carry a staff and wear a burnus. See further Wilks 1968a, 168–169, 172.

<sup>84</sup> Wilks 1968a, 173; Wilks 1989, 98; Wilks 1995, 62.

<sup>85</sup> Wilks 1968a, 170.

<sup>86</sup> See further Weiss 2003a, 90–91, 117–118.

in the local society, as happened in Dagbon (see Subchapter 2.3), or not, as was the case in Gonja (see Subchapter 2.2) and Mampurugu (see Subchapter 2.5)?

## 2. THE STATE, THE CHIEFS AND THE SCHOLARS

A decisive political factor in the early history of the Voltaic Basin was the advent of warriors on horseback. In various traditions, these immigrants were to establish themselves as the ruling elite over several communities in the region and were to lay the foundations of the so-called Mossi states. These Mossi states consisted of a northern 'set', i.e., Yatenga and Wagadugu,<sup>87</sup> and a southern 'set', i.e., Mampurugu, Dagbon and Nanun. Before the advent of the immigrants, the Voltaic Basin was inhabited by several autochthonous groups, such as the Kurumba or Fulde and the Dogon or Kibse in the north, the Samo or Ninise in the west and the so-called Gurunse, i.e., the Nuna and Kasena, the Konkomba and Gurensi, as well as the Mandekan-speaking Bisa. All of these groups, except for the Bisa and the Samo, spoke related Voltaic or Gur languages. The economic foundation of their societies was farming, fishing and animal husbandry. Among some of these groups, the institution of sacred chieftainship had emerged well before the advent of the immigrants. As Skalnik has noted, the immigrants, though mounted and militarily well-equipped, were not numerous at the beginning and did not subdue population groups who lacked an adequate degree or readiness for state formation. Instead, these immigrants constituted only the final catalyst in a process already underway. Furthermore, the originally dichotomous opposition between the immigrants and the indigenous population during the formative period became transformed with time into a dual unity. On the other hand, all of the Mossi states were to display a similar process of both expansion and internal friction and fission. This was due to the fact that only sons of chiefs could attain political power – either at home or by carving out new political entities. Those who were unsuccessful in the competition for higher political office inevitably sank to the social substratum of commoners, a process termed by Skalnik 'commonerization'.<sup>88</sup>

There are challenging problems attached to the arrival of the immigrants, not least the location of their points of departure as well as their origin. Several traditions on the origin of these 'outsiders' claim that their ancestors had departed from a region or 'kingdom' called Malle. Modern scholars have debated about where to place Malle: are the traditions referring to the 'medieval' West African empire of Mālī, or, as Levtzion suggests, should one identify Malle with some of the southeastern Mandekan groups? Whatever the place of origin of the immigrants – Mālī or an area inhabited by southeastern Mandekan – both options point towards the Mande factor discussed in the previous subchapter. In fact, most scholars agree

<sup>87</sup> Sometimes, Fadan N'Gurma is included on the list of the 'northern' Mossi states.

<sup>88</sup> Skalnik 1978, 471–475.



**Plate 1.** Muslims of Dagbon and Salaga, illustration from Dupuis 1824.

that the new ruling strata of the Mossi states were horse warriors. However, as will be discussed below, the Mande/Mossi factor is very complicated although it has to be dealt with in depth in order to see how the Mande Muslim factor was to be integrated in these states and how the influence of Islam in a seemingly slow process changed some basic cultural features of these societies. Further migrations of militant cavalry groups, either those of Mande warriors who created the Gonja state during the sixteenth century or off-shoots of the southern ‘Mossi’ states who created the petty chiefdoms of Buna and Wa in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, seem to have fuelled the development of pluralistic political systems. Two other external factors influenced the consolidation and the internal development of the various states in the Voltaic Basin, namely the northward expansion of Asante during the eighteenth century and the spread of Hausa traders and scholars. The political situation in the Voltaic Basin thus underwent two major changes. First, the advent of ‘Mossi’ warriors marked the beginning of the ‘Mossi’ state-complex by establishing a political order consisting of those who possessed political authority (*nam*) and those who possessed *tengasobundo* or ritual control over the land. At this stage, the Muslims were not part of the political setup, either because there were no settlements of Muslim traders and scholars or because they had few links with the ruling strata. The second change in the political setup in the Voltaic Basin occurred during the period of the sixteenth to seventeenth century migration. In this period, some of the states were to integrate the Muslims as a ‘third estate’ (Goody): first in Gonja, but also in Dagbon, Wa and Buna. In the other states of the ‘Mossi’ complex, the situation was more complicated, and, for example, in the two other southern

‘Mossi’ states, Mampurugu (Mamprusi) and Nanun (Nanumba), the Muslims did not achieve a similar influential position at court as happened in Dagbon.

### 2.1. The Mande/Mossi Factor and the ‘First Kingdom’ of Dagbon

The background of the Mossi has puzzled researchers for over a century. All of the states of the ‘Mossi complex’ that emerged in the Voltaic Basin sometimes at the end of the fifteenth century were made up of a ruling stratum that, at the very beginning of the formation of the states, had invaded their respective region and subdued the autochthonous inhabitants. According to their myth of origin, all of this elite were more or less ‘related’, and had entered the Voltaic Basin from the north/northeast. Modern historians, such as Wilks, believe that the area of departure of these conquering horse-raiders was Diamare or Gurma.<sup>89</sup> Local chronicles, such as the *Ta’rīkh as-Sūdān*, recall a period when the Niger Bend was invaded by ‘Mossi’ during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>90</sup> The ‘Mossi threat’ on the Niger Bend was only eliminated after several invasions by Songhay rulers during the late fifteenth and sixteenth century.<sup>91</sup>

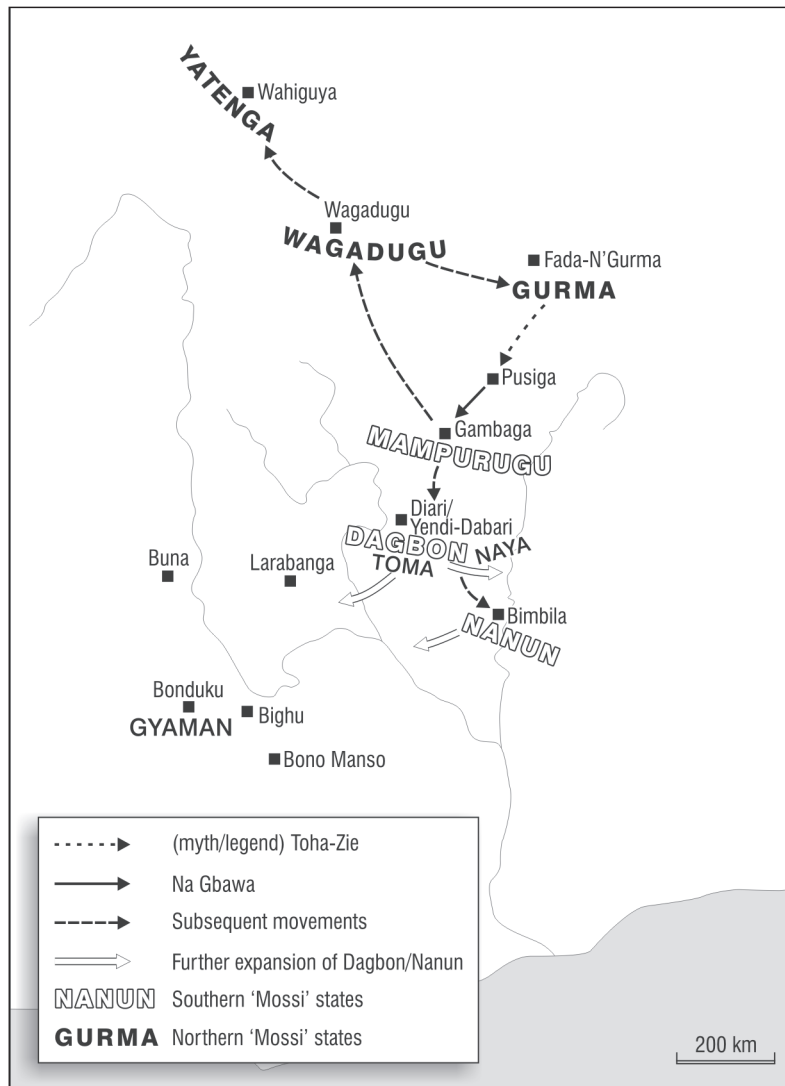
Whereas the reputation of the ‘Mossi’ in the Timbuktu chronicles is one of a frightening ‘pagan’ invading group against whom Muslim rulers, such as Askia al-Hājj Muhammad, were to declare *jihad* and launch a just war, local drum histories of the ruling strata in the ‘Mossi’ states are remarkably silent about these events. Instead of remembering decades, if not centuries, of attacks against the Niger Bend, the ‘mythical age’ in the Mossi drum histories points toward a history of cooperation, at least with the ruler of Mālī. However, a closer analysis of the relationship between the ‘Mossi’, the Mālī and the Songhay Empires might reveal a more complicated picture although it has to be pointed out that any analysis of the relationship rests on very vague historical foundations. The crucial setting was the Middle Niger and the Niger Bend, a region that was inhabited by Mande groups in the Inland Delta area, Songhay and Zarma in the eastern Niger Bend, Hausa to the southeast of Songhay

<sup>89</sup> Wilks 1985, 467.

<sup>90</sup> According to the *Ta’rīkh as-Sūdān*, Timbuktu was attacked by the ‘Mossi’ in ca. 1343 (Hunwick 1999, 11–12). Another ‘Mossi’ attack on Timbuktu occurred during the 1430s, and although the invaders were defeated and driven off (Hunwick 1999, 38–39), the invasion itself was perhaps one of the factors that led to the weakening of the Malian position on the Niger Bend at a crucial moment. However, about fifty years later, new ‘Mossi’ attacks occurred: against Sāma in 1477/78 and against Bīru (Walata) and Timbuktu in 1480 (Hunwick 1999, 92, 97–98).

<sup>91</sup> An invading ‘Mossi’ army was already annihilated by the seventeenth Songhay ruler (Hunwick 1999, 4). The ‘Mossi’ attacks during the 1470s and 1480s led to a long series of counterattacks and invasions by the Songhay army. Sunni Ali had already defeated the *Mossi-koi* (the ruler of the ‘Mossi’) in 1483/84 and pushed him back to the borders of his territory whereas several rulers of the Askiya dynasty launched attacks against the Mossi and tried to invade their territory, among others Askiya al-Hājj Muhammad in 1498/99 and Askia Dāwūd in 1549 and 1561/62 (Hunwick 1999, 99, 106–107, 146, 150). Iliasu (1971, 104) further argues that the counter attacks of Songhay eventually determined the northern limits of the Mossi domains.





Map 4. The Voltaic Basin, 14th to 15th century.

and Zarma, and Dogon and Mossi in the southern interior of the Niger Bend (i.e., in an area called Gurma).<sup>92</sup> Following the Mole-Dagbamba myths and their presentation of the ‘heroic age’ of the ‘Mossi’ states, the ‘Mossi’ were – most of the times – the allies of the ruler of Mālī in his attempt to quell attacks by ‘foreigners’, perhaps even the expanding Songhay Empire, during the fifteenth century. The information of the *Ta’riḵh as-Sūdān* points to this direction as no attacks by the ruler of Mālī on the ‘Mossi’ are recollected whereas the Songhay rulers seemed to have been the archenemies of the ‘Mossi’.<sup>93</sup> However, the question of external influences in the

<sup>92</sup> Hunwick 1999, xxvii.

<sup>93</sup> Northern ‘Mossi’ traditions from Wagadugu collected by Frobenius (1933, 351) mention an attack on the city of Marenga across the Niger. However, the reference to a ‘city’ is somewhat problematic as Frobenius (1933, 345) earlier stated that Marenga was the name for the Songhay people among the ‘Mossi’. Frobenius supposes that the attack by Naba Nasibirri, the seventh ruler of Wagadugu, against Marenga was the same event as the ‘Mossi’ attack on Bīru in 1480, mentioned in the *Ta’riḵh as-Sūdān*. This Naba Nasibirri was presumably the same ruler as Nasiri, ‘the ruler of

Voltaic Basin and in the ‘Mossi’ states is more complicated as the question of the background of the ruling elite still remains open. A similar, intriguing matter is the political system that emerged in the Voltaic Basin, and connected with this question is the influence of Islam in these societies.

Tamakloe’s as well as other versions of the mythological origin of the ruling elite in the Mossi states have a common structure, not least the appearance of the mythical hero, the Red Hunter/Toha-Zie (Tohazie, Tohajiye), and the central position of the legendary figure of Na Gbewa.<sup>94</sup> British colonial administrators, such as Mackay, Syme and Rattray, even claimed that in addition to the connection of the Red Hunter with Mālī that the immigrants/conquerors had originally been Muslims but subsequently had abandoned their faith and taken over the religion of the local, sometimes conquered population.<sup>95</sup> Levtzion dismissed these arguments as speculations and claimed that Malle should not be identified with the (Muslim) Mālī Empire. Instead, he claims that Malle was the region where southeastern Mandekan-speaking people, possibly the Busa in Borgu, lived: “These Mande people were not Muslims, and if any Mande elements were introduced at that stage they could not have been Islamic.”<sup>96</sup>

Levtzion’s location of Malle in northern Borgu is a plausible suggestion but not the only one. An early local version of the Zamfara origin of the Dagbamba was presented in Malam al-Hasan’s account,<sup>97</sup> and a similar argument was raised by Geoffrey Parker, Acting District Commissioner in Yendi in 1924, who claimed that the immigrants are “supposed to have come from Malle, an unallocated portion of Hausaland.”<sup>98</sup> Captain St. J. Eyre-Smith further noted that

[t]he Mamprusi, Dagomba (and Moshi peoples in the French Haute Soudan) claim to have come originally from Zamfara in the Soudan, in the heart of the early Songhois Kingdom on the west of Bornu. [...] It is possible that the leader of the invaders was the descendant of a ruler or member of the ruling family in the country from which he came, and was thus held in awe by his followers, adopting the ceremonies of his former court as soon as he decided to settle and found a new kingdom.<sup>99</sup>

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the Mossi’ against whom Askiya al-Hājj Muhammad waged a *jihad* in 1498.

<sup>94</sup> Tamakloe 1931a and Tamakloe 1931b. Local versions of the founding myth and legend of foundation of the various ‘Mossi’ states, especially Dagbon and Mampurugu, are discussed in Iliasu 1971, Benzing 1971, Ferguson 1972 and Skalnik 1978.

<sup>95</sup> Rattray 1932, I, xii, II, 550; PRAAD ADM 11/1/824, Mackay: *A Short Essay on the History and Customs of the Mamprussi Tribe* (s.a.), 3; PRAAD ADM 11/1/824, J.K.G. Syme, *The Kusasis. A Short History* (s.a.), 36.

<sup>96</sup> Levtzion 1968, 86.

<sup>97</sup> PRAAD ADM 11/1/824, J. Withers Gill, *A Short History of the Dagomba Tribe* (s.a.), 3.

<sup>98</sup> PRAAD ADM 56/1/113, Geoffrey Parker, *A General Survey of the System of Land Tenure in the Eastern Dagomba District* (1924), 1.

<sup>99</sup> Eyre-Smith 1933, 6–7.

Later researchers, such as Staniland, claim that the strangers who conquered Dagbon were non-Muslim Hausas from Zamfara.<sup>100</sup> His claim is backed by Seidu, who notes that Dagbamba drum chants trace the roots of the Dagbamba to Zamfara where Toha-Zie, the Red Hunter is believed to have come from.<sup>101</sup> Mackay, again, presents an early version of Mampurugu story of origin which resembles that of the Dagbamba, namely the departure of the ‘conquerors’ from “a country East of Sokoto [which could be Zamfara, HW], that they were originally Mohammedans and that an ancestor of ‘Bongwa’ the first Na [i.e., ruler] we know of, had gone to Mecca.”<sup>102</sup> If this would be the case, then one would expect to find traces of Hausa instead of Mande elements among the ruling elite in the Voltaic Basin. However, Malam al-Hasan’s text does not give any further hints and the information of Mackay’s informants is problematic, especially concerning the alleged early Muslim link and the pilgrimage to Mecca of the ancestor – the theme rather reads like a later (Muslim-influenced) interpretation.

A third possibility for the origin of the ruling elite in the ‘Mossi’ states highlights again the Mande connection but indicates a more northern location than Levtzion’s Busa/Borgu one. According to Dierk Lange, people living in the eastern part of the Niger Bend had a Mande-identity before the fifteenth century and the influence of Mālī reached as far as Kebbi.<sup>103</sup> Following this idea, one would be able to situate the Red Hunter in the region – the ‘wilderness’ – of the Dallols, thereby connecting the Hausa and the Mande/Mālī claim: Kebbi being a region adjacent to Zamfara, sometimes even included as one of the ‘original’ seven Hausa states/Hausa bakwoi, but being at that time under the influence of Mālī. In fact, Ivor Wilks’ presentation of the history of the ‘Mossi’ states points towards a similar conclusion.<sup>104</sup>

There is another hint about a possible Mande connection with the states in the Voltaic Basin and its link to the immigrants from ‘Malle’. This connection might be established through the *damba* (*dámma*) festival, which is the main annual festival among the Dagbamba, Mamprusi, Nanumba, Gonja and Wala. Among the Mandinka and Juula, the festival is known as *dô-mba ma*, “the day of great dance”.<sup>105</sup> Kuba, following Moraes Farias, suggests a Songhay origin for the festival, among whom the festival is known as *gani*, meaning in Songhay “to dance”.<sup>106</sup> In Songhay, the *gani* festival had no connections to Islam whatsoever, whereas both the *damba*

<sup>100</sup> Staniland 1975, 3.

<sup>101</sup> Seidu 1989, 9, 14. However, Seidu bases his claims on H.A. Blair’s original theory about the migration of the Dagbamba warriors from Zamfara into the Voltaic Basin. See further Blair 1932, 39–54.

<sup>102</sup> PRAAD ADM 1171/824, Mackay s.a., 3. Mackay, on the other hand, concludes that “there are many and various stories of their country of origin”.

<sup>103</sup> Lange 1991.

<sup>104</sup> Wilks 1985, 469–470.

<sup>105</sup> Duncan-Johnstone 1932, 13. ‘Damba’ is identified by him as a Mandingo word meaning ‘big dance’.

<sup>106</sup> Kuba 1996, 192.

as well as the *gani* festival have subsequently been merged with the Islamic *mawlid*. In the Voltaic Basin, for example, the *damba* is identified as a ‘Muslim’ festival, but this can only have emerged when Islam became closer connected with the ruling elite during and after the eighteenth century. Nadel, on the other hand, suggests that the *gani* festival in Nupe is linked to influences with Borno.<sup>107</sup> However, one could argue that in all societies where the *damba/gani* festival has undergone a transformation to emerge as a ‘Muslim’ festival, one could detect different cultural layers, an older, non-Muslim one, and a more recent, Muslim one. The older layer could be linked with a Mande or Mandefied cultural component that was spread either by Mandekan-speaking communities or by partially Mandefied immigrants. The recent Muslim layer has to be linked to the different groups that were connected with the spread of Islam in West Africa, either Juula or Kanuri. One could thus suggest that the descendants of the Red Hunter were such a Mandefied group of migrants, who had been influenced by (or exposed to) Mande culture in the ‘wilderness of Malle’. Presumably, therefore, one could argue that the possible region of origin of the ruling elite in the (southern) ‘Mossi’ states could have the eastern Niger Bend, a region between Mālī and Hausaland.

It is fair to assume that Toha-Zie is a mythical figure but that his son Nyagse was almost certainly a historical one, as Fage has already suggested.<sup>108</sup> Nyagse is identified as the leader of a migrant cavalry group that established itself as the ruling elite over established, ‘stateless’ peoples. Of the latter, little is known: they spoke a language belonging to the Gur group and had earth priests<sup>109</sup> (*tindana*).<sup>110</sup> However, the establishment for a probable chronology of the advent and the subsequent establishment of the various ‘Mossi’ kingdoms is more difficult. Most historians date the reign of Na Nyagse, the ‘founder’ of the (First) Dagbon Kingdom, to the second half of the fifteenth century.<sup>111</sup> The ‘First Kingdom’ of Dagbon was, by and

<sup>107</sup> Nadel 1949, 177.

<sup>108</sup> Fage 1964, 186.

<sup>109</sup> Earth priests were the custodians of the local shrines and were magical-religious actors. They were and are present among all groups in the Voltaic Basin and are known under different local names such as *tindana* (Dagbani, Mampruli and Kusaal), *tendaana* (Wala) and *tensoaba* (Tenkodogo, Yako and Ouahigoya). See further Beyer 1998, 143–145.

<sup>110</sup> Both the name ‘Dagbamba’ and the language spoken by the indigenous inhabitants were assumed by the invaders. Most researchers believe that the term ‘Black Dagomba’ (*Dagbon-sabilisi*) refers to the indigenous people who inhabited Dagbon (Goody 1964, 201; Staniland 1975, 3). However, this is contested by Tait who claims that the ‘Black Dagomba’ were ‘Grunshi’ and the indigenous inhabitants of Dagbon were the Konkomba (Tait 1955, 206). On the Konkomba, see further Tait 1961.

<sup>111</sup> Fage (1964, 181): 1476 to 1492; Levtzion (1968, 198): middle of the fifteenth century; Benzing (1971, 211): 1474 to 1489. Wilks (1985, 467), on the other hand, suggests that the establishment of Na Gbewa at Pusiga may be dated to the early part of the fifteenth century and the emergence of the southern ‘Mossi’ states to the early to mid-fifteenth century. Following Izard’s computations on the creation of the northern Mossi kingdoms, Wilks further believes that these kingdoms were established at the end of the fifteenth (Wagadugu) and mid-sixteenth (Yatenga) century. However, these dates are in conflict with Frobenius’ list of rulers in Wagadugu, which would indicate that the

large, an aristocratic and predatory military polity. The organization of the state was closely connected with the organization of the means of destruction, and, in many oral traditions, the conquest of Dagbon by Na Nyagse is said to have been a clash between warriors on horse and the autochthones who had none, perhaps even a clash between raiders who were using iron weapons and locals who did not<sup>112</sup>. Economic growth resulted primarily from the capture of booty and people in raids whereas political power was distributed principally among the aristocratic class who had the means to conduct warfare. In Dagbon, as elsewhere in the ‘Mossi’ states, that aristocratic class was largely the class of princes of the blood, who were later the receivers of territorial fiefs. Only some rudimentary administrative structures were to emerge during the ‘First Kingdom’, most notable that of the class of eunuch functionaries.<sup>113</sup> The ‘dualistic’ nature of the Mossi states was to be highlighted in the ideological and cultural spheres. In Dagbon, for example, the immigrants took over the language of the autochthones, the language of the Mole-Dagbane cluster,<sup>114</sup> and some of their rituals and festivals, such as the *bugum* or fire festival<sup>115</sup> in Dagbon whereas other festivals, such as the *damba* or the *yawum* dance<sup>116</sup> remained distinctive to the immigrants. Economically, the autochthonous agricultural communities gradually acquired a multi-ethnic and socially stratified character and thus signalled a process of ‘commonerization’ or, following Skalnik,

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formation of the northern ‘Mossi’ kingdoms was already in full sway during the mid-fifteenth century (Frobenius 1933, 345–351). On the other hand, the Wagadugu list of the first kings is extremely unreliable, as Levtzion has noted, and only Naba Wubri (Frobenius: Ubri) is regarded as being a historical person, whose reign is tentatively dated by Fage (1964, 182) to have occurred ca. 1500. However, this date seems too late if the seventh ruler of Wagagugu, Naba Nasibirri, is the same ruler as is referred to in the *Ta’rikh as-Sūdān*. Fage himself admits the problems in the dating of the northern Mossi rulers and even suggests that Ubri could have ruled at the beginning of the fifteenth century (Fage 1964, 187). Iliasu (1971, 108), on the other hand, suggests that the emergence of the kingdom of Mampurugu – as the first of the ‘Mossi’ kingdoms – probably emerged during the early decades of the fourteenth century, whereas Yatenga and Fada N’Grumah, the two last ones, during the middle of the fifteenth century.

<sup>112</sup> This is one of the central themes in Goody 1971.

<sup>113</sup> Ferguson 1972, 28–29. Similar rudimentary state offices emerged in the northern ‘Mossi’ states. In Frobenius account of Wagadugu, Naba Sorroba, the fourth ruler, summoned six ‘big men’ of the country, namely the Uidi-naba, the Lachale-naba, the Gunga-naba, the Tansoba-naba, the Kamsogo-naba and the Ballum-naba (Frobenius 1933, 348).

<sup>114</sup> Beyer 1998, 206.

<sup>115</sup> Blair quoted in Seidu (1989, 8). “The big annual festival of Konkonba and other complete pagans, is their Bugum festival, the burying of the bush and fire rites in general. Therefore we are safe in assuming as a certainty that the Bugum festival existed in Dagbon prior to Muslim immigration.”

<sup>116</sup> The *yawum* dance is done on horseback. Tait already noted that comparable displays of horsemanship are given in Northern Nigeria in the Hausa Emirates, which he regards as having had a great influence in Dagbon (Tait 1955, 205). Beyer, following a lexico-historical and linguistic analysis, suggests that the introduction of the *damba* festival could be linked to Mande immigrants, perhaps the Gbanya (Gonja). However, in his final analysis, however, Beyer claims that an older nucleus of Hausa or Songhay background is more likely for the *damba* festival (Beyer 1998, 140–141).

they became involved in a complicated relationship of dependence on the emerging state organization in which the immigrants were to play the dominant role.<sup>117</sup>

## 2.2. The Gonja [Gbanya] Factor

The Voltaic Basin underwent dramatic changes during the sixteenth century. Mande horse warriors pushed into Gonja, established a new kingdom there, and subsequently overran the western parts of the territory controlled by the (First) Dagbon kingdom.<sup>118</sup> Nāba‘a, one of the ‘princes’ from Mālī who attacked Bighu whereafter he moved his forces eastwards across the Black Volta and settled at Yagbum, is identified in another written version of the Gonja tradition, the mid-eighteenth century *Kitāb Ghanjā*, as the first ruler of Gonja,<sup>119</sup> whose reign is computed by Wilks et al. as from 1552/53 to 1582/83.<sup>120</sup> The Ngbanya, as the descendants of the Mālīan cavalry men were known, came to form a chiefly class dispersed throughout the territorial divisions which Nabaga and his successors created.<sup>121</sup> The autochthonous peoples of the region, the Vagella, the Anga, the Tampolensi and the like, were to constitute the commoner class, the *nyamasi*, and continued to exercise a ritual control over the land through their earth priests.<sup>122</sup>

According to Brooks, wherever Mande warriors, such as the ruling lineage of the Ngbanya, conquered a society, they imposed Mandekan languages and other cultural and social patterns. These included the Mande tripartite social system comprising 1) elite and free persons; 2) *nyamakalaw*, or endogamous occupational groups, consisting of bards, smiths, and leatherworkers; and 3) captives. Further, Brooks notes that

The political sphere of Mandekan-ruled states was characterized by the ascendancy of a ‘royal’ clan, or several ‘royal’ clans that rotated rulership between them. These and other privileged families monopolized offices, and over time there was increasing differentiation between such ‘royal’ and ‘noble’ families and other ‘free’ people. To the extent they could, the ruling elites circumscribed the powers and prerogatives of power associations and the influence of smiths and others associated with them, favouring instead Muslim clerics and traders who generally reciprocated by supporting ‘legitimate’ authority. The struggle between traditional religious beliefs and Islam joined in this period would continue for centuries...<sup>123</sup>

<sup>117</sup> Skalnik 1978, 474.

<sup>118</sup> BM/Goody 1954, 54; AA/WLH 1986, 46; Wilks 1982, 469–470; Wilks 1985, 483–484.

<sup>119</sup> KG/WLH 1986, 91. Although Massing’s claim that the foundation of Gonja is related to the demise of Bighu is correct; his chronology is not, i.e., when he claims that Gonja was founded as late 1700 (Massing 2000, 301).

<sup>120</sup> WLH 1986, 114.

<sup>121</sup> Oral traditions refer to ‘Jakpa’ as the founding father of the Gonja state, but historians have concluded that ‘Jakpa’ was not a name but rather a title (Levtzion 1968, 52). In Tamakloe’s text (1931a, 20; 1931b, 257), the leader of the Mande horse warriors is called Sumaila Ndewura Jakpa.

<sup>122</sup> Goody 1967, 186–187; Levtzion 1968, 55; Wilks 1985, 484.

<sup>123</sup> Brooks 1985, 140.

The first phase of the creation of the Gonja kingdom occurred under Nāba‘a (Nabaga)<sup>124</sup> and his son and successor Manwura<sup>125</sup> (ruled ca. 1582/83–1600/01 [WLH 1986]) whereas the final consolidation of the kingdom occurred under Jakpa Lanta (or Lātā<sup>126</sup>), who reigned ca. 1622/23–1666/67 (WLH 1986).<sup>127</sup> At the height of their power, the Gbanya had successfully overrun the western part of the formerly Dagbamban controlled Voltaic Basin, including gaining control of Daboya, the only important salt producing centre in the whole region.<sup>128</sup> The attacks on Dagbon reached their apogee when the Gonja army defeated and killed the Dagbamban ruler Na Dariziegu ca. 1670.<sup>129</sup> However, despite Jakpa Lanta’s attempt to create stable conditions for the succession to the highest office, namely that of the Yagbumwura or ruler of Gonja, his attempts failed. The kingdom was shattered by dynastic struggles, which led to a disastrous civil war from 1690/91 to 1702/03.<sup>130</sup> Even after the end of the civil war, the country was divided and the central authority was permanently weakened, as the *Kitāb Ghanjā* recalls: “Since then they have not agreed upon one king because each of them is called king in his own land.”<sup>131</sup>

The political instability continued during the eighteenth century. An invasion of a Gbanya ‘prince’ named Kumpati into Dagbon ended in the defeat of his troops and the killing of the prince at the battle of Sanso in ca. 1713, marking the end of the threat of Gonja to its eastern neighbour.<sup>132</sup> Further problems occurred with the

<sup>124</sup> Wilks 1966b: Wadih Naba‘, ruled ca. 1549/50–1579/80.

<sup>125</sup> Wilks 1966b: Thā‘ara Mawura, ruled ca. 1579/80–1598/99.

<sup>126</sup> Wilks 1966b: Al-Lātā, ruled ca. 1622/23–1666/67.

<sup>127</sup> Wilks 1966b, 27; WLH 1986, 114. At the end of his reign Jakpa Lanta is said to have divided the country among his sons and the sons of his brothers (KG/WLH 1986, 86), giving each of them a village or town to preside over, such as Tuluwe, Bole, Kumu, Kpandai, Kpembe, Kapendi, Wasipe, Senyon and Kawsaw. The post of Yagbumwura, the overlord of Gonja, was to rotate among the divisions (Hall: *Notes on Gonja History*, in Goody 1954, Appendix VII).

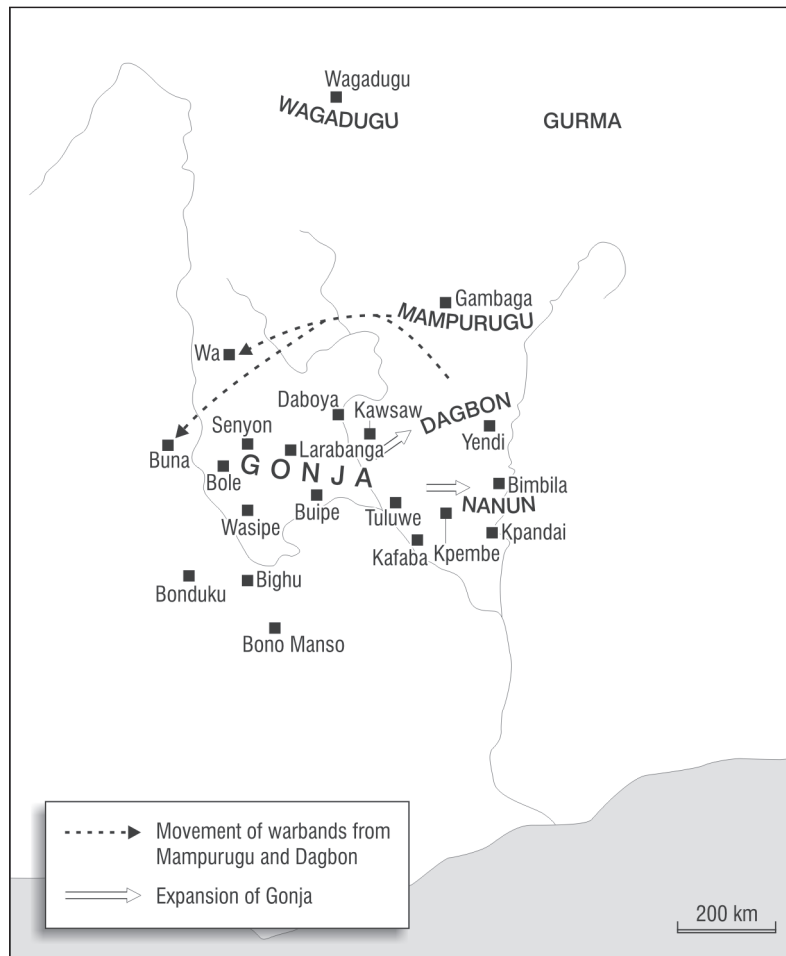
<sup>128</sup> On the conquest of Gonja, see the *Ta‘rikh Ghunjā* (TG/WLH 1986, 158–164), which includes the conquest of Bole (159), Gbuipe (160), Daboya (160–161), Kawsawgu (161), Deber (161), Tuluwe (162), Kafaba (162), Yeji (163), Kulepe (163), Kpembe (163) as well as campaigns against the Nanumba and Konkomba (163).

<sup>129</sup> Tamakloe 1931a, 20; Tamakloe 1931b, 259; Rattray II, 1932, 564; Levtzion 1968, 197; Benzing 1971, 123. Most of western and central Gonja was under the control of Dagbon before the Gbanya invasion whereas eastern Gonja as far as Salaga and Kete-Krachi was under the control of and settled by the Nanumba. Goody assumed that the Dagbamban dominance of the Voltaic Basin was associated with the control of trade, particularly kola nuts, to Hausaland. See further Goody 1964, 202. The *Ta‘rikh Ghunjā* refers to a battle between the Dagbamba and Gbanya in which the Gbanya forces captured and killed the ‘amīr of Yandi’. In the *Ta‘rikh Ghunjā*, the Dagbamban ruler is called Gharba, but as Wilks, Levtzion and Haight have pointed out, this cannot be the case as ‘Gharba’ would be Ya Na Gariba whose floruit was in the second half of the eighteenth century. (TG/WLH 1986, 163; WLH 1986, 171)

<sup>130</sup> KG/WLH 1986, 95.

<sup>131</sup> KG/WLH 1986, 97.

<sup>132</sup> Tamakloe 1931a, 29; Tamakloe 1931b, 266–267; Levtzion 1968, 89, 187. The KG noted the defeat of the ‘army’ in Tūnu‘ma land, i.e., Toma or the westerly and southerly parts of Dagbon (KG/WLH 1986, 97; WLH 1986, 122).



Map 5. The Voltaic Basin, 16th to 17th century.

rise of Asante in the south. During the reign of Asantehene Opoku Ware (ruled ca. 1720–1750) Gonja was made a vassal of Asante: first Western Gonja through the Asante conquests of Techiman in 1722/23 and Gyaman in 1732/33, thereafter Eastern Gonja in ca. 1745 and 1751/52.<sup>133</sup>

Like the ‘Mossi’ kingdoms, Gonja was a conquest state. However, as Wilks has noted, there was a crucial structural difference between the early ‘Mossi’ kingdoms and that of Gonja. Whereas the Mossi states at first were made up of two different elements – the alien ruling elite (*gbanya*) and the subjugated autochthones as commoners (*nyamse*), the Gonja or Gbanya kingdom had right from the beginning a third estate, namely that of the Muslim scholars or the *karamo*.<sup>134</sup> The close relationship between the Muslims and the ruling elite is revealed in a story about the prince Sumaila Ndewura Jakpa (i.e., Nāba‘a). According to a prophecy by a *malam* in Mālī, the prince would never be a king in his own country. Therefore, the prince emigrated together with seven thousand followers and arrived at Jah where

<sup>133</sup> Wilks 1975, 20–23; KG/WLH 1986, 99, 101, 105; WLH 1986, 141–142.

<sup>134</sup> Goody 1967, 186–187; Levtzion 1968, 55; Wilks 1985, 484.



he made friends with a certain *malam* called Fati Morukpe.<sup>135</sup> Although it is unclear whether or not the two Malian princes, ‘Umar and Nāba‘a, and their warriors were Muslims when they left Mālī,<sup>136</sup> their, and especially Nāba‘a’s, subsequent alliance with the Bighu scholars Ismā‘īl Kamaghatay and his son Muhammad al-Abyad is recalled in several written accounts.<sup>137</sup>

The alliance between the Gbanya leader and the Muslim scholar is important as it started a new chapter in the relationship between rulers and Muslims. Ismā‘īl Kamaghatay had befriended Nāba‘a whereas his son Muhammad al-Abyad, after the death of his father, joined the second ruler Manwura (Levtzion: Ma’ūra; Malam Baba: Mbonwura). Muhammad al-Abyad met the ruler when he was preparing for a decisive battle. The scholar performed a miracle, and the enemy was defeated. Thereafter, he became the ruler’s close ally and imam. Some accounts even claim that at least some of the ruling Gbanya were converted to Islam by Muhammad al-Abyad.<sup>138</sup> It can be argued that the close and seemingly effective relationship between the ruler and the scholar was to set an example for the Dagbamban rulers to follow, as will be discussed in the following subchapter. Muhammad al-Abyad was appointed the first imam, a position his descendants were to hold thereafter. According to a more recent tradition, the alliance between Jakpa and Fati Morukpe, i.e., Manwura and Muhammad al-Abyad, rested on an oath made by the ruler:

By the name of Allāh, I will give you a hundred horses, a hundred slaves, a hundred sheep, a hundred gowns, and a hundred trousers with its ropes. If you die, your people and children will take it after your death, and if I die, my people will be kind to you and your people after my death.<sup>139</sup>

<sup>135</sup> Tamakloe 1931a, 20–21; Tamakloe 1931b, 257.

<sup>136</sup> According to information provided by one Malam Baba in Salaga, the Mande invaders had originally been Muslims but subsequently had lost their Muslim identity: “During the life of Yagbumwura Nahu [not identified, HW] it was that all Gonjas refused the Islamic religion. [...] They stayed and enjoyed themselves too much that they stopped the Islamic religion – they did not pray again.” Following Malam Baba’s chronology, Yagbumwura Nahu could be identified as Nāba‘a as the Gonja ruler later met and befriended a Muslim scholar named Ismaila. This scholar was perhaps Ismā‘īl Kamaghatay from Bighu (although Malam Baba refers to a latter interpretation when stating that Ismaila (Ismā‘īl) came from “Shegu”). Malam Baba in *Oral traditions of Gonja* 1969, 45. On the identification of Shegu or Segu as Bighu, see footnote 55.

<sup>137</sup> Muhammad al-Abyad is arguably the same person as Tamakloe’s Fati Morukpe (T: Moru the albino; Levtzion: the White Learned Muslim) and Goody’s (1954, 55) Mohammedu Labayiru. TG/WLH 1986, 158; Fāti Morukpe. See further Levtzion 1968, 52. Malam Baba refers to the scholar as Mahammadu Labyagu, also called Fateurkpe (Malam Baba in *Oral traditions from Gonja* 1969, 41).

<sup>138</sup> Malam Baba in *Oral traditions from Gonja* 1969, 42. Levtzion, however, argues that the conversion of the rulers as manifested by taking Muslim names, did not necessarily mean that they had become ‘real’ Muslims (Levtzion 1968, 54). Other traditions seem to indicate that at least some of the Gbanya had been influenced by Islamic customs. According to a Vagala tradition, the grooms of the arriving Gbanya warriors had no foreskins (Rattray II, 1932, 516). This might indicate that circumcision was practiced. However, whether or not it can be seen as a sign of Islamic influence is unclear as circumcision was also practiced by some non-Muslim groups. At any rate, the Vagala themselves found this habit to be strange.

<sup>139</sup> TG/WLH 1986, 158; Levtzion 1968, 52. See also *Qissatu Salaga Ta’rikhu Gonja* in El-Wakkad

However, following Malam Baba's account, the first conversion of a Gonja ruler was that of Jakpa Lanta (Malam Baba: Lata). He had studied with the Muslims, had taken the name Iddrisu and "had become an important person in Islam" before becoming Yagbumwura. As a ruler, he was said to have declared *jihad* on all Gonjas and converted all of them to Islam.<sup>140</sup>

All those Muslims who claim to be the descendants of Muhammad al-Abyad and the Kamaghatay lineage form a distinctive group of Muslims called Sakpare.<sup>141</sup> In fact, according to the above-quoted account, Muhammad al-Abyad is said to have sent out people to live in every town conquered by 'Jakpa' and made one of them their imam.<sup>142</sup> In addition to the Sakpare imams, there exists a senior official at the chiefs' courts called the *Nso 'wura*. Levtzion has translated the title as 'chief of the Juula' or 'chief of the Muslims', but his function was to be the chief's spokesman and the head of the Dogte or 'heralds of the chief'. Levtzion assumes that the Dogte were former members of the chiefly estate who had been eliminated from the chiefly estate and had chosen to become Muslims. Whereas the first two groups of Muslims were integrated into the Gbanya socio-political system, those Muslims who did not belong to the two hereditary groups, the Sakpare and Dogte, formed a third group of strangers and later immigrants, mainly Hausa.<sup>143</sup>

However, despite the distinctive role of the Muslims at the court in Yagbum and subsequently also the regional courts,<sup>144</sup> Gonja never developed into an Islamic

1961, 10–11, 18–19 [hereafter QSTG/W].

<sup>140</sup> Malam Baba in *Oral traditions from Gonja* 1969, 44. Interestingly, Lanta's career before becoming the ruler of Gonja was not dissimilar of another important ruler-to-become, namely Zangina who in 1700 was chosen as Ya Na in Dagbon. Zangina, too, had studied with the Muslims and his reign is identified as the beginning of the 'Second Kingdom' of Dagbon. See further Chapter II.2.3.

<sup>141</sup> Massing 2004, 913. The Sakpare Muslims were regarded as the 'wives of the chiefs', because they depend on them for their food. This dependence was a mutual one: whereas the Sakpare Muslims were not allowed to interfere in politics, their spiritual support to the chiefs was crucial. Contrary to junior members of the ruling elite, the Sakpare Muslims were not seen as posing a political threat or as an element of tension and competitors of succession and thus were allowed to sit on the chiefly skin as they cannot aspire to political office (Levtzion 1968, 336). See also Levtzion 1978. Similar information is provided by Wasipewura Safo: the Gbuipewura is the Yagbumwura's imam whereas the other imams are the "sons of the Gbuipewura." Wasipewura Safo in *Oral traditions of Gonja* 1969, 127.

<sup>142</sup> TG/WLH 1986, 161; Wilks 1966b, 27; Levtzion 1968, 52, 59. See also QSTG/W 1961, 10–11, 18–19. All imams in Gonja are drawn from the Sakpare community; their role is to pray for the chiefs, who in their turn are obliged to support their imams. However, in contrast to the rotational order for becoming the Yagbumwura, the Yagbumwura's imam always succeeded from Buipe, an indication of the seniority of the Buipe Sakpare imams. It is even claimed that Mawura built a mosque at Buipe or that Jakpa Lātā repaired the old one that was in ruins and was later buried in the mosque (Levtzion 1968, 60).

<sup>143</sup> Levtzion 1968, 55–57. According to Levtzion, the word Dogte means in Mande 'no brotherhood'.

<sup>144</sup> Levtzion (1968, 60–72) lists Muslim offices in the following Gonja divisions: Buipe, Bole (Sakpare imams as well as another Mande Muslim group called Dabo and the so-called Mbontisuwa or 'Akan Muslims' in addition to 'stranger' Muslims), Tuluwe (Sakpare and Turewa, i.e. Hausa Muslims who came after the Sakpare), Kafaba (Muslims of Borno origin), Kpembe (Sakpare and

state in the sense that Islam would have been regarded as the religion of the ruling elite or the ruler.<sup>145</sup> According to Levtzion, a chief in Gonja may be defined as ‘half islamized’.<sup>146</sup> Gonja remained a dualistic state in the same sense as the earlier Muslim kingdoms during the ‘era of empires’ had been,<sup>147</sup> namely that the Islamization of the commoners or the rulers was not regarded by the Mande Muslim scholars of the Suwarian tradition to be a goal in itself. Not surprisingly, therefore, there has been little communication between the commoners and the Muslims and the former have been little touched by Islam.<sup>148</sup> Some state festivals, such as the *damba*, were given a Muslim interpretation, celebrated as the *mawlid*, but most Muslim festivals were transformed to the extent that the original Islamic features were hardly recognizable.<sup>149</sup>

### 2.3. The ‘Second Kingdom’ of Dagbon and the Conversion of Na Zangina

The defeat and killing of Na Dariziegu in ca. 1670 [Levtzion]<sup>150</sup> in a battle against Gonja threw Dagbon into a political crisis. The Gbanya were to dominate societies and groups that formerly had been subjugated by Dagbon and took control of the salt production centre of Daboya. As a consequence of the political instability in Toma, i.e., western Dagbon, the political centre of Dagbon shifted to the east. The old capital at Yendi-Dabari was abandoned and a new one was subsequently established at Chele (Cheli, Tsheli, Chare, Chari), a Konkomba (Kpamkpamba) settlement whose inhabitants were driven away. Chele eventually became (New) Yendi during the early or mid-eighteenth century and with it, part of Konkombaland became eastern Dagbon.<sup>151</sup> However, for the next decades after ca. 1670, Dagbon

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formerly also Dogte), Kusawgu (only Hausa stranger community), Daboya (formerly Sakpare who were replaced by stranger imam, e.g., others from Borno, Larabanga and Safane).

<sup>145</sup> Goody 1967, 188.

<sup>146</sup> Levtzion 1968, 54.

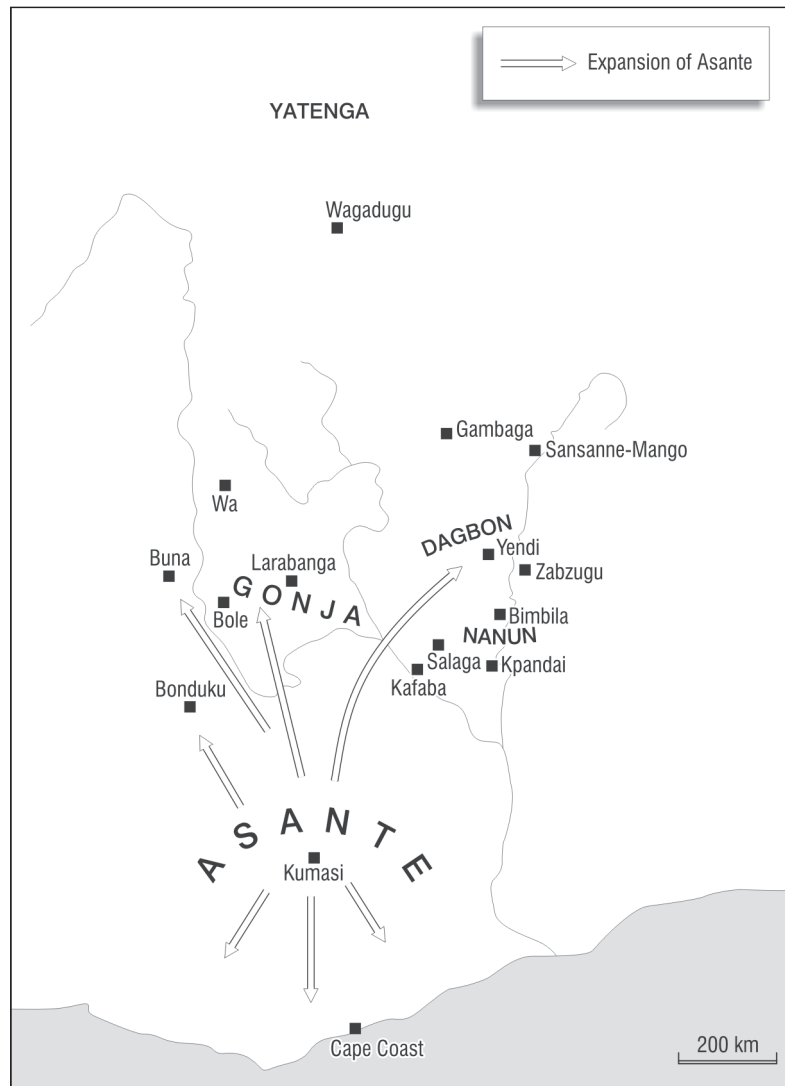
<sup>147</sup> According to Levtzion (1968, 53), Islamic influence in sixteenth-century Mālī was restricted to the courts of major chiefs and trading centres. The Mande peasants and warriors were hardly or only superficially touched by Islam, and the Bambara, from whom the Gbanya warriors claimed to stem, were among the least Islamized of the Mande.

<sup>148</sup> Levtzion 1968, 55. The dual nature of the Gonja state and especially the ruling elite is demonstrated by the power of the rulers to invest both imams and earth priests. For example, the Wasipewura gives the Wasipe (Daboya) Imamate to the Muslim leader while he also installs the local earth priest, the Yibliwu Kagbariwuru. Wasipewura Safo in *Oral traditions of Gonja* 1969, 129.

<sup>149</sup> Tamakloe 1931b, 238; Levtzion 1968, 55; Malam Baba in *Oral traditions of Gonja* 1969, 47; Beyer 1998, 138.

<sup>150</sup> Benzing’s use of approximate dating suggests that Na Dardjeghu could have ruled between 1609 and 1624, i.e., she places the death of the Dagbon ruler at the beginning of the Gbanya invasion. According to her, Old Yendi was abandoned ca. 1660–1675 (Benzing 1971, 214). Ferguson (1971, 16–17) claims that Ya Na Darizio, if slain by the Gonja ruler Jakpa, would have ruled between 1622/23 and 1666/67 – the proposed dates [= Wilks 1966b] for the reign of Jakpa Lanta.

<sup>151</sup> According to Ferguson, Chele was said to have been chosen as the site for a new capital by Ya Na Luro although it was only effectively to become such two generations later. In fact, Ferguson notes, at the end of the ‘First Kingdom’ and the emergence of the ‘Second Kingdom’ of Dagbon,



**Map 6.** The Voltaic Basin, 18th to 19th century.

was ruled by six rulers, a period that was marked by the breakdown in the customary machinery for the selection of the ruler and disputes over the paramountcy. An open civil war after the death of Na Gungobili was only avoided when the Mampurugu ruler Nayiri Atabia (ruled ca. 1692/93–1742/43) was asked to intervene and decided in favour of the youngest contestant, namely Zangina son of Na Tutugri.<sup>152</sup>

A different interpretation of the end of the ‘First Kingdom’ and the ‘Gonja factor’ is presented by Phyllis Ferguson. According to her, the rulers of Dagbon had already, prior to the Gbanya invasion, started to shift their interests to the east. Her assumption is that the predatory nature of Dagbamba rule west of the Volta River had impoverished the region and the Dagbamba rulers were looking for

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there was a remarkable shift in the axis of the kingdom from its former alignment to a new east-west one. Not only was the capital moved but several other settlements as well (Ferguson 1972, 34–37). Also Rattray II, 1932, 564.

<sup>152</sup> Tamakloe 1931a, 25–28; Tamakloe 1931b, 262–265; Blair 1932, 48–49; Levtzion 1968, 88.

new opportunities. Another possibility was that iron ore was becoming scarce and Ferguson's informants would mention the quest for iron as the major reason for the eastward expansion. Thus, according to Ferguson, the advancing Gbanya forces were seemingly taking advantage of a military and political vacuum in western Dagbon when they moved across the White Volta River, but in the end were not able to compete with the Dagbon forces in the quest for the more valuable eastern areas around the Daka and Oti Rivers.<sup>153</sup>

Na Zangina's rule (ca. 1700–1714) was to become a turning point in the history of Dagbon and Phyllis Ferguson even regards him as the founder of the 'Second Kingdom' of Dagbon.<sup>154</sup> His rule was marked by his attempt to invite Muslim traders – Mande but also Hausa – to settle in Dagbon so that Yendi would emerge as an important stop on the caravan route, especially the east-west one. However, Na Zangina's policy did not imply the beginning of Muslim settlements in Dagbon. In fact, Muslim traders, especially Mande or Wangara, had settled in Dagbon during the pre-Zangina period, but their position seems to have been that of strangers with no connections to the ruling elite. This situation changed under Na Zangina, who was to establish a close relationship between himself and the Muslims.<sup>155</sup>

According to Levtzion, possible traces of pre-Zangina Wangara settlements are to be found in Old Yendi, where excavations have revealed the remnants of a rectangular-shaped building, different from other buildings in the town.<sup>156</sup> Furthermore, a Muslim Mande trader called 'Umar Jabaghte or Gbanyaghe'<sup>157</sup> had settled among the Konkomba in Kuga in Eastern Dagbon before the place was conquered by the Ya Na Luro. The Konkomba were driven away whereas 'Umar Jabaghte remained. Another indication of the earlier Muslim presence in eastern Dagbon is indicated by the office of *Tsheli-Yarna* (i.e., *Chele Yeri Na*) in (New) Yendi, which is held by a Muslim elder. Levtzion's informants claim that the first Muslim who held this office was a member of the Sisse patronymic group who had settled among the Konkombas at Chele before the Dagomba conquest.<sup>158</sup>

<sup>153</sup> Ferguson 1972, 38–39.

<sup>154</sup> Ferguson 1972, 88–89.

<sup>155</sup> Levtzion 1968, 86. Phyllis Ferguson (1972, 31) even refers to very vague local information that Islam was introduced by Ya Na Nyagse.

<sup>156</sup> However, according to Phyllis Ferguson's informants, the area excavated was locally known as *zong bila*, ("small entry hut") and that it was the residence of the last Ya Na to rule at Old Yendi (Ferguson 1972, 32). See also Shinnie and Ozanne 1962.

<sup>157</sup> This person has not been identified. The name of his patronymic group, Jabaghte/Gbanyaghe, as given by Levtzion, could indicate that he was a member of (or at least affiliated with) the Jabaghatay family, one of the many merchant-cum-scholar Wangara families. At least one member of the group is mentioned in the ALA, namely 'Umar Dabla, who lived during the mid-eighteenth century. He belonged to those of the Mango who emigrated from Groumia (present-day La Côte Ivoire) to Sansanne Mango, founded the Karamo-Kajura house there and described himself for some time as Imam of Mango (ALA IV, 2003, 545).

<sup>158</sup> Levtzion 1968, 86–87; according to Ferguson (1972, 75), it was Ya Na Luro who had encouraged the settlement of a Wangara Muslim at Chele and given him the title *Chele Yeri Na*.

The existence and influence of Muslims before Zangina is also suggested by Brigitte Benzing and Phyllis Ferguson. Benzing, however, contrary to Wilks, Levtzion and Ferguson, argues that an important impetus was brought by an early Hausa influence with the ruling strata of Dagbon. In fact, Benzing highlights a possible early Hausa influence. According to oral traditions collected by her, Ya Na Dimani [ruled ca. 1579–1594] had lived in the bush together with a Hausa called Kankang Daliya Yelkondo, who was a butcher. When the Hausa butcher died, Dimani inherited Kankang Daliya Yelkondo's butcher knife and is hailed among the Dagomba for having established the butcher's craft among them.<sup>159</sup> She further refers to Sölken's theory about a pre-Islamic Hausa immigration in the (eastern) Voltaic Basin of which this Hausa butcher could have been a part.<sup>160</sup> However, Benzing's theory is somewhat weak in terms of chronology. If the early Hausa diaspora community consisted of artisans but were non-Muslims, then the Mande hypothesis of Wilks and Ferguson is still valid as this hypothesis is based on the assumption that the Mande were Juula, i.e., Muslims. The Muslim Hausa influence must be regarded as a later factor, especially as the closest Hausa state, Zamfara, seems to have been a more or less non-Muslim state for a longer period than some of the other Hausa states – according to Krieger's list, the first ruler to convert to Islam in Zamfara was Aliyu, who reigned around 1635.<sup>161</sup>

Consequently, Benzing's and Ferguson's claim that the origins of Islam among the Dagbamba are to be sought in the so-called 'First Kingdom', i.e., from Ya Na Nyagse through to Ya Na Gungobili, is certainly valid but has to be specified by giving reference to the key importance of the Mande/Wangara to the process. During the 'Second Kingdom', i.e., from Ya Na Zangina onwards, Islam was to gain an even stronger foothold in Dagbon as was manifested, e.g., by the growth of Muslim authority and the attachment of Muslim offices to the court in Yendi.<sup>162</sup>

Na Zangina's close relationship with the Muslims was already manifested at the beginning of his rule when, according to Tamakloe, he and several other members of the court officially converted to Islam:

(Na Zangina's) first act was to embrace [Islam]<sup>163</sup>. His elders and himself were taught to pray five times a day and the ablution was made by Yamusa, the Imam of Sabare, a town near Nakpari. The Imam Yamusa and the other Mallams who formed his retinue, had come from Wongara and settled in this place in the previous reign.<sup>164</sup>

However, according to Yendi drum chants recorded by Wilks, Zangina's conversion occurred before he became the new ruler. Consequently, Zangina was not the first

<sup>159</sup> Benzing 1971, 121.

<sup>160</sup> Benzing 1971, 143; Sölken 1939, 21.

<sup>161</sup> Sölken 1939, 21–22, 30; Krieger 1959, 37–38.

<sup>162</sup> Ferguson 1972, *passim*.

<sup>163</sup> Tamakloe: Mohammedanism.

<sup>164</sup> Tamakloe 1931a, 28. [Wongara = Wangara.] Also Tamakloe 1931b, 266.

king to become a Muslim but the first Muslim to become king in Dagbon.<sup>165</sup> On the other hand, Tamakloe's text gives some other interesting information about the Muslims. First, by 1700 there existed a Wangara Muslim community in Sabali/Sabari large enough to include one imam and "other Mallams", i.e., Muslim scholars. Second, both Imām Yāmūsa and his retinue moved to (New) Yendi after Na Zangina's conversion.<sup>166</sup>

A totally different interpretation of Zangina's relationship with the Muslims is presented by Blair. According to his informants, Zangina became the ruler without any connections to the Muslims and it was only after his election that he turned his interest towards the Muslims. While expanding his influence towards the Oti River, he came to Sabari, camped there and sent for Muslim scholars. Only thereafter, "(h)e built a mosque there, and had his people and his children taught the Koran."<sup>167</sup>

Levtzion's and Ferguson's work provides some further information on the background of the Yarse/Wangara as well as the conversion of Na Zangina. Imām Yāmūsa was the *Sabali-Yarna*. According to Levtzion, *yarna* is a contraction of *yarse-na*, meaning 'the chief of the [Mande] Muslims', the same as the *nso'owura* in Gonja.<sup>168</sup> In fact, Imām Yāmūsa of Sabari belonged to a famous Mande Muslim scholarly family, the Boghyo or Baghyogho (Bagayugu) patronymic group, whose fame as scholars goes back to Muhammad Baghyogho, one of the most influential scholars in sixteenth-century Timbuktu.<sup>169</sup> The first *yarna* of Sabali was Yāmūsa's father, Shaykh Sulaymān b. 'Abdallāh Bagayugu, the Wangara, who, according to Levtzion, had come to Dagbon during the reign of Na Tutugri (ruled ca. 1660–1669 [Ferguson/F]) and built the first mosque at Sabari.<sup>170</sup> However, according to the anonymous *Ta'rīkh ash-Shaykh Sulaymān* the arrival of Shaykh Sulaymān Baghayugu in Dagbon already occurred during the reign of Ya Na Luro (ruled to ca. 1660 [F]) who had invited the scholar to come and settle in Old Yendi:

I have heard of you Muslim people: for example, of the way you improve yourselves. For that reason I have sent to my brother the Sultan of

<sup>165</sup> Wilks 1965, 89.

<sup>166</sup> Tamakloe 1931a, 28; Tamakloe 1931b, 266.

<sup>167</sup> Blair 1932, 49.

<sup>168</sup> Levtzion 1968, 89, 91. Wilks 1965, 90: *Yari-Na* or *Yarisi-Na*, a Dagbane title meaning 'chief of the Muslims'.

<sup>169</sup> Wilks 1965, 93–94. An outline of Shaykh Sulaymān's background and the Bagayugu '*ulama*' of Timbuktu is presented by Ferguson (1972, 48–52, 64) and by Massing (2004). As Ferguson notes, it is unclear whether Shaykh Sulaymān himself was a descendent from the famous Timbuktu scholar Abū Bakr Bagayugu.

<sup>170</sup> Wilks 1965, 93–94; Levtzion 1968, 91. According to the *Ta'rīkh Daghabāwī* (A History of Dagomba), which was compiled in its present form by Imam Halidu (Khālid b. Ya'qūb, 1871–1937), Friday Imam of Yendi 1915–1935 [ALA IV, 2003, 596], it was Zangina who built a mosque in Sabari and made Yāmūsa its imam (Wilks 1965, 88). However, according to Tamakloe's informants, Yāmūsa was already Imam of Sabari, whereas the *Ta'rīkh Daghbūn* (History of Dagbon), an anonymous nineteenth-century manuscript, claims that Yāmūsa was made imam of the mosque (Wilks 1965, 88). It is likely that the different texts are mixing up two different events, namely the earlier foundation of the mosque at Sabari and the appointment of Yāmūsa as imam of the Ya Na.

Wagadugu, King of Mossi, to ask for you, Allah, Allah. I would like you to stay among us, and make these things better: teach us, the people of Dagomba, to read and such other things.<sup>171</sup>

Ya Na Luro's fondness for – if not engagement with – Islam and Muslim scholars is interesting. Is it possible that the ruler of Dagbon had become convinced of the usefulness of an alliance between Muslim scholars and a ruler after his experiences with the invading Gbanya and their close relationship with the Muslims? Ferguson, however, basing her considerations upon another local nineteenth-century Mole manuscript, claims that Luro, before becoming the Ya Na, had been a trader in gold and copper rings; he got his gold in the south and the copper from Wagadugu. Ferguson postulates that Luro might have come into contact with Shaykh Sulaymān when the latter was teaching and participating (?) in the gold and silver trade in the Mossi/Wagadugu town of Kaya.<sup>172</sup>

The Wangara Muslim community in Sabari was to be remembered as representing the early spread of Islam into Dagbon as well as of having introduced circumcision.<sup>173</sup> Sabari seems to have been the first genuinely Muslim community in Dagbon, and according to Ferguson, it is most likely that Shaykh Sulaymān had founded it. Moreover, not only Ya Na Luro but also his son and successor Tutugri had a close relationship to the Muslim community at Sabari and Shaykh Sulaymān. Tutuguri, in another manuscript consulted by Ferguson, is said to have “respected Islam and fed Muslim students,” whereas other traditions link Tutuguri's subsequent wife (who was to give birth to Zangina) to Sabari,<sup>174</sup> Other oral traditions claim that Tutuguri's son Zangina was sent to Sabari to study with Yāmūsa.<sup>175</sup>

The Muslim community at Sabari was to increase substantially during the reign of Ya Na Zangina. According to both local oral and written tradition, Muhammad Zangina sent his cousin Andani Sigili to recruit Muslims from Mossi, e.g., from Salmatenga, Sulaymān Baghayugu's old community: “And he went to the people of Sulaymān in the town of Salmatenga [a]nd he gathered the talāmīdh [followers] like. [...] And went to the King of Mossi at Wagadugu and he was given them.”<sup>176</sup> According to Ferguson, the mission of Andani Sigili occurred after the death of Sulaymān Baghayogho in Dagbon (which is obvious, following Tamakloe's

<sup>171</sup> *Ta'rikh ash-Shaykh Sulaymān* MS/A, translated by Ferguson 1972, 62–63; ALA IV, 2003, 550 (the text itself is a *khbar* compiled by Malam al-Hasan Mole in 1972 from an older ms.). On Shaykh Sulaymān's travel to and visit in Yatenga and Wagadugu, the northern Mossi states, and the possible link between his scholarly community and the subsequent Bagayugu Imamate of Wagadugu, see Ferguson 1972, 67–72.

<sup>172</sup> Ferguson 1972, 72.

<sup>173</sup> Levtzion 1968, 91–92. Shaykh Sulaymān is said to have moved from Old Yendi via Zakpalsi to Sabari. Zakpalsi, too, was subsequently to emerge as a Muslim centre (Ferguson 1972, 76–77).

<sup>174</sup> Ferguson 1972, 79–80. On Zangina's mother and her link to Sabari, see also Benzing 1971, 167.

<sup>175</sup> Wilks 1965, 90; Levtzion 1968, 91.

<sup>176</sup> *Ta'rikh al-Muslimīn fī (az-) Zamān* by Malam al-Hasan Mole, quoted and translated in Ferguson 1972, 102. Also Wilks 1965, 94–95.



presentation), and has to be seen as an attempt to invite the *talamidh* (followers) of Shaykh Sulaymān, to resettle in Dagbon where their shaykh was buried and where his son, Yāmūsa, had been recognized as *Yeri Na* or head of the Muslims of Dagbon.<sup>177</sup> This new Wangara group arrived under the leadership of Būba Moli from Salmatenga and Sabari thereafter developed into a centre of the Mole scholars, who claim to be descendants or followers (*talamidh*) of Sulaymān Baghayugu.<sup>178</sup>

Apart from Sabari, there existed at least two other Muslim settlements in the Oti River Valley before the transfer of the capital from Old Yendi to Chele, namely Kamshegu and (New) Larabanga. The growth of Kamshegu is closely connected with the settlement of Hausa immigrants and will be discussed in the following subchapter. The foundation of (New) Larabanga, also, seems to have been connected to the eastward push of the Gbanya and the conquest of the western part of the ‘First Kingdom’ of Dagbon. Ferguson assumed that some Muslims emigrated during this period from (Old) Larabanga, 22 miles (ca. 33 km) south of Yarizori, perhaps together with the Dagbamba chief of Yarizori (the *Yelizolilana*), to the east, and founded a new settlement, (New) Larabanga 22 miles south of Zabzugu where the Yerizolilana had settled. According to some of her informants, this took place during the reign of Ya Na Dariziegu.<sup>179</sup> Although (New) Larabanga, through the *Larabang Yeri Na*, was under the direct supervision of the Ya Na, this community of Muslim scholars was also closely linked with the settlement of Kworli-Nakpali. This settlement had been established by Dagbamba ‘princes’. The Muslim scholars of Larabanga were to serve as teachers but were also to hold Muslim offices in Kworli-Nakpali.<sup>180</sup>

Whether or not Na Zangina’s conversion led to the beginning of the Islamization of society, a change in cultural and social habits or even the establishment of an Islamic order is another matter. Tamakloe’s informants state that the new faith did not collide with the old and traditional one: “The example of Na Zangina, of being a [Muslim]<sup>181</sup> and a Pagan at the same time has been followed by his successors until the present day.”<sup>182</sup> Benzing, too, is rather skeptical about the impact of the Muslims

<sup>177</sup> Ferguson 1972, 105–106.

<sup>178</sup> Wilks 1965, 94–95; ALA IV, 2003, 547. The head of the Mole group is the *Yidan Mole*, an official whose main function is to preside over the *damba* (*mawlid*) festival (Wilks 1965, 94).

<sup>179</sup> Ferguson 1972, 82 fn 2. According to Wilks (1965, 95), the ancestors of the house of the *Yidan Kamara* in Yendi had arrived from (Old) Larabanga during the reign of Ya Na Tutugri (mid- to late seventeenth century). According to a Kamara manuscript collected by Tait and referred to by Wilks (1965), the early presence of the Larabanga Kamara in Eastern Dagbon is indicated in a list of prominent Muslim elders who participated at the accession of Muhammad Zangina to the throne since the Chief of Labansi is presumed to be the Chief of the Larabanga. At court, the function of the *Yidan Kamara* was to wash the body of a dead Ya Na. The house of the *Yidan Kamara* has further supplied at least two imams to the Ya Na.

<sup>180</sup> Ferguson 1972, 83.

<sup>181</sup> Tamakloe: Mohammedan.

<sup>182</sup> Tamakloe 1931a, 28; Tamakloe 1931b, 266.

during the ‘Second Kingdom’. According to her, the development of a distinctive class of Muslim court officials did not result in a general acceptance of Islam as the religion of the commoners. Islamic influence was visible to a large extent on a cultural level and was manifested by the introduction of the Islamic lunar calendar, Islamic festivals, Islamic names and marriage concepts.<sup>183</sup>

One reason for the coexistence of the old and the new faiths at the court was certainly due to the Suwarian tradition with which presumably most – if not all – Wangara Muslims were acquainted. However, another reason for the slow process of Islamization in Dagbon during the reign of Na Zangina – a ruler who one might claim was most favourable to the Muslims and perhaps also the propagation of the faith among his subjects – was the lack of a permanent capital. During his rule, the court of Dagbon was still a mobile one due to the Gonja threat and the abandonment of Old Yendi. Levtzion is perhaps right in declaring that the mobility of the court made it impossible for the Muslims to establish a community centred on the court. Instead, they settled in villages east of (New) Yendi/Chele, not far from the temporary residence of the Ya Na. Only when Yendi emerged as the new permanent capital, a Muslim community developed around the court at Yendi.<sup>184</sup>

A completely different interpretation has been put forward by Ferguson. According to her, the emergence of eastern Dagbon as the territorial focus of the ‘Second Kingdom’ was closely linked with the growth of a Muslim presence in Dagbon: “(A)s the Muslims settled in the Oti River valley and created new towns, so too did princes who created other towns.”<sup>185</sup> According to Ferguson, one can identify four main centres of new settlements/towns in eastern Dagbon, all of which were connected to one of the four Muslim settlements, namely Chele/(New) Yendi, Kamshegu, Sabari and (New) Larabanga.<sup>186</sup> In her view,

The configuration of each of the four areas, with a juxtaposition of Muslim and princely settlements, reflect that symbolic relationship between Muslims and chiefs in Dagbon which gave a distinctive character to the founding of the Second Kingdom. The military, political, and economic consolidation of the greater eastern territory was to be achieved by Muslims and chiefs, again acting in close concert, during the reigns of Ya Na Muhammad Zangina and his successor, Ya Na Andani Sigili.<sup>187</sup>

Most important, however, is her conclusion:

(I)n this period, more than at any other time in the history of Dagbon, the distinction between being a Muslim and being a chief was one that was not rigidly defined or politically maintained. Many chiefs [...] became Muslims, and sometimes Muslims became chiefs.<sup>188</sup>

<sup>183</sup> Benzing 1971, 142–147.

<sup>184</sup> Levtzion 1968, 94.

<sup>185</sup> Ferguson 1972, 85–86.

<sup>186</sup> Ferguson 1972, 87 map 8.

<sup>187</sup> Ferguson 1972, 88–89.

<sup>188</sup> Ferguson 1972, 89.

It is possible that Muslim influence had started to make its impact already at the end of the ‘First Kingdom’. One of Ferguson’s informants claimed that, during the nomination process after the death of Ya Na Gungobili, the Muslims had persuaded the *kpamba* (the councillors of the Ya Na) and the kingmakers that they should not chose as Ya Na any man of small stature, or someone who was blind, sick, mad, impotent, or ‘whose parents are not known’.<sup>189</sup> The list of physical requirements of the potential eligible ruler closely echo standard Sunni Muslim legal treatises, but, on the other hand, also reflect common Sudanic (non-Muslim) concepts of the required characteristics of a ruler.<sup>190</sup> Thus, I think that the evidence of Ferguson’s informant is interesting but weak.

The position of the Muslims in the Second Kingdom was highlighted through the formal alliance which Ya Na Zangina made with the Sabari scholars. This alliance can be taken as the formal integration of the Muslim scholars within the political order of the Dagbamban Kingdom. According to an oral account, Ya Na Zangina, after his nomination, told the elders of ‘Yendi’ that he intended to go to the mosque of Yāmūsa “in order to ask God to help the land, that the land may remain good.”<sup>191</sup> On his arrival in Sabari, the newly elected Ya Na Zangina asked the scholars to bring their Qurans to the mosque so that they could pray together. When they had assembled in the mosque, Imām Yamūsa took a Quran and put it in the hands of Ya Na Zangina, who spoke:

I pray to God to build my Kingdom as compacted as clay [...]. My forefathers used to offer male guinea fowls as a sacrifice to God, but I am simply going to pray to Him and His Prophet Muhammad [...]. I will rule my people in the name of Allāh and His Prophet Muhammad [...].<sup>192</sup>

Ferguson’s presentation of Ya Na Zangina’s intentions leaves no doubts – the aim was to establish a new order, i.e., one that aimed at integrating Islam and the Muslim scholars into the political order so as to achieve a transformation of Dagbon.<sup>193</sup>

Ferguson thus argues that, at least during the early period of the ‘Second Kingdom’, the border between the Muslims and the chiefs was rather fluid in Dagbon. One should contrast these conditions with the situation in Gonja where, according to Goody and Levtzion, the class of the Muslim scholars never gained a similar political influence but remained a class of ‘strangers’. However, Benzing’s and Ferguson’s presentations are not incongruous. Benzing, too, notes the development and importance of the class of Muslim scholars in Dagbon whereas Ferguson has little to say about the Islamization of the state or the subjects. In fact, what Ferguson describes could be identified as the emergence of Muslim titles and offices in addition to traditional non-Muslim ones in Dagbon, which, in the end, did not

<sup>189</sup> Ferguson 1972, 91–92.

<sup>190</sup> Al-Mawardi 1996, 12.

<sup>191</sup> Tait Mss B, quoted in Wilks 1965, 89.

<sup>192</sup> Ferguson 1972, 96.

<sup>193</sup> Ferguson 1972, 97.

lead to the establishment of an Islamic order. The development of Islam in Dagbon resembles in this respect both the political and religious situation in the Mālī Empire as well as the Hausa states (but not Borno) – Muslims being attached to the court and thus having, at times, a profound influence, but at others, when a ruler who was lukewarm towards Islam and the Muslims was in office, their influence might have been minimal. The state and the political structures as such, however, were non-Muslim, and the ruler himself was ruler over and protector of both Muslims and non-Muslims.

The main point of my attempt of describe the background of the ‘Second Kingdom’ of Dagbon has not been to present a new outline of state formation and consolidation in the Voltaic Basin. What I want to highlight is the development of an intimate relationship between members of the ruling elite in Dagbon, especially the Ya Na, and the Muslim community. Ya Na Zangina’s visit to Sabari and his prayer in the mosque marked a visible turning point and was a political as well as religious manifestation of the beginning of a new era. From now on, the Muslim community was to be tied to the state as a third estate, just as it already was in Gonja – or, for that matter, had already been in the Sudanic kingdoms with which the Dagbamba ruling estate had been in contact: Mālī, Songhay and the Hausa city-states of Katsina and Kano. However, the alliance between the ruler(s) and the Muslim leaders did not result in an Islamization of the state and the political culture.

#### 2.4. Wa and the Three ‘Tribes’

Raiding parties from Dagbon and Mampurugu established small polities in Wa, Buna, Dorimon and Wechiau during the sixteenth century.<sup>194</sup> Wilks, who has analyzed the *Ta’rīkh Ahl Wala* of Friday Imām Ishāq b. ‘Uthmān or Malam Isaka,<sup>195</sup> states that, in the case of Wa, one can detect two separate arrivals of warrior bands. The first was the ‘Dagomba connection’, namely the arrival of warriors from Dagbon under the command of Windana (or Suri) and in the company of two ‘princes’. Windana is said to have established himself in Wa in an area inhabited by Tampolense and Sisala. One of the princes, Dakpana, established himself in Dorimon whereas the other, unnamed, settled in Wechiau. A son of Dakpana campaigned as far as Buna, defeated its people and established himself as the ruler of Buna.<sup>196</sup>

The establishment of the rule of Windana (Suri) at Wa was based on a combination of military supremacy and arrangement with the local population. According to the *Al-akhbari Wala Kasamu*, another late nineteenth-century local text from

<sup>194</sup> Rattray II, 1932, 450.

<sup>195</sup> Ishāq b. ‘Uthmān Dabila b. Ya‘qūb, known as Malam Isaka (ca. 1860–1931), ALA IV, 2003, 566–567.

<sup>196</sup> Wilks 1989, 49–50.

Wa,<sup>197</sup> Windana acquired *tendaanlun*, ritual authority, by his defeat of the ‘Lobi’ people, but at a later stage, political power, *nalun (naam)* was again separated from the ritual one.<sup>198</sup> However, the authority of the ‘First Tribe’, i.e., Windana and his people, the Sokpariyiri and Suriyiri, was challenged by the local people, such as the Dagaaba, Wiili and Birifor. The *Ta’rīkh Ahl Wala* even regards the episode as a virtual uprising of the *tendaanba*, the local ritual authorities (Earth-Priests) against Windana<sup>199</sup>. At this point, the ‘First Tribe’ is said to have appealed to the Mampurugu ruler in Nalerigu for assistance. In response to their request, the Nayiri, the ruler of Mampurugu, sent troops to Wa under the command of one of his sons called Salifu (Saliya). With the assistance of the Mampurugu troops, the situation in Wa was resolved, driving some of the ‘Dagarti’ across the Black Volta, whereas other submitted. However, in Wa *nalun* moved from the ‘First Tribe’ to the ‘Second Tribe’, i.e., to Salifu and his people.<sup>200</sup>

The immigrants from Dagbon and Mampurugu were not Muslims. However, over the next centuries, Wa was to develop into a distinctive Muslim centre. The background for this development was due to the immigration of various Muslim groups.<sup>201</sup> Wilks claims that local historians, such as Malam Isaka, present the arrival of the Muslims in a similar fashion as the arrival of the warbands from the east. Malam Isaka refers in his account, *Ta’rīkh al-Muslimīn*, to the existence of three old Mande/Wangara Muslim settlements in the Wa area, namely Palewogo, Visi and Nasa.<sup>202</sup> At least the Mande settlement in Palewogo, whose inhabitants call themselves Kantonsi<sup>203</sup> and are known by others as Samuni (Walii = ‘the easterners’) and Dagari-Juula, is generally believed to have long preceded the arrival of the warbands.<sup>204</sup> Wilks himself dates the early Juula immigration to the fifteenth century and says it was part of the extension of the Wangara trade network along the north-south axis.<sup>205</sup> Another local text referred to by Wilks, Al-Hajj Salifu’s *The Konate Clan. Our Grandfathers, their Names and Places they Settled In*,<sup>206</sup> indicates that

<sup>197</sup> For a critical discussion, see Wilks 1989, 32.

<sup>198</sup> Wilks 1989, 33.

<sup>199</sup> Wilks 1989, 51.

<sup>200</sup> Wilks 1989, 52. When Salifu became the ruler of Wa, he ordered some of the Mamurungu troops to return home. However, on their way back, the commanders conducted their own campaigns in different localities and founded petty chiefdoms in Funsu, Kojopere and Walembele.

<sup>201</sup> According to Rattray, Wa originally consisted of two Muslim elements: the Wangara and the Hausa (Rattray II, 1932, 453).

<sup>202</sup> According to Malam Isaka, Palewogo was settled by the Sienu (Siyanu), Dabo (‘Dawu’) and Zono (‘Juna’), whereas Visi and Nasa were each settled by one group, the Kunatay (‘Kunati’) and the Tarawiri (‘Tariwari’).

<sup>203</sup> According to Wilks’ informant, the Kantonsi had first entered Buna, thereafter moved to Mampurugu but returned and settled at Palewogo. However, after a quarrel with the Wa Na, ‘things went badly’ for the Kantonsi and they dispersed (Wilks 1989, 54).

<sup>204</sup> Wilks 1989, 54.

<sup>205</sup> Wilks 1963, 44. Wilks lists the following Wangara ‘divisions’ in Wa: Taraore, Baro, Diabarate, Gbeni, Kamarate, Kamara, Koulibali, Sisse, Timite, Toure, Watara.

<sup>206</sup> English text written in 1964 (Wilks 1989, 55).

Visi was the oldest Muslim settlement in the area. The ancestor of the Kunatay in Visi was Sharīf Abū Bakr of Timbuktu, who had left the town and waged ‘religious wars’ as he moved to the south and finally established himself at Visi.<sup>207</sup>

Following Wilks’ interpretation, the emergence of the early Mande settlements in the Wa area resulted from the movement of two different Kantonsi elements, one of warriors and the other of scholars. Local traditions claim that Mande warriors, referred to as the Sienu, settled at Palewogho, whereas the Kunatay scholars settled at Visi: “Palewogo gave the chiefs, Visi gave the karamokos (scholars).”<sup>208</sup> Nasa, whose Mande inhabitants are not regarded as Kantonsi, is said to be a somewhat later settlement, perhaps, as a local tradition claims, the Tarawiri, who at a certain point had settled in Mampurugu,<sup>209</sup> accompanied the Mamprusi troops in their move towards the Wa area.<sup>210</sup> According to *Al-akhbar Saltanat Bilād Wa*,<sup>211</sup> the Tarawiri were three Mande Muslims, Sidi ‘Umar, Yūsuf and ‘Umar Fitini. The senior of them was Sidi ‘Umar or Sanda Muru, seemingly the leader of the group. According to the manuscript, he had been the leader of a warband that had entered the region at Jirapa before moving to Mampurugu. His companions, however, Yūsuf and ‘Umar Fitini, were scholars. After Salifu (Saliya) had become Wa Na, Sidi ‘Umar and his people asked him for permission to settle at Nasa, which was granted.<sup>212</sup>

Visi and Nasa, therefore, were the two oldest Muslim settlements in the Wa area and Kunatay and Tarawiri emerged as the two leading scholarly patronymics. A further change occurred with the arrival of a second group of Muslims in the area. Whereas the first group of Muslims in Wa was called Yerihi, the second one was called the ‘*ulama*’. Their ancestor was Ya’ muru Tarawiri, a Mande scholar.<sup>213</sup> He is alleged to have settled in Wa in the latter part of the seventeenth century and brought Islamic teaching to Wa. He was elected as imam of the three early settlements of Yaro, Guli and Gbetore, and when Salifu’s successor Pelpuo abandoned Gbetore and moved to Wa, Ya’ muru followed him and was made Wa Imam. His descendants are the people of the Wa Limamyiri and were to hold most of the Wa imamates.<sup>214</sup>

<sup>207</sup> Wilks 1989, 55.

<sup>208</sup> Wilks 1989, 55–56.

<sup>209</sup> On early Kantonsi immigration from Visi to Mampurugu, see Davis 1997.

<sup>210</sup> Wilks 1989, 57. According to Wilks investigations, Nasa was ‘bigger than Wa’ before the Zabarima invasion during the late nineteenth century and that the office of the *Nasa Yeri Nam* was older than the *Wa Yeri Nam*. The *Yeri Na* is the chief of the Yerihi, the ‘Old Muslims’.

<sup>211</sup> ‘The Story of the Sultanate in the Land of Wa’. According to Wilks, it is possible that the manuscript was written by Wa Imam Sa’id b. Abd al-Qādir who lived during the early nineteenth century (Wilks 1989, 35).

<sup>212</sup> Wilks 1989, 36, 57–59.

<sup>213</sup> Wilks claims that Ya’ muru Tarawiri was probably a younger contemporary of Shaykh Sulaymān Bagayugu. He was a son of al-Hājj Alfa Mahmūd Tarawiri of Dia on the Middle Niger. His father, grandfather and great-grandfather were all famous Muslim scholars resident in Dia (Wilks 1985, 476; ALA IV, 2003, 564).

<sup>214</sup> Wilks 1989, 59–60.



**Plate 2.** Nakori Mosque, Wa District, Upper West Region; photo: Dawud Rashid Yahya.

The third and last group of Muslims to arrive in Wa were traders from Hausaland. Again, according to Malam Isaka's text, the arrival of the Hausa traders occurred in three waves. The descendants of all the three groups comprise the section of Wa known as Dzangbeyiri. According to Wilks' investigations, these traders had originally come from Katsina in Hausaland, but were said to have settled in Dagbon prior to their immigration to Wa. The arrival of the Hausa occurred during the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>215</sup>

Thus far, little has been written about the arrival of the various groups in the Wa area. Local manuscripts give little assistance, but Wilks has been able to produce a tentative chronology through the combination of various sources. Archaeological

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<sup>215</sup> Wilks 1989, 63. According to Rattray, the Dzangbeyiri ('Zangberese') claim that their ancestors had come from Kuka in Hausaland (Rattray II, 1932, 453).

data for Palewogo indicate that the site was first inhabited about the sixteenth century.<sup>216</sup> The westward trust of Dagbon under Windana and the subsequent establishment of Dagbamba ruling elite in Wa, Buna, Wechiau and Doriman can also be dated with some precision. Tamakloe recorded Dagbamba accounts of an attack on Buna which is said to have occurred during the reign of Ya Na Dalgudamda.<sup>217</sup> However, Benzing claims that this is an error and states that the campaign occurred during the reign of Ya Na Zokuli (ruled during the 1680s and the 1690s).<sup>218</sup> Following Ferguson and Benzing, therefore, the Dagbamba expansion westward and the establishment of small warrior polities in the Black Volta region occurred at the same time as the Gbanya invasion of Gonja. It is possible that the westward push by Ya Na Zokuli was an attempt to retake earlier positions or to establish control over areas, such as Buna, which had been sacked by the Gbanya warriors.

The Mampurugu connection, on the other hand, is somewhat more problematic. Wilks stresses that the positive response of Salifu/Saliya to appeals for help from Wa is only one of many existing versions. Other Wala traditions have Salifu an exile from Mampurugu, having left there as a result of a skin dispute.<sup>219</sup> Mampurugu accounts further claim that Nayiri Atabia, who ruled ca. 1690–1741/42, campaigned as far west as Buna and that he appointed chiefs to places through which he passed. Wilks therefore postulates that Salifu's settlement in the Wala country occurred in the context of Nayiri Atabia's expedition to the west, although not much is remembered of it.<sup>220</sup>

What makes Wa an interesting precolonial political entity is the position of the Muslims both at court and in society at large. During the late nineteenth century, Wa was referred to as a Muslim town more or less surrounded by a sea of non-Muslim people. However, Wa itself was not the only Muslim settlement in the Black Volta area; there had been others such as Buna and Visi. The establishment of a Dagbamba ruling estate at Wa followed the 'usual' pattern in the region: political authority had links to the local ritual authority, but not to the Muslims. Islam was not yet a factor that was taken into account. However, the situation had changed with the establishment of Salifu's rule. Though the connection between Salifu and the Tarawiri is not clear, their settlement in Nasa marked the beginning of the connection between the ruling elite and the Muslims. With the arrival of more Mande scholars, especially Ya'muru, probably during the reign of Peluo, the second ruler of Wa, the structures of Muslim offices were laid in Wa, namely the establishment of the imamate or the office of the imam of the ruler. This means that both in Dagbon as

<sup>216</sup> Wilks 1989, 86.

<sup>217</sup> Tamakloe 1931a, 18; Tamakloe 1931b, 256. Tamakloe: Darigudiembda, surnamed 'Shelbema Datolle. Also Ferguson 1972, 34.

<sup>218</sup> Benzing (1971, 160–161). According to oral sources consulted by Benzing, Ya Na Zokuli drowned in the Black Volta between Wa and Buna on his return from his expedition.

<sup>219</sup> Wilks 1989, 88.

<sup>220</sup> Wilks 1989, 88–89.





**Plate 3.** Old Dondoli Mosque of Wa, Upper West Region; photo: Dawud Rashid Yahya.

well as in Wa a significant change in the religious structure occurred more or less at the turn of the eighteenth century. The reason for this change is not clear, but if the Gonja factor – the close cooperation between a warlord and a Muslim scholar – made itself felt in Dagbon, one could argue that this was also the case in Wa.

However, whether or not the rulers of Wa became Muslims is a totally different matter. Neither the Ya Nas following Zangina nor the Yagbumwuras in Gonja were known to be ‘real’ Muslims although some of them had Muslim names. In Wa, too, most of the rulers and the Nabihi, the ruling estate, were not Muslim apart from having adopted Muslim names, celebrating the *damba* as a Muslim festival and wearing ‘Muslim’ clothes. However, as Wilks has stressed, most scholars in the western Voltaic Basin were, until the eighteenth century, Mande and followers of the Suwarian tradition. This meant that the conversion of the rulers would come in ‘God’s time’ and as long as a ruler supported the cultural hegemony of the Muslims, there was no problem with him and his subjects not being Muslims.

### **2.5. Mampurugu: Rulers, Muslims and Larger Politics**

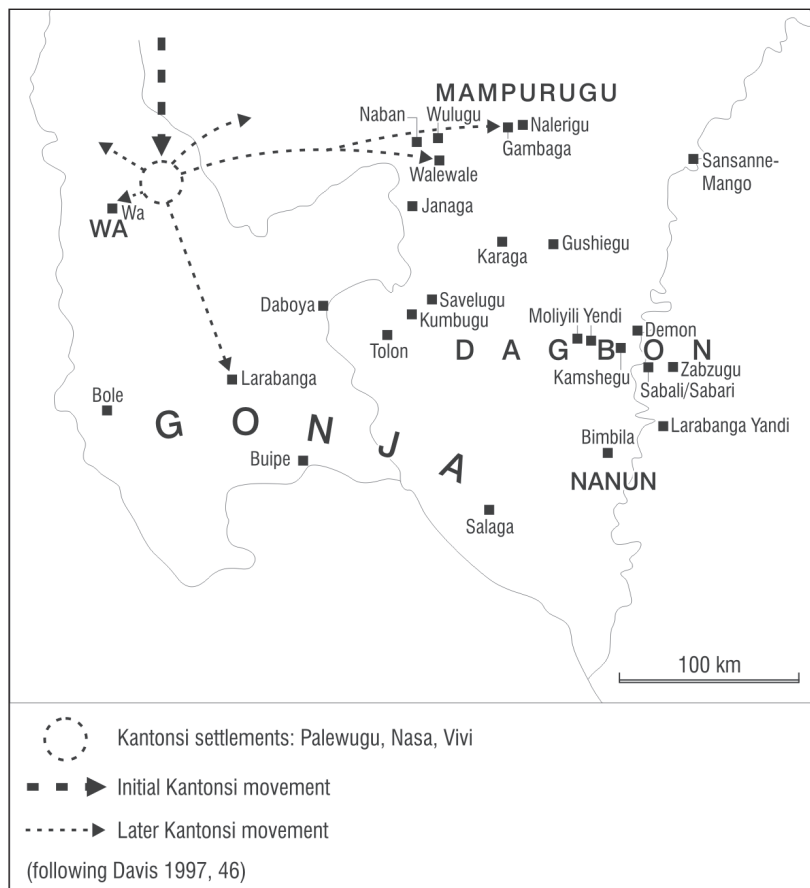
The Mampurugu (Mamprusi) kingdom was one of the off-shoots of the fourteenth/fifteenth-century Mossi invasion. Traditionally, Mampurugu is regarded in the Mole-Dagbamba tradition as being the senior state.<sup>221</sup> British colonial investigations even

<sup>221</sup> Iliasu 1971, 102.

claimed that the Mampurugu ruler was a kind of overlord of the Mossi states until the disturbances caused by late nineteenth-century ‘freebooters’ such as Babatu and Samori (see below) and the establishment of colonial rule in the Voltaic Basin:

On the arrival of the Germans in Sansanne Mango the Chief affected his independence from Mamprusi, on the arrival of the French in Wagadugu the yearly tribute of horses, slaves, and clothing ceased, as did the necessity of having a new Mossi king confirmed by the king of Mamprusi, and similar tokens of respect also paid to Nalerigu by Yendi ceased on the arrival of the Germans there. It is to be remembered that in the case of Dagomba and Moshi their independence was always fully recognised by the mother Kingdom of Mamprusi.<sup>222</sup>

Whether the Nayiri, the ruler of Mampurugu, could claim political hegemony over the region is questionable. Mampurugu oral traditions assert that Tusugu, the senior son of Na Gbewa, was the ancestor of the rulers of Mampurugu whereas his younger brothers, Sitobu and Nmantambu, were the ancestors of those of Dagbon and Nanun, respectively. The last two kingdoms are thus seen as ‘junior brothers’ of Mampurugu. The ruling houses of the northern Mossi states claim to be the descents



**Map 7.** Muslim settlements in the Voltaic Basin, 17th to 18th century.

<sup>222</sup> PRAAD ADM 11/1/824, Mackay s.a., 12–13.

of Wedraogo (Widraogo), the son of Na Gbewa's daughter Yanenga, and are thus seen as Mampurugu's 'grandchildren'. All of the Mossi traditions put Mampurugu as the parent state of the polities in the Voltaic Basin. This position is reflected by the tradition of sending delegations from neighbouring Mossi states and Dagbon to Nalerigu, the capital of Mampurugu, to honour a new Nayiri upon his installation as head of the Mampurugu state.<sup>223</sup>

Nevertheless, the political development of Mampurugu is far from clear. John Fage already noted that there was "something wrong" with the Mampurugu tradition. Compared with the much more elaborate Dagbamba traditions, the Mampurugu tradition is much 'poorer', both in its outline and its detail. He further notes that the assignation of Mampurugu as the 'father' state does not imply that the Mampurugu polity is the senior member of the group or that it was the most powerful.<sup>224</sup> Compared with the Dagbamba tradition which emphasizes the killing of the *tindanas*, the Mampurugu tradition is silent on this subject. Instead, when the Mampurugu ruling estate established itself in the area around Gambaga, the *tindana* was spared. Thus, in contrast to Dagbon, where one could claim that the ruler acquired both political and ritual power as well as ownership of the land (the last two by killing the *tindanas*), the Mampurugu ruler held first and foremost political authority (*naam*) and established a symbiotic relationship with the various local *tindanas*.<sup>225</sup> Therefore, if Dagbon can be called a 'conquest' state in Goody's sense, where a band of horse warriors occupied an area,<sup>226</sup> Mampurugu was not one since the subjugation of the autochthonous population was not done by conquest but rather by the integration of the immigrants into the local setting through the formation of a relationship between the Nayiri and the *tindanas*.<sup>227</sup>

Similar to Dagbon and the other states of the Mossi complex, Mampurugu emerged as a 'predatory' state. The political economy of Mampurugu was based on the economics of military exploitation. This was, in a sense, the unavoidable outcome of the political system that emerged in the Mossi states, as Skalnik has stated. Political life during the formative period of these states was one of a constant process of expansion and fission. Those who lost the competition for political power would start again as warlords; nobles who were unsuccessful in maintaining their position among the ruling elite were more or less forced to earn their livelihood by raiding and pillaging.<sup>228</sup> However, although the Nayiri's suzerainty at times stretched over several neighbouring populations, the authority of the Mampurugu ruler over

<sup>223</sup> Lance 1995, 41–45. Similar argument in Rattray II, 1932, 559.

<sup>224</sup> Fage 1964, 183.

<sup>225</sup> On the establishment and allocation of political power in Mampurugu, see Drucker-Brown 1989.

<sup>226</sup> Goody 1971.

<sup>227</sup> Beyer 1998, 55.

<sup>228</sup> Skalnik 1978; Davis 1986, 235; Lance 1995, 46–47.

these people was seldom effective. As a consequence, therefore, Mampurugu remained less unified and more heterogeneous than Dagbon.<sup>229</sup>

On the other hand, the general political development in Mampurugu is surprisingly similar to that of Dagbon. Like Dagbon, one could divide the political history of Mampurugu into two periods, namely a ‘First’ and ‘Second Kingdom’. The ‘First Kingdom’ would include the formative period which seems to have ended during the latter part of the seventeenth century in Mampurugu. The ‘Second Kingdom’ is marked by a strong tendency towards centralization and rulers committed to political innovation, starting with the long rule of Na Atabia (ca. 1690–1741/42). He is remembered in the Dagbamba tradition for having solved a bitter contest among the princes for the skin after the death of Na Gungobili. The task of selection was handed over to Na Atabia, who decided in favour of Zangina.<sup>230</sup> The position of Na Atabia as being the superior ruler was clearly underlined although his arbitration is the only example of direct Mampurugu interference in the political affairs of Dagbon.

During Na Atabia’s reign, Mampurugu troops pushed as far as Buna and Manga (present-day La Côte d’Ivoire). Whether or not this push was part of an attempt to invade these countries with the aim of expanding Mampurugu influence in the western Voltaic Basin, as Mackay has claimed,<sup>231</sup> is unclear. Whatever the aims, the push did not result in an effective domination in the region. There was, however, according to Mackay and Rattray, one lasting effect of Na Atabia’s invasion: the attack on Mangu and the resettlement of war captives in the vicinity of Sansanne Mangu.<sup>232</sup> However, this tradition is in conflict with a local text, *Al-kalām Māghu Sansani*.<sup>233</sup> According to the manuscript, a Manga warband left Māghu Tūra or Grumania as a result of internecine struggles during the 1730s. This warband consisted of a number of warrior-chiefs (*dozon*), Juula clerics (*karamon*) and commoners (*ngyen*). During the subsequent years, the warband made an alliance first with the Yagbumwura and, at a later stage, with the ruler of Mampurugu. Interestingly, both times the role of the Muslims was crucial in the negotiations: whereas the Yagbumwura sent the ‘King of Misrāsi’<sup>234</sup> to the Manga warleaders, the ‘king of Mābruku’<sup>235</sup> sent the imam of Kusakū [Kawsawgu].<sup>236</sup> After the negotiations, the Manga warband agreed to engage in warfare against the Gruma to the east of Mampurugu. They established

<sup>229</sup> Levtzion 1968, 130–131.

<sup>230</sup> Tamakloe 1931a, 26–28.

<sup>231</sup> PRAAD ADM 11/1/824, Mackay s.a., 7–8.

<sup>232</sup> PRAAD ADM 11/1/824, Mackay s.a., 7–8; Rattray II, 1932, 547.

<sup>233</sup> ‘The Account of Sansanne Mangu’, originally composed perhaps at the beginning of the nineteenth century (*Al-kalām Māghu Sansani*, text and translation in AKMS/WLH 1986, 189).

<sup>234</sup> WLH 1986, 185: the *Mishriwuna* was a Gonja custodian responsible for the old mosque at Gbuipe. He was appointed from the Jabaghatay of Gonja. Also Levtzion 1968, 61.

<sup>235</sup> WLH 1986, 186: Mamprusi/Mampurugu. The ruler is identified as having been Kuribila or Mahama Na Kurugu, who was the second Nayiri after Na Atabia.

<sup>236</sup> AKMS/WLH 1986, 181.

a war camp (Hausa: *sansanne*) in the region, i.e., Sansanne Mangu. Following Levtzion's interpretation, the Mango warband had been called to Mampurugu by the Nayiri to repel an invasion from Kantindi, one of the Gruma chiefdoms. Furthermore, following local chronicles, the Mango warband was accompanied by Gonja warriors and Muslims from Gonja.<sup>237</sup> With the increased activities along the east-west trade route, Sansanne-Mango soon developed into an important stop and became the centre of the Chokosi state.<sup>238</sup>

Na Atabia is generally remembered for having pursued a similar economic and domestic policy to that of Na Zangina in Dagbon – or, perhaps it was vice versa: the younger Zangina followed the example of the older ruler? Na Atabia is said to have opened the roads to traders from other countries and to have encouraged Muslim settlement in his territory.<sup>239</sup> The Rules of succession were restricted to certain 'gates'. The position of the ruler was strengthened by the assignation of new administrative functions to palace officials recruited from outside the chiefly class and key administrative tasks were handed over to eunuchs.<sup>240</sup> One of these new administrative posts was that of the *Mangoshi* [Davis: *Mangaisi*], 'the keeper of the wooden bowl', who functioned as a toll-collector and host to the traders. The first person to be appointed was a Muslim, who used to carry food for the traders in a wooden bowl, called *akushi* in Hausa. His name has been forgotten, but he and his descendants became known as Magaji Akushi or Mangoshi.<sup>241</sup>

In spite of that, the first Muslims to settle in Mampurugu were not Hausas but the Kantonsi, a Mande/Wangara group who arrived there during the mid-seventeenth century. Little is known about them though it is assumed that they probably migrated to the area from their settlements to the west at Palewogho and Visi following some internal disruption. The arrival of the Kantonsi is still regarded as a landmark in Mampurugu social history: they are said to have introduced weaving. The integration of the Kantonsi chronologically preceded the influx of Muslims from Hausaland, i.e., Hausanized Wangarawa, Hausas and others. Especially Walewale along one of

<sup>237</sup> The KG refers to an attack by the Mango and Gonja forces in the land of Ghurma in 1751. KG/WLH 1986, 105.

<sup>238</sup> Levtzion 1968, 80; Massing 2004, 911. Chokosi is the name given to the people by the Mampursi and Dagbamba; they call themselves *Anufom* (sg. *Anufo*). The Chokosi state had its centre at Sansanne-Mango; its chiefs were of Mande origin, its commoners of Asante origin and the Muslims of Juula origin (Levtzion 1968, 78).

<sup>239</sup> Rattray II, 1932, 547. Levtzion 1968, 124. Davis 1997, 47–48. In order to secure the trade route from Hausaland to Gonja, Na Atabia is said to have established three Mampurugu chiefdoms among the Kusasi: Sinibaga, Binduri and Bawku (PRAAD ADM 11/1/824, Mackay s.a., 7–8; also Davis 1997, 50, 52).

<sup>240</sup> Wilks 1985, 473.

<sup>241</sup> Levtzion 1968, 125; Davis 1986, 236; Davis 1997, 50–51. However, as Levtzion assumes, it is possible that this Hausa was of Wangara origin as the patronymic of Mangoshi's family, Taraore, indicates. Davis' informant, again, claims that the first *mangaisi* was from Larabanga. See further Drucker-Brown 1986.

the major north-south trade routes was to attract a number of both Yarse (Muslim Mande) and Hausa emigrants.<sup>242</sup>

An open manifestation of the new era was the transfer of the court of Mampurugu from Gambaga to Nalerigu. The exact reason for the relocation is not clear. In contrast to Dagbon, the Gonja factor has to be ruled out as Mampurugu never felt the pressure of the Gbanya expansion. One local tradition states that the relocation occurred after Na Atabia had repelled a Gurma invasion. Other traditions say that Na Atabia left Gambaga due to drought and famine.<sup>243</sup> Nevertheless, Levtzion does not regard the external pressure as being a necessary cause for the relocation. Instead, he points towards internal changes that were unleashed by Na Atabia's attempts to attract traders and artisans to settle in Mampurugu. The development of the trade route resulted in the establishment and subsequent growth of a Muslim community in Gambaga. Sometime after the nomination of the first Mangoshi, he introduced a learned Hausa Muslim, called Mahmūd,<sup>244</sup> to the Nayiri, to be appointed imam (*limam*). Mahmūd and Na Atabia made a contract, whereby the latter would comply with the imam's advice as to what was forbidden by Islam. However, the contract proved unworkable.<sup>245</sup> The imamate of Mahmūd points towards two interesting matters. First, the fact that an imam was nominated shows that there was already a Muslim minority in Gambaga (but without spiritual leadership).<sup>246</sup> Secondly, the relationship between Na Atabia and Mahmūd was different to that between Na Zangina and Yāmūsa in Dagbon. In the former case, the Muslim scholar had approached the ruler whereas in the latter, the ruler approached the Muslim scholar. The alliance was also dissimilar: Na Zangina swore an oath, while Na Atabia made a contract. One could stretch the comparison even further and highlight the different backgrounds of the two scholars. Whereas Yāmūsa was a Juula and followed the Suwarian tradition, Mahmūd was a 'learned Hausa'. He might even have been a Wangarawa since the term 'Hausa' – in contrast to Juula, Wangara or Mande – is more ambiguous. Or, in reference to Mahmūd's rather critical approach to local customs, it could be claimed that he was one of those scholars who were not in favour of an accommodationalist approach.

Be that as it may, Na Atabia must have perceived the presence of a growing Muslim community and a critical imam in Gambaga as problematic, if not unsuitable,

<sup>242</sup> Davis 1986, 235–236; Davis 1997, 45–47. Some of Davis' informants even say that Walewale started as a Hausa *zongo* (camp).

<sup>243</sup> Lance 1995, 54. According to Rattray, Na Atabia had made war against the Konkomba (Kpem-kpwamba) before he moved from Gambaga (Rattray II, 1932, 547).

<sup>244</sup> According to Davis' informant, Sarkin Fawa Bukari of Gambaga, the first imam in Gambaga was one Imam (Limam) Umaru who had come from Hausaland (Davis 1986, 236; Davis 1997, 55).

<sup>245</sup> Levtzion 1968, 126; Davis 1986, 237. The imamate of Gambaga continued initially among several relatives of Mahmūd but was later transferred to Muslim immigrants from Gurma. See further Davis 1986, 238–241.

<sup>246</sup> After the nomination of Mahmūd, the Muslim community built two mosques in Gambaga (Davis 1997, 53).

for the residence of a chief.<sup>247</sup> He therefore established himself at Nalerigu and since then all Nas have resided at Nalerigu and Atabia put a *tindana* in charge of the ‘town fetishes’ of Gambaga, namely the *Gambaglana* (*gambaga-naba*).<sup>248</sup> During the reign of his son and successor, Na Jaringa/Yamusa, Nalerigu was surrounded by a great wall.<sup>249</sup> Consequently, a profound division of the political non-Muslim ruling strata and the Muslim section in Mampurugu emerged since the Nayiri and his councillors live in Nalerigu whereas the imam and the malams are to be found in Gambaga.<sup>250</sup> According to Drucker-Brown, the division in Mampurugu can also be seen as an attempt by Na Atabia to remain (or regain) his ritualistic autonomy by moving to Nalerigu and leaving Gambaga to the *tindana* and the Muslims. Drucker-Brown suggests that the Nayiri needed this ritual autonomy since he, as a ritual specialist, supervises rituals associated with both the *tindanas* and the imam and requires access to the services of both of them.<sup>251</sup>

The tense relationship between the Muslims and the non-Muslims in Gambaga is revealed in several accounts. Frobenius’ account of the formation of Wagadugu contains an interesting story about the *Gambaglana*, his cordial relationship with the Juula and the negative attitude of his daughter towards them: the daughter is annoyed for not being allowed to wage war against the Juula although she was put in charge of the warriors by her father. After quarrelling with her father, she ran away and later married a hunter and gave birth to a son, Uidi Rogo, who inherited her negative attitude against the Juula, attacking the Marenga (Songhay) and Yarse all the time.<sup>252</sup> Frobenius’ account gives a variation of the Mossi tradition of the origin of the northern Mossi states and their relationship with Mamprugu. It seems to encapsulate the Mossi and Timbuktu traditions of the close relationship of the Red Hunter and his relatives and ‘Malle’ on the one hand and on the other, the attacks of the ‘Mossi’ against Timbuktu and other settlements in the Niger Bend. However, could the position of the *Gambaglana* as the guardian of the Mande traders also point to a much later period, perhaps that of Na Atabia whose policy

<sup>247</sup> Levtzion 1968, 129.

<sup>248</sup> However, according to Rattray’s informants, Atabia put not only the *tindana*, the *Gambaglana*, but also the imam in charge of the town of Gambaga (Rattray 1932, II, 547).

<sup>249</sup> PRAAD ADM 11/1/824, Mackay s.a., 8; Rattray 1932, II, 547. According to Rattray, Na Jarena [Yaringa] means Red Snake. It is possible that Rattray received his information about Mamprusi either from Mackay’s informant(s) or Mackay himself or as both versions of the story of the building of the wall of Nalerigu are almost identical. However, in his text, Rattray names the following informants: Haruna, Yahiya, and Bakyele, all Elders of Nalerigu. According to Davis, Jaringa was the first Nayiri with a Muslim name (Ya’ mūsa/Yamusa), indicating the relatively strong influence of the Muslims at court at that time. Furthermore, another son of Na Atabia, Ibrahim (Ibrāhīm), had studied the Quran with the *Mangoshi/Mangaisi*. When asked to be enskinned as Bindurinaba, Ibrahim refused and declared that he was following the ‘Islamic way’. His descendants hold the other Muslim office, that of *Yidanas Yiri*. See further Davis 1986, 238; Davis 1997, 53.

<sup>250</sup> PRAAD ADM 11/1/824, J.K.G. Syme, *The Kusasis. A Short History* (s.a.), 36; Rattray 1932, II, 547.

<sup>251</sup> Drucker-Brown 1975, 82–83; Lance 1995, 55.

<sup>252</sup> Frobenius 1933, 344–345.

was to protect the traders? Another tradition recalls the tense relationship between the *Gambaglana* and the Muslim section of Gambaga, the former complaining to Rattray: “Dead game found on the land belongs to me, save a foreleg which goes to the finder. Bangles and beads and any other valuables belong to me, save when found by the Mohammedans who refuse to hand them over.”<sup>253</sup>

Na Atabia’s move to Nalerigu inhibited further inroads by Muslims into the political life of the Mampurugu kingdom.<sup>254</sup> The political and ritual structures of the Mampurugu state were more or less untouched by Islam. On the other hand, despite the clash of interests and conflict between Muslims and the *tindana* in Gambaga, the relationship between the Imam of Gambaga and the Nayiri seems to have been most of the time ambiguous but cordial. As in Dagbon, Muslims were to play a prominent role in the ritual and pomp of Mamprusi court life. At the installation as well as the funeral of a Nayiri, the Muslims play a designated role. Further, the Imam of Gambaga came to Nalerigu to offer prayers on public occasions or during times of crisis. In their roles as intermediaries with the supernatural, the imams were consulted as diviners and interpreters of dreams. Islamic cultural and ritual elements, such as Muslim amulets, were highly prized and much in use among both the ruling elite as well as the commoners. The religious festivals follow the Muslim calendar; Mampurugu boys are circumcised and given Muslim names besides proper Mamprusi ones – even the sons of the rulers.<sup>255</sup> However, compared with Dagbon, there were only a few Muslim centres in Mampurugu, the most important being Gambaga and Walewale, and the countryside was more or less unaffected by the Muslims and their religion.<sup>256</sup>

Some Muslims in Gambaga were associated with the Nayiri’s court and were responsible for certain economic and juridical activities in Mampurugu. The Imam of Gambaga served as *imam al-balad* at court, his main position there being that of a peacemaker and advocate for wrongdoers. The imam’s value to the Nayiri was mainly due to his knowledge not only of prayer but also of writing. As Davis notes, the importance of the imam and other Muslims was highlighted by their ability to encapsulate ‘magic’ and ‘power’ in the written word. This was exemplified in Mampurugu war-coats, which were sewn by Muslims and covered with talismans produced by Muslim scholars.<sup>257</sup>

<sup>253</sup> Rattray 1932, II, 459–460.

<sup>254</sup> Lance 1995, 55.

<sup>255</sup> Levtzion 1968, 133; Davis 1997, 53–56. In Mackay’s list of the Mampurugu rulers, all Nayiris since Na Atabia are listed with both their Mampruli and their Muslim names [Davis’ list = Davis 1986, 234]: (11.) Najeringa/Yamusa [Ya’mūsa Na Jaringa], (13.) Nabpisi/Solamani [Sulayman Na Pisi], (14.) Na Bono/Haruna [Haruna Na Bongu], (15.) Na Jia (Andani) [Andani Na Jia], (16.) Kuligaba/Mahama [Mahama Na Kuligaba], (17.) Na Salifu, (18.) Dambungu/Abu Dahramani, (19.) Nyungu/Damawa, (20.) Napari/Azabo, (21.) Na Beriga/Yamusa, (22.) Na Sigiri/Sulimanu (PRAAD ADM 11/1/824, Mackay s.a.).

<sup>256</sup> Levtzion 1968; Davis 1986, 233, 244; Lance 1995, 59–60.

<sup>257</sup> Davis 1997, 53.



Other important Muslim offices were that of the *Mangaisi Yiri*, the *Yidanas Yiri* and the *Nakosi Naba*. The *Mangaisi Yiri* was responsible for washing the corpse of the *Nayiri* and supervising the dyeing industry. The *Yidanas Yiri* served as a liaison between the Muslim community and the *nabisi*, the princely class. The *Nakosi Naba* or *sarkin fawa* (Hausa) was the Chief Butcher and had responsibility for killing the first cow on the death of a *Nayiri*. However, the most lucrative of his duties were his control and regulation of the livestock trade and his slaughtering of animals for the local market at Gambaga and the provisioning of caravans passing through the town.<sup>258</sup>

Apart from Gambaga and Nalerigu, other imams were to develop a similar relationship between themselves and the court. This was the case between the Imam of Walewale and the court of the Wunaba, the Imam of Nabari and the court of the Wulugunaba as well as the Imam of Janaga and the court of the Soonaba. Nevertheless despite the creation of Muslim offices and Muslim cultural influence, Islamization remained an urban affair in precolonial Mampurugu. The Muslim communities were to a large extent isolated and retained their ‘foreign’ status. As a consequence, the countryside and the villages were little influenced by Muslims or Islam.<sup>259</sup>

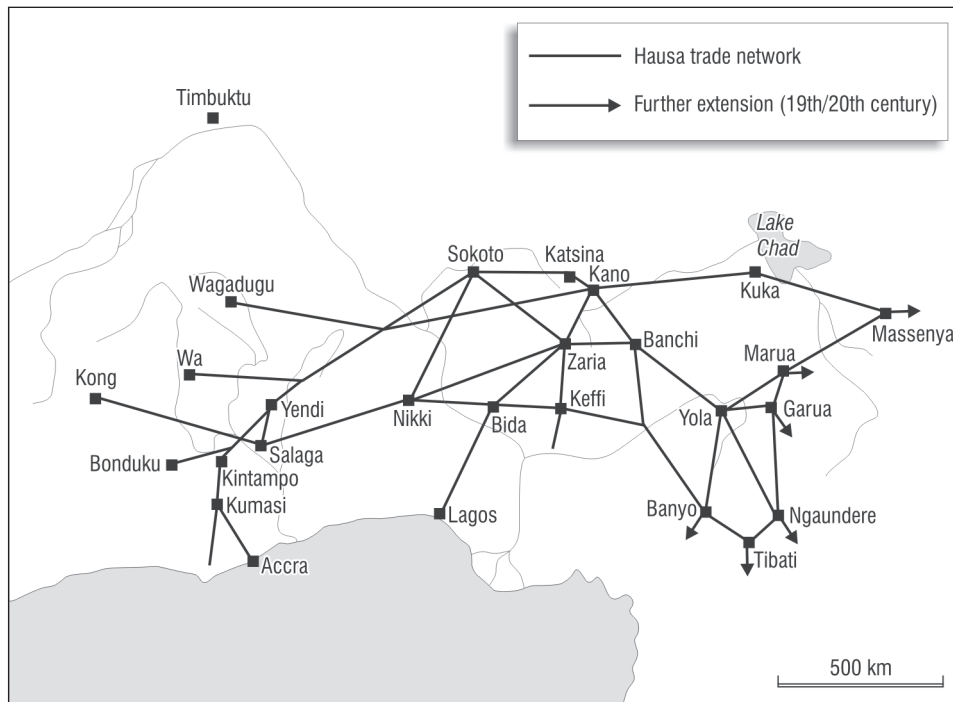
### 3. THE HAUSA FACTOR AND BEYOND

Apart from the Mande/Wangara scholars and communities, Hausa traders, and later also scholars, were to make an impact on local societies in the Voltaic Basin. From a chronological perspective, one can distinguish between older Mande communities and more recent Hausa ones. The beginning of the Mande influence can be dated to at least the fifteenth century, but Hausa immigration into the region does not start until several centuries later. The opening of the east-west trade route that linked Gonja with Hausaland during the fourteenth century – as stated in the Kano chronicle does not mean that this trade route was developed or traversed by Hausa traders. Although the Mande influence in the Voltaic Basin was closely connected with Islam – Islam, apart from the Mandekan language, being the most important ‘ethnic’ marker of the Mande/Wangara – this was not the case with the Hausa, or at least not in the beginning of their advent into the Voltaic Basin.<sup>260</sup> Last, but not least, though Mande and Wangara were rather well-defined ethnic markers in the sense that all Wangara families would be able to trace their roots back to Mande Kaba or other regions along the Middle Niger and the Niger Bend, Hausa was much more fluid as an ethnic marker. Whereas almost all immigrants or traders from the Central Sudan, i.e., Hausaland and beyond, were known as Hausa in the Voltaic Basin, a

<sup>258</sup> Davis 1997, 54–55.

<sup>259</sup> Davis 1997, 55–56.

<sup>260</sup> Sölken 1939, 21–22.



**Map 8.** Hausa networks.

closer look at their background often reveals that a trader or a scholar was – or his family was – Tuareg, Kanuri or FulBe.<sup>261</sup>

The difference in identification is important, as Lovejoy has noted. Although each trading group from the Central Sudan classified itself by occupation, emphasized its common origin and maintained distinct facial markings, all the traders were Hausa-speaking, Muslim in allegiance and culturally similar to other Hausa speakers. Group identification was situational; at times the traders referred to their occupation and origin, but at other times they used residence, language and religion – especially when trading outside Hausaland.<sup>262</sup>

An intriguing question with regard to the Hausa factor in the Voltaic Basin is to what extent Hausa traders and scholars were a vehicle for Islamization or not. The process of Islamization of Hausa society was similar to that in the Mālī Empire. Rulers and members of the court had converted to Islam in some of the Hausa city-states, but Hausa society in general was largely unaffected by the new faith. A similar situation prevailed in the kingdom of Borno, although there Islam seemed to have had a deeper impact on both commoners and the society at large. In fact, Islam was introduced into Hausaland from two directions, from the west and the east.

<sup>261</sup> Lovejoy 1971, 544–545. Also Abaka 2005, 70–72.

<sup>262</sup> Lovejoy 1971, 545. The key term for group reference among the Hausa was *asali*. *Asali* connotes origin and theoretically it implied endogamy although through the practice of ‘joking relationships’ (*abokan wasa*) marriage was also permitted outside the group. However, as Lovejoy has noted, *asali* was not a kinship term. Members of Hausa society seldom recognized lineages except within the aristocracy. Rather, *asali* indicated a state or a town of origin or a historical event or process with which a person’s ancestors identified. Lovejoy 1980, 53.

First, Wangara scholars and traders and, at a later stage FulBe scholars, from the west are claimed by the Kano chronicle to have brought with them the new faith. According to local chronicles, this process seems to have started in the fourteenth century.<sup>263</sup> At this stage, however, Islam had already emerged as the ‘state religion’ in the kingdom of Kānīm, whose Saifawa rulers had adapted the new faith as early as the late eleventh century.<sup>264</sup> By the mid-thirteenth century, Kānīm was, like the Mālī Empire, a Muslim kingdom in the sense that the rulers were Muslims and Islam was made the official religion of the court through policies pursued by Mai Dunama Dibalami (ruled ca. 1210–1248). By the fifteenth century, the rulers of Borno (Barnū) titled themselves *amir al-mu’minin*, commander of the faithful, and their capital Gazargamo emerged as a centre of Islamic learning, whereas Kalumbardo emerged as a Muslim scholarly community in the sixteenth century. Being the dominant political and economic power in the greater Lake Chad region, Bornoan influences were felt in the neighbouring regions, including Hausaland, whose city-states had a complex relationship with Borno. At least during some periods, some of the *Hausa bakwai*, the mythical seven Hausa states, such as Daura, Kano, Katsina and Zaria, had to acknowledge the Mai of Borno as their overlord and, at least from a Bornoan perspective, were seen as tributary vassal states.<sup>265</sup> It is further argued by historians that Bornoan influence also made itself felt in the Hausa city-states by the advent of traders and Muslim scholars from Borno, presumably beginning in the fifteenth century, if not earlier. As in Borno, Islam made an impact at the court and among the merchant community in the Hausa city-states. Local Muslim scholarly communities emerged, the most well known being the community in Yandoto in Katsina.<sup>266</sup>

In fact, the process and position of Islamization in the Central Sudan resembled that in the Western Sudan, namely the – sometimes nominal – conversion of the rulers and members of the court, the emergence of a Muslim community that was tied to the ruler and the court – sometimes physically located at a distance from the capital – and at least some members of the merchant and trade community becoming adherents of the new faith. Thus, as in the Western Sudan, Islam emerged as an urban religion in the Central Sudan. Further similarities are striking. Although both the rulers of Mālī and (Kānīm-)Borno claimed to be Muslims, most of their subjects were non-Muslims and adherents of local traditional African beliefs. None of the rulers pursued a violent or forceful policy of converting the commoners. Instead they would try as much as possible to adjust the new and the old faith, or,

<sup>263</sup> KC/Palmer 1909/1972, 28, 32. According to the *Waraqā maktūba fihā asl al-Wanqariyīn* (On the history of the Wangarawa in Kano), the main influx of Wangara scholars, e.g., Shaykh ‘Abd al-Rahmān Zagaitī, occurred at the end of the fifteenth century (al-Hajj 1968, 8).

<sup>264</sup> Lavers 1980, 191. Kānīm was the centre of the kingdom until the fifteenth century when the Saifawa rulers moved their court to Borno. Thereafter, the Saifawa dynasty ruled Borno whereas Kānīm went into decline and at times was a province of Borno.

<sup>265</sup> Smith 1997, 121–127, 134–137.

<sup>266</sup> Usman 1981, 27.

as condemned by later Muslim reformers, they would pursue a policy of ‘mixing’ and the rulers themselves would participate in both Muslim as well as non-Muslim rituals and festivals. Muslim scholars, whether in the Western or in the Central Sudan, had little option other than either to accommodate to the prevailing political and social conditions or to emigrate. This move could either be within the realms of the rulers where they could establish communities of Muslim scholars which were granted immunity and the right to create a Muslim order within the community, or to leave the area altogether. The spread and establishment of Wangara communities outside the heartland of Mālī was at least sometimes an outcome of Muslim scholars protesting against local, ‘pagan’ practices as has been mentioned in the previous subchapters. However, wherever they established new communities, the Wangara scholars continued the praxis of accommodation following the Suwarian tradition.<sup>267</sup>

The strategy of Hausa Muslims in the Voltaic Basin (and elsewhere) seems to have been similar to that of the Wangara, at least until the late eighteenth century. Accommodation to the prevailing political and social conditions was important, not least due to the fact that most Hausa who travelled westward were traders. Some researchers, such as Sölken and Benzing, also believe that the first Hausa immigrants were not even Muslims.<sup>268</sup> This might be the case if one agrees with the idea that the east-west trade route was opened by Wangara (Wangarawa)<sup>269</sup> in the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries and that Hausa immigrations only followed after that. It is unlikely that those Hausa immigrants would have been Muslims at that stage, especially if one assumes a rather slow process of Islamization in Hausaland. Moreover, Wilks, Hunwick and Sey assume that most of the Muslim Hausa traders who extended their activities into the eastern Voltaic Basin during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were of Wangarawa identity.<sup>270</sup> However, as will be seen below, by the seventeenth century, there was a noticeable immigration of Hausa Muslims, be they traders or even scholars. The end effect of this Hausa Muslim immigration into the Voltaic Basin was, following Wilks, that one can distinguish a Wangara substratum and a Hausa overlay in terms of the process of Islamization in the region.<sup>271</sup>

Hausa immigration into the Voltaic Basin was mainly confined to areas with stratified societies: Gonja and Dagbon, and to a lesser extent, Mampurugu and Wa. Early Hausa trading communities were established in Gonja. The fame of Gonja was based on the kola trade and, from a Hausa perspective, the best kola nuts could be bought in Gonja.<sup>272</sup> Certain communities in eastern Gonja claim to be of

<sup>267</sup> See further Hiskett 1984 and Wilks 2000.

<sup>268</sup> Sölken 1939, 30–31; Benzing 1971, 143.

<sup>269</sup> The Wangara were known in Hausaland as Wangarawa.

<sup>270</sup> ALA IV, 2003, 541.

<sup>271</sup> Wilks 1963, 410.

<sup>272</sup> On the kola trade, see Lovejoy 1980 and Abaka 2005.

Hausa origin and to have been established before the Gbanya expansion during the seventeenth century into this formerly Dagomban-controlled territory.<sup>273</sup> One of such settlements was Kafaba, which developed into the major trade settlement of the region and was the forerunner of Salaga. Salaga itself is said to have been established by a Hausa Muslim,<sup>274</sup> and emerged during the nineteenth century as the most important kola and slave market in the Voltaic Basin and was the main northern ‘port of entry’ of the Asante kingdom until 1874 (see further Subchapter 3.1.).

The activities of the Hausa Muslims in Dagbon during the eighteenth century is interesting, at least if one follows their own tradition. Hausa immigration swelled to significant proportions with the expansion of the kola trade in the eighteenth century.<sup>275</sup> This Hausa Muslim influence was different than that which emerged after the militant reform movements inspired by Usman dan Fodio (‘Uthmān b. Fūṭī) in Gobir and which swept over Hausaland during the early nineteenth century.

It is not known when the first Hausa Muslims arrived in Dagbon. However, Hausa immigrants were certainly present in Dagbon before the end of the seventeenth century. Benzing recorded one oral tradition that claimed that, already under the rule of Ya Na Dimani (the thirteenth Ya Na), a Hausa named Kankang Daliya Yelkondo introduced butchering to the Dagbamba. Benzing follows Sölken’s argument of the existence of an older, non-Muslim Hausa diaspora community (“althausanischheidnischen Diaspora”) in the Voltaic Basin, and assumes that the origins of several of the artisan groups, such as those of the butchers, the smiths, the weavers, the dyers and the well-diggers, which were generally said to have emerged as an outcome of the pro-Muslim policy of Ya Na Zangina and his invitation to Hausa artisans to settle in Dagbon, in fact go much further back than the early eighteenth century.<sup>276</sup>

Be that as it may, at the beginning of the eighteenth century there existed at least one prominent and influential Hausa Muslim group in Dagbon, namely the Muslim community in Kamshegu and its leader Muhammad al-Kashnāwī or Malam Mahama. According to the *Ta’rīkh Daghbūn*, an anonymous nineteenth century manuscript, Muhammad al-Kashnāwī had introduced Islam to Zangina and gave him his Muslim name, Muhammad Zangina, Zangina’s ‘pagan’ name being Wumbi.<sup>277</sup> Another oral tradition collected by Tait (and reproduced by Levtzion) attributes the introduction of the wearing of gowns instead of skins as well as the conversion of Na Zangina to a Hausa Mallam living in Kamshegu:

<sup>273</sup> Wilks 1963, 414.

<sup>274</sup> Goody 1954, 203; Lovejoy 1980, 53. According to Alhaji Imoru, Friday Imam of Salaga, the first Muslims who settled in eastern Gonja came from Hausaland. However, he claims that the first Muslim community emerged at Kpembe (Alhaji Imoru in *Oral traditions of Gonja* 1969, 117).

<sup>275</sup> Wilks 1963, 434. Lovejoy dates the expansion of Hausa immigrants to the nineteenth century (Lovejoy 1980, 39).

<sup>276</sup> Benzing 1971, 143.

<sup>277</sup> *Ta’rīkh Daghbūn*, quoted in Wilks 1965, 88; Ferguson 1972, 100. (Wilks 1965, 89: Wumbi)

One of the Mallam's wanzam's (barbers) circumcised Na Zangina, and the Mallam himself taught him to pray. The Mallam then sent weavers, wanzams, and Mallams to Yendi [...]. So this Hausa Mallam brought a complete civilization to Dagbong. Na Zangina became happy and made him chief of that village Kamsheghu.<sup>278</sup>

In fact, Tait's information seems to strengthen Benzing's theory of a pre-Zangina Hausa community that included a variety of artisans, although the date of the beginning of this community is not known. On the other hand, Muhammad al-Kashnāwī's position highlights the early Hausa influence in Dagbon. Being a Hausa trader from Katsina, the major trading centre of Hausaland during the seventeenth- and eighteenth centuries,<sup>279</sup> he probably arrived in Dagbon at the end of the 'First Kingdom', during the late seventeenth century.<sup>280</sup> However, on his journey to Dagbon, his caravan was raided by brigands and he lost all his belongings. The local Muslim (Wangara) community at Sabari, however, took pity on Muhammad al-Kashnāwī, who was given a wife and encouraged to stay with them. It seems as if Muhammad al-Kashnāwī thereafter was engaged as both a scholar and a trader – teaching the young Zangina as well as launching him on his early career as a trader to Hausaland. According to Phyllis Ferguson, it is possible that Zangina established fruitful contacts during his travels to Hausaland with those Hausa traders and artisans, who were induced to settle in Dagbon during his reign, and included weavers, barbers, blacksmiths and scholars.<sup>281</sup>

Although this Hausa tradition seems credible, Levtzion's argument that it is a reflection of the later change among the Muslim population in Dagbon seems valid.<sup>282</sup> The existence of a large, influential Hausa Muslim community in Dagbon is unlikely before the eighteenth century, though some Hausa traders and perhaps also Hausa Muslim scholars were likely to have been engaged in the Gonja trade perhaps as early as the seventeenth century.<sup>283</sup> Consequently, it is likely that, before the eighteenth century, the Mande/Wangara were the larger proportion of all Muslim strangers in the Voltaic Basin.

Na Zangina's policy of attracting Hausa immigrants was part of a purposeful and carefully planned policy towards Muslim immigration. Na Zangina's key objective was to place the services of the Muslim immigrants at the disposal of the state. According to the tradition of the Kamshe-Na collected by Tait,

<sup>278</sup> Levtzion 1968, 92. Also Wilks 1965, 89.

<sup>279</sup> On Katsina's position as the central trading centre in Hausaland before the *jihad*, see Adamu 1979.

<sup>280</sup> ALA IV, 2003, 541.

<sup>281</sup> Ferguson 1972, 90, 100–101. Local traditions claim that he visited Kano and Zaria. He is also said to have travelled in the company of [Wangara?] Muslims northwards as far as Timbuktu.

<sup>282</sup> According to Ferguson's informants, Zangina was circumcised by a Wangara barber from Sabari and given the name Muhammad (Ferguson 1972, 90). Thus, following this oral tradition, the Wangara and not the Hausa factor was decisive in the conversion of Zangina.

<sup>283</sup> Wilks 1965, 93.

Na Zangina sent out the Muslims to go to the whole of Dagbon and teach Dagombas how to pray and how to say their prayers in Arabic. Therefore these Hausa Malams went to the towns and villages in Dagbon [...] and so the Hausa Muslims married Dagomba women and brought fourth children and the number of Muslims increased in Dagbon. As the Muslims were sent out to teach, the barbers were also following them, circumcising the males in Dagbon and shaving their hair for them. So this famous Hausa Malam [i.e., Muhammad al-Kashnāwī?, HW] brought a complete civilization to Dagbon [...].<sup>284</sup>

Certainly Ya Na Zangina's pro-Hausa policy strengthened the Hausa faction in Dagbon. The most important Hausa Muslim settlement was Kamshegu and the Kamshe-Na emerged as an important as well as influential person.<sup>285</sup> According to Levtzion, the Kamshe-Na initially appears to have been a follower of the Sabali Yarna, indicating that the Mande Muslim chief was the senior one.<sup>286</sup> Ferguson suggests that Muhammad al-Kashnāwī, who was awarded the office of Kamshe-Na and given a grant of land in the Kamshegu area by Ya Na Zangina, had lived in Sabari and belonged to the community around Imam Yāmūsa.<sup>287</sup> At a later stage, when the Hausa became most prominent group of strangers in Dagbon, the Kamshe-Na was even said to have become Na Zangina's 'spiritual father' and therefore subsequent Kamshe-Nas were regarded as being the senior Muslim elder as well as being called by every Ya Na *nba*, 'my father'.<sup>288</sup> With the establishment of the court at Chale/New Yendi in the reign of Ya Na Zangina's successor Ya Na Andani Sigili, the Kamshe-Na sent a number of Muslims to be his representatives there. These deputies of the Kamshe-Na were later on to hold the (Muslim) offices of *Waligu Na*, *Asachiya*, and *Mba Malle*.<sup>289</sup>

Whatever the position of Hausa Muslims was in Dagbon, their relationship with the rulers and the court in Yendi closely resembled that of the Mande Muslims. Both Mande and Hausa were engaged in long-distance trade, but as Yendi was situated along the east-west trade route, it is likely that the Hausa community in Dagbon decisively expanded during the eighteenth century following the expansion in the Gonja (kola) trade.<sup>290</sup> However, despite the larger numbers of Hausas arriving in Yendi, and sometimes perhaps even remaining in the town, one cannot

<sup>284</sup> Tait MS, "Kamshe Na", quoted in Ferguson 1972, 101.

<sup>285</sup> According to Benzing, the *Kamshe Na* was already the senior Muslim elder during the second half of the eighteenth century (Benzing 1971, 22). She refers to a letter that is located among the Arabic manuscripts in Copenhagen, namely Code Arab CCCII: Vol I fol. 107, a letter from Abū Bakr, Sultan Kamsheghu to Bābā ibn Imam Gambaga for the Ashanti King (listed in Levtzion 1965, 116). However, according to Ferguson's investigations (1972, 12 fn 2), the lists of *Kamshe Nas* consulted by her did not include any Abū Bakr in the appropriate period.

<sup>286</sup> Levtzion 1968, 92–93.

<sup>287</sup> Ferguson 1972, 100. Similar argument in Wilks 1965, 88.

<sup>288</sup> Levtzion 1968, 92–93.

<sup>289</sup> Ferguson 1972, 102. According to Wilks (1965, 89), one of Muhammad al-Kashnāwī's sons was the first *Waligu-Na*.

<sup>290</sup> Lovejoy 1980. See further Chapter II.3.1 below.

detect from the available sources or oral traditions any difference in their attitude towards the religious state of affairs in Dagbon. Thus, one could claim that most Hausa Muslims were first and foremost traders and only secondly scholars. Such conditions seem to be reflected in the way the Muslim community of Kamshegu, as well as the Kamshe-Na, accommodated themselves to the prevailing political and religious conditions in Dagbon, namely gaining a kind of internal autonomy by acknowledging the position of the local ruler, by paying homage to him and performing for him those services he requested.

Both Mande and Hausa Muslims formed stranger communities in Dagbon (as well as elsewhere in the Voltaic Basin). The link – or gates – between the local society and the stranger community were the various titled persons like the Sabali Yarna and the Kamshe-Na. Until the early nineteenth century, the main difference between these two stranger communities was that the Hausa community seemed to have expanded, although the actual number of Hausas living in Dagbon at the end of the eighteenth century is unknown.

The situation was to change remarkably during the nineteenth century which witnessed a profound expansion of the Gonja (kola) trade. The main reason for this change was the foundation of the Sokoto Caliphate in the Central Sudan. The Sokoto Caliphate was an Islamic political entity, led by Muslim scholars (or former scholars) who had become amirs in the various Hausa city-states. Only at this stage of the history of Hausaland did the Islamization of the commoners begin when the Muslim leaders began to agitate for the conversion of their subjects. In addition, Islamization resulted in changing cultural habits: a Muslim had to wear clothes and, in principle, the kola nut was the only approved stimulant. With several million Muslims in the Sokoto Caliphate (as well as the kingdom of Borno), this meant an incredible increase in demand for kola nuts from Gonja. Although it is probable that trade was more or less at a standstill at the beginning of the nineteenth century due to the warfare in Hausaland during the *jihād* of Usman dan Fodio and his followers, Hausa long-distance traders, or *fatauci*, successively expanded their activities in Gonja after about 1810.<sup>291</sup>

The growth of activities along the Gonja trade route was also felt in Dagbon and is best reflected in the emergence of a new Hausa trading quarter near Yendi. This quarter was called Gamaji and its head *Magajin Gamaji*. According to Malam Al-Hasan, the background of Gamaji was as follows:

In Yendi there was only one Hausa man who knew the language. He was a Katsena man. With the re-opening of the Salaga market the trade route from Hausa land was restored and traders came as far as Yendi. Traders do not lodge in a town without first saluting the King. So the first arrivals took potash, a grass platter, saddle-cloths, ten sheets of paper and some scent and went to the King's house to greet him. The King summoned the Katsena man so that he might converse with the caravan leaders. They

<sup>291</sup> Lovejoy 1980, 38.



greeted the King in the Hausa tongue and the Katsina man translated to them the King's reply when they exclaimed "Verily, here is one who understands us" (ga mai-ji). From that the Dagombas called them Gamaji and the trading quarter which they were allowed to build was called the Gamaji quarter for ever more, and the head of the quarter was given the rank Magajin Gamaji. In time this trading quarter became a town close to Yendi where all matters concerning the Hausas were dealt with, and if letters and presents arrived from other chiefs they first went to Gamaji.<sup>292</sup>

Although Malam Al-Hasan's reference to a Katsina man in the beginning of his account – perhaps even Muhammad al-Kashnāwī – could point to the eighteenth century, one has to date the beginning of the office of *Magajin Gamaji* to the nineteenth century. Malam Al-Hasan himself noted the shift of the kola market from Chofe (Gbuipe) to Salaga before the establishment of the Gamaji Quarter. Salaga, perhaps founded in the eighteenth century, emerged as the main kola market only at the beginning of the nineteenth century. There is also another version of Malam Al-Hasan's account of the genesis of the Gamaji office, namely Imam 'Umar's manuscript *Labaarin Dagonbaawaa* ('History of the Dagomba people').<sup>293</sup> This version of the text provides no further clues about the origin or background of the office: "all the people know *Gaamaaji* but they do not know his origin."<sup>294</sup> However, this version, too, presents a rough chronological outline of Dagbon prior to the nomination of the *Magajin Gamaji*: the capital had been moved to Yendi, the kola market had moved from Gbuipe to Salaga. In fact, the *Labaarin Dagonbaawaa* seems to highlight the role of the Katsina man: "there was no man in Yendi who could understand Hausa until a Katsina man came and settled down there..."<sup>295</sup>

Despite Malam Al-Hasan's rather cryptic reference to the Katsina man, his description of the origin of the Gamaji office can be seen as a metaphor for the growth of the Hausa community in Yendi. Perhaps the Kamshegu community was too far away from Yendi or perhaps the ruler wanted better control of the traders who traversed through his country. Whatever the case, the Ya Na decided to take – again – a different standpoint towards strangers than the ruler of Mampurugu: instead of having them establish their settlement far away from his capital (as was the case in Mampurugu), the traders quarter was established only a little outside of Yendi. Starting from the *Magajin Gamaji*'s compound, other Hausa traders started to camp there, and soon Gamaji had grown into a small town in the vicinity of Yendi and the *Magajin Gamaji* was in charge of the quarter and all Hausa resident or in

<sup>292</sup> Malam Al-Hasan in Withers-Gill s.a., 12.

<sup>293</sup> This manuscript is included among the Hausa prose writings Imam 'Umar (Alhaji Umar of Kete-Krachi) wrote for Adam Mischlich. Although the manuscript was probably produced by Imam 'Umar, the author of the text was Malam Al-Hasan which is also stated in the text. See *Labaarin Dagonbaawaa*, text and translation in Pilaszewicz 2000 [hereafter LD/P 2000], 223.

<sup>294</sup> LD/P 2000, 235. However, earlier in the text there is a reference to 'Muhammad, the first Gama-ji' who was killed in a battle against the Basari (LD/P 2000, 234).

<sup>295</sup> LD/P 2000, 235.

transit.<sup>296</sup> Gamaji can therefore be said to have been the first *zongo* or strangers' settlement in Yendi.<sup>297</sup>

The expansion of Hausa traders during the nineteenth century was not only felt in Dagbon and Gonja. In Wa, the influx of Hausa immigrants was connected with Ibrahīm Mūsā (died ca. 1930) who was originally from Borno but had resided in Kano before moving to Wa. He was one of the founders of the Wa Zongo at the end of the nineteenth century and was given the title *Sambada Na*, "Chief of the Strangers" (i.e., *sarkin zongo*) by the Wa Na. He also became the Imam of the Hausa mosque in Wa.<sup>298</sup> Most Hausa immigrants in Wa were traders, and – at least among the group who is said to have been the first to settle in Wa during the 1860s – their grandfathers had come from Katsina to the Voltaic Basin.<sup>299</sup>

While the Hausa community evolved as a distinctive and influential group of strangers in Dagbon during the nineteenth century, the situation was different in Mampurugu. Here, too, the influx of Hausa traders gained momentum during the eighteenth century and, arguably, can be tied to Nayiri Atabia's policy of attracting merchants and craftsmen to settle in Gambaga. According to Malam Al-Hasan's text 'The Origin of Gambaga',<sup>300</sup> one of the first group of Hausa craftsmen to settle were the potters. These Hausa were said to be Zamfarawa. At least one Hausa settlement emerged in Mampurugu, namely Jangoiyiri close to Gambaga.<sup>301</sup> There was a Hausa itinerant preacher among the early Hausa immigrants, Malam Gado from Zamfara. According to the 'Origin of Gambaga', Malam Gado was able to persuade the local inhabitants to move their domicile to a more suitable place – their original place of residence was short of water – and he is said to be the founder of Gambaga or Gamba, the Iman's town.<sup>302</sup>

The influence of Malam Gado is somewhat dubious. It seems as if he and other, subsequent, Muslim scholars, who served as religious specialists for the local ruler, had a close relationship with the ruler of Mampurugu, perhaps even a semi-official position as one of the ruler's key advisors. For example, one King (*nayiri*) Bugulizori is said to have "bestowed money upon mallams and fetish-men,"<sup>303</sup> an indication that the services of Muslim scholars were much appreciated. But Malam Gado himself was not a very active champion of Islam in the region. Although

<sup>296</sup> LD/P 2000, 236.

<sup>297</sup> On establishment and development of *zongos* during the colonial period, see further Chapter V.

<sup>298</sup> ALA IV, 2003, 566.

<sup>299</sup> Wilks 1989, 63.

<sup>300</sup> 'The Origin of Gambaga' in: Withers-Gill 1924 [hereafter OG/Withers-Gill].

<sup>301</sup> 'The History of the Moshi' in: Withers-Gill 1924, 12 [hereafter HM/Withers-Gill]. Janoiyiri could be identified with Janga (Davis 1997, 56).

<sup>302</sup> OG/Withers-Gill, 9. However, Davis argues that Malam Al-Hasan's assertion that Malam Gado would have founded Gambaga is an overstatement and reflects the Hausa bias of local nineteenth-century Muslim scholarship (Davis 1997, 53).

<sup>303</sup> OG/Withers-Gill, 9.

it is said that his original intention for visiting the region was for the purpose of proselytization, he eventually did not:

He did not go about spreading his faith. He remained only looking out for food, wealth and honour... He did not plant a single grain of his religion there.<sup>304</sup>

Instead, he attracted other Zamfarawa to come to Gambaga. But none of them were Muslim scholars, as Malam Al-Hasan claims. Those Muslim scholars that were to arrive after Malam Gado came from Kong “and their descendants have acquired the Imamship till now.”<sup>305</sup>

There are several interesting questions connected to the influx of Hausa traders in the Voltaic Basin during the nineteenth century. According to Pilaszewicz, nineteenth century Hausa Muslims brought with them the Islamic creed which had an orthodox character and little tolerance for the traditional religion.<sup>306</sup> Such an argument is rather problematic for several reasons and has little backing in the available written and oral sources. The argument for an ‘orthodox’ Hausa Muslim interpretation of Islam, i.e., one that followed or was influenced by Muslim reformers such as Usman dan Fodio, which would have contrasted with the prevailing Mande and pre-*jihad* Hausa interpretations makes sense in theory – but only if more or less all nineteenth-century traders from Hausaland and beyond would have been adherents of such an ‘orthodox’ interpretation. However, it would seem that most Hausa traders were not vigorous champions of these ideas – at least not in the Voltaic Basin. What mattered for them most of all was to conduct business and if their ‘orthodox’ interpretation would lead to unstable conditions, trade would suffer. Therefore, what they would do at most would be to criticize their co-religionists for a laxity towards the tenets of Islam. Non-Muslim traditions, at least in the Voltaic Basin, would not be attacked by them. If this was the case, then the remarkable silence of the Hausa Muslims in the Voltaic Basin during the nineteenth century could be given the following interpretation: they did not perceive themselves as propagators of *jihad* or the messengers of a Muslim reform movement. The end effect was that the Hausa Muslims did not challenge the prevailing political, religious or social structures of those kingdoms in the Voltaic States where they settled and established communities.

<sup>304</sup> OG/Withers-Gill, 11.

<sup>305</sup> OG/Withers-Gill, 11. However, Malam Al-Hasan’s account is in contradiction with Davis’ sources and informants on the holders of the imamate in Gambaga.

<sup>306</sup> Pilaszewicz 2001, 2.

### 3.1. The East-West Axis: Salaga and Beyond

Previous subchapters have discussed the importance of the north-south axis and the link between the gold trade and the Mande factor in the Voltaic Basin and beyond. Of equal importance was the east-west axis and the link between the kola trade and the Hausa factor, though commencing at a later stage than the northbound Mande trade. Political and socio-economic developments in the Voltaic Basin between the fifteenth and the eighteenth century reflect this change. First, there was the attempt of the 'First Kingdom' of Dagbon to establish political hegemony over the region, one that aimed at controlling trade routes and alluvial gold deposits. This development was challenged and reversed by the Gbanya invasion and the subsequent establishment and enlargement of the Gonja Kingdom. The expansion of the Gonja Kingdom was halted by the emergence of the 'Second Kingdom' of Dagbon during the early part of the eighteenth century, and, at a later stage, first Gonja and thereafter Dagbon were incorporated as vassal states within the Asante Empire.

The political shifts in the Voltaic Basin were analogous to the long-term changes in the economic structures, especially those connected to long-distance trade. Gold deposits in the western Voltaic Basin, as well as those in the Akan region, were the focal point for the northbound trade until the advent of the European merchants and their attempt to secure as much as possible of the gold trade. The Gbanya invasion was an attempt to regain the control of the gold trade, but had no lasting success. The consolidation of Asante at the beginning of the eighteenth century, on the other hand, was effective in terms of controlling both the gold deposits as well as the gold trade. In the following two centuries, Asante was able to establish a tight control of the gold trade as well as to pursue a distinctive trade policy. Asante foreign trade rested on three bases: strict government/state control, an Atlantic-directed gold trade and a savannah-directed kola trade.<sup>307</sup>

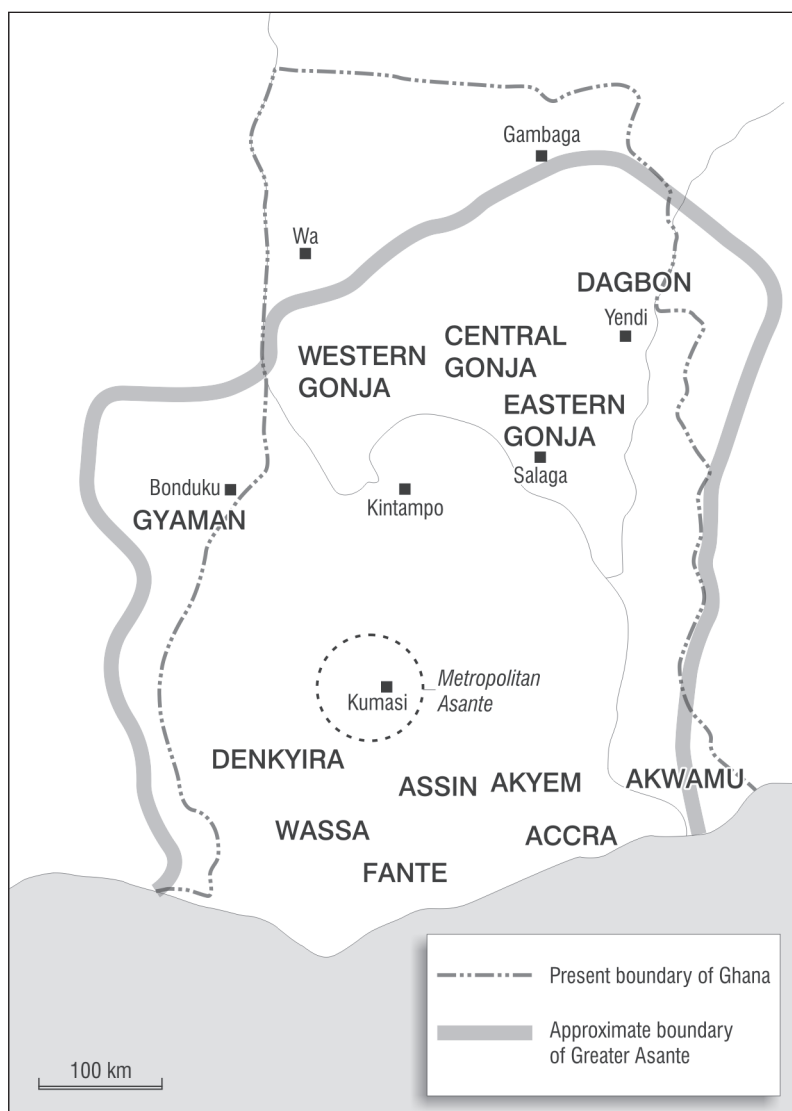
The military expansion of Asante during the eighteenth century resulted in the realization of Asante-controlled foreign trade. This meant that kola nuts replaced gold dust as the main trade good in the savannah long-distance trade. The Mande traders tried either to continue in the gold trade, or moved into the kola trade. However, the majority of the kola traders were Hausa – most of them were of Bornoan (Beriberi) origin though they were residents of Hausaland.<sup>308</sup> The first major centre of the kola trade was western Gonja and beyond, where older trade centres such as Buipe and Bonduku continued to attract foreign caravans from the savannah.<sup>309</sup> Yet, it is probable that the Hausa traders never went as far as Bonduku at this stage.<sup>310</sup>

<sup>307</sup> On Asante history, see further Fynn 1971 and Wilks 1975.

<sup>308</sup> Goody and Mustapha 1967, 612.

<sup>309</sup> Wilks 1975, 261.

<sup>310</sup> During subsequent centuries, Hausa traders were to push as far as Kong and beyond. In Bonduku, the Hausa seemed to have engaged in the dyeing of cloth (Goody 1964, 203).



**Map 9.** Greater Asante.

Instead, the main kola centre for the Hausa traders was eastern Gonja, where Kafaba and Tuluwe were the most important regional trade centres until the middle, if not the end, of the eighteenth century.<sup>311</sup> However, conflicts between Asante and the Juula state of Kong, in addition to a steady influx of Hausa traders and the increase of Hausa settlements in eastern Gonja, led to the realignment of the Asante

<sup>311</sup> According to the *Qissatu Salaga Ta'riku Gonja*, the Hausa kola traders used to come to Gbuipe (Buipe/Gufi) to buy red and white kola. While the red kola came from Asante, the white came from Bonduku (QSTG/W 1961, 16). The importance of Buipe, Tuluwe and Kafaba is reflected in eighteenth-century European maps and accounts. For example, a map from 1722 mentions the 'kingdom of Telowe' and 'Caffaba', and on a late eighteenth-century map, 'Caffaba' is placed as the terminus of the route from Katsina. (Goody 1964, 203; Levtzion 1968, 26.) Furthermore, the *Ta'riku Ghunjā* has a reference to Kafaba (TG/WLH 1986, 162–163). According to Wilks, Levtzion and Haight (1986, 142), Kafaba was a Muslim town and a recognized sanctuary.

northbound trade to Salaga.<sup>312</sup> Additionally, the connections between Dagbon and Asante meant that Yendi rose to be a key stopover along the east-west trade route from Salaga towards Hausaland. The shift of the main Asante transit market from Buipe to Salaga was to have a very positive effect in Yendi, as was stated in the *Labaarin Dagonbaawa*: “the routes of the Hausa traders also went [now] towards Yendi because the market was moved to Salaga.”<sup>313</sup> In fact, following the political instability along the north-south trade route via Kong and Bonduku, the Gonja trade route gained even more importance during the nineteenth century.

Salaga was the leading transit market for the Asante northern trade until 1874.<sup>314</sup> Asante domination in was felt in two ways. After the Asante northward expansion during the eighteenth century, the Asante government in Kumasi exercised its authority through the divisional rulers rather than the Yagbumwura. As Salaga itself was controlled by the Gbanya ruler of Kpembe, the importance of the Kpembewura increased with the growth of Salaga. Second, the affairs of the Salaga market were overseen by Asante governors of high rank.<sup>315</sup>

The beginnings of Salaga are obscure. According to Levtzion, it is likely that Salaga was already a market of some importance at the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>316</sup> Before the Gbanya invasion, this region was mainly inhabited by Nanumba and Salaga could have been a trading centre of southern Nanun.<sup>317</sup> When the Gbanya made Kpembe into one of their divisional capitals, Salaga emerged as its market centre. The position of Salaga was further strengthened with the settlement of Muslim traders, a process that must have started before the transfer of the principal market of Gonja to Salaga. The Hausa kola trade during the eighteenth century attracted not only traders but also men of learning. According to both local oral traditions and the *Qissatu Salaga Ta'rikhu Gonja*, the first Muslim to settle in Salaga was a man remembered as Bature, who built houses for himself and his children, a small market, as well as a place for his guests.<sup>318</sup> Bature is said to have been followed by

<sup>312</sup> Goody and Mustapha 1967, 611; Wilks 1975, 245, 262–264.

<sup>313</sup> LD/P 2000, 235–236.

<sup>314</sup> According to Arhin (1970, 365), a transit market is a market where the exchangeable goods were not for local consumption. A transit market such as Salaga was visited by ‘target traders’, who had specialized in the exchange of a variety of goods such as consumer goods, prestige goods, trading goods, or capital goods. For an analysis of Salaga as the ‘gateway’ for Asante, its role as a ‘port of trade’ and the organization of the market, see Lovejoy 2003.

<sup>315</sup> Wilks 1975, 265–266, 459; WLH 1986, 27. Asante resident administrators and functionaries were also stationed in Yendi, Gyaman (Bonduku) and Gonja before 1874 (Wilks 1975, 246, 248, 278).

<sup>316</sup> Levtzion 1968, 27.

<sup>317</sup> According to the *Ta'rikh Ghunjā*, Kunbi (Kpembe) was conquered by ‘Jakpa’ in his campaign against Nanumba. TG/WLH 1986, 163. ‘Jakpa’ can be identified with the Gonja ruler Ndewura Jakpa or Lanta (ruled ca. 1623/24–1666/67). See further QSTG/W 1961, 24 and WLH 1986, 199.

<sup>318</sup> QSTG/W 1961, 24, 26; Levtzion 1968, 27. Bature (‘the white’ or ‘the Arab’) is said to have come from Hausaland, being himself of Arab origin. It is possible that Malam Shaydiya arrived at Salaga at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Lovejoy argues that Malam Bature settled in Salaga during the last decade of the eighteenth century and Malam Shaydiya arrived there sometime



**Plate 4.** “View of Salaga”, illustration from Binger 1892, 88/89.

Malam Shaydiya (Chediya) from near Katsina who is said to have built the first mosque in Salaga and whose quarter became known as *Harat al-‘alim* or Unguwa Mallam, ‘the learned man’s compound’.<sup>319</sup> Malam Shaydiya made Malam Musa, a native of Salaga, the first imam, whereas he himself became the first *sarkin hausa*. Thereafter, the position of *sarkin hausa* remained within his family. His son, Malam Ibrahim (Ibrahima), was called ‘the father of orphans’ due to his benevolence and generosity.<sup>320</sup> Another group of early Muslims resident in Salaga were a group of Beriberi or Muslims from Borno who also built a mosque.<sup>321</sup> By the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, Alfa Sabi (Alfā Sābī), who was a well-known pious scholar from Djougou Kilinga, settled in Salaga.<sup>322</sup> Perhaps it was the arrival and settlement of Alfa Sabi which transformed Salaga into one of the regional centres of Muslim scholarship. While the first Hausa and Beriberi community was mainly a community of Diaspora traders, Alfa Sabi – according to the *Qissatu Salaga Ta’rīkhu Gonja* – was only interested in studying and in worshipping Allah.<sup>323</sup>

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after the *jihād* in Katsina, i.e., after 1807 (Lovejoy 1980, 38). If one uses the genealogy in the *Qissatu Salaga Ta’rīkhu Gonja* of Malam Shaydiya’s siblings, and the approximate date of the chronicle (shortly after the Salaga Civil War in 1892), Lovejoy’s dating seems reasonable: Malam Shaydiya was followed by his son Malam Ibrahim, who was followed by his son Labaran, whose son Sanusi was imam when the chronicle was written. If one calculates approximately 20–30 years for one generation to be in office, the early 1800s is a possible date for the arrival.

<sup>319</sup> QSTG/W 1961, 26; Wilks 1963, 414; Levtzion 1968, 27.

<sup>320</sup> QSTG/W 1961, 28.

<sup>321</sup> QSTG/W 1961, 28.

<sup>322</sup> Levtzion 1968, 28.

<sup>323</sup> QSTG/W 1961, 28.

By the nineteenth century, Salaga had emerged as not only one of the largest transit markets in West Africa – Lovejoy assumes that Salaga was almost as big as Kano and could have had some 40,000–50,000 inhabitants<sup>324</sup> – but also a leading regional centre of Muslim learning. Although Hausa trade with Asante originated in the eighteenth century, the trade was not fully developed until after the *jihad* of Usman dan Fodio in Hausaland (1804–1808). By the 1810s, Hausa immigrants settled in a number of local market centres, including Salaga, in response to the commercial expansion in northern Asante. Lovejoy suggests that, already by 1817, the influx of Hausa traders had transformed Salaga into a prosperous market town.<sup>325</sup> Abū Bakr al-Siddīq’s account from the early nineteenth century refers to Salaga as an important centre for the kola trade,<sup>326</sup> and the British Resident in Kumasi, Dupuis, was informed by local Muslims that Salaga “is reported to be of twice the size of Coommassy, and its population, of whom nearly one sixth part are Moslems, to be about four hundred thousand souls.”<sup>327</sup> Although Dupuis’ account of the size of Salaga’s population is certainly an overstatement, the idea of an important trade centre with a large Muslim population was not. Salaga was a cosmopolitan merchants’ town, which used Hausa as the *lingua franca*. Resident traders in Salaga built houses for their families as well as their guests, resulting in the establishment of distinct wards (*unguwa*).<sup>328</sup> According to Levtzion, it was the custom of traders from one country to stay in a particular ward at Salaga, where each *mai gida* functioned as a landlord and broker for his guests. Thus, by the nineteenth century, the Mossi traders lodged at the Unguwa Mossawa, traders from Dendi, Borgu and Kotokoli at the Unguwa Kapate, and Mande traders at the Unguwa M’Beima. Hausa traders stayed in several other wards.<sup>329</sup>

Although Asante pursued a policy of tight control over the trade within their dominions, Muslim traders were also present at Kumasi.<sup>330</sup> The rule that Hausa traders “could not cross the river Yeji [Volta] because the Ashanti would not let them do so” was a deliberate Asante trade policy during the nineteenth century.<sup>331</sup> It was

<sup>324</sup> Lovejoy 1980, 113; Lovejoy 2003, 481. Johnson (1986, 342) estimates that Salaga’s population ranged between 20,000 and 50,000, including dry-season visitors, during the nineteenth century. Wilks (1975, 244) states that the town had some 40,000 inhabitants before its decline after 1874.

<sup>325</sup> Lovejoy 1971, 538; Lovejoy 1980, 18–19, 38.

<sup>326</sup> Wilks 1967, 168.

<sup>327</sup> Dupuis 1824, xl.

<sup>328</sup> Lovejoy 2003, 484–486. However, as Lovejoy notes, Salaga was hardly an attractive town, apart from being the central regional market place. Then as now the surroundings of the town were stripped of its trees and bushes for use as firewood. Water was and is a scarcity during the dry season. The town itself must have been heavily overcrowded during the market season, which lasted for about six months. However, during the lean season, the town counted only a few thousand inhabitants.

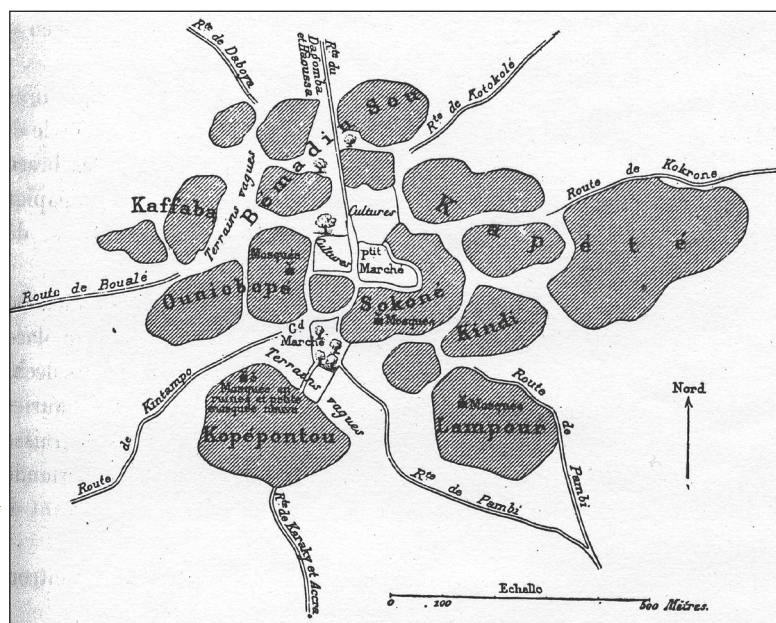
<sup>329</sup> Levtzion 1968, 29–30. According to the *Qissatu Salaga Ta’rīkhu Gonja*, Salaga attracted not only Hausa merchants but also traders from Yawri, Borno, Gurma, Yoruba, Nupe and Borgu (QSTG/W 1961, 30).

<sup>330</sup> Wilks 1975, 310; Owusu-Ansah 2003, 254.

<sup>331</sup> QSTG/W 1961, 30–31; Wilks 1975, 267–268; Abaka 2005, 58.



**Plate 5.** “Sketch-map of Salaga”, illustration from Binger 1892, 95. At least four mosques are indicated, including one in ruins.



finally revoked with the British occupation of Asante in 1896.<sup>332</sup> On the other hand, Asante restrictions were not total as Muslim, i.e., Hausa, traders visited markets and Asante farmers all over the kola production region south of the Volta River, e.g., in Akeyah (between Mampong and Kumasi), Ejura, Nkoranza and Yobati (between Atebubu and Yeji). According to Lovejoy, Asante trade restrictions were imposed only during and after the 1830s, confining the Hausa Muslim traders to Salaga. This policy lasted until the Anglo-Asante war of 1873–74.<sup>333</sup> However, the Asante policy of blocking Muslim traders from entering Asante was perhaps also due to the political disturbances in Kumasi at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It seems as if the position and influence of the Muslim community in Kumasi gained notable strength during the reign of Asantehene Osei Kwame (ruled ca. 1777–1798/1804). This ruler was accused by leading members of the Asante court of pursuing a pro-Muslim policy – it was rumoured that he even might have converted to Islam or at least having been strongly attracted towards Islam.<sup>334</sup> Osei Kwame was forced

<sup>332</sup> Maier 1996, 334.

<sup>333</sup> Lovejoy 1971, 539. Wilks (1975, 268) assumes that the restriction upon Hausa traders was placed in ca. 1844.

<sup>334</sup> Wilks 1975, 250–251. According to Wilks (1961, 22; 1975, 256–261) and Owusu-Ansah (1987, 147–151; 2003, 252), Asante contacts with Muslims dated back to the 1730s when Asante pushed northwards and subjugated several of the northern trading towns. The northern expansion brought Muslims into Asante on a large scale, both as captives (who were resettled in Asante) or as traders. The first body of Muslims known to have been formally incorporated into the Asante political administration were Muslim scholars and clerics who were brought from Mampong to Kumasi when Osei Kwame was enstooled as Asantehene in 1777. These scholars formed the body of *Ohene Nkrampo* or the ‘King’s Muslims’, and were incorporated into the king’s household and worked side by side with the *nsumankwafo* (‘court physicians’) with the mutual objective of protecting the king. McCaskie (389 fn 170), on the other hand, questions the alleged Islamic tendencies of Asantehene Osei Kwame. According to him, Wilks’ argument overstates the impact of Muslims in Asante and overstates the the religious impact of Islam on Asante. According to him, although Muslims in

to abdicate in ca. 1804<sup>335</sup> as a result of the anti-Muslim party in Asante, who saw Islam as a threat to the political and societal stability in Asante.<sup>336</sup> Direct Muslim influence at the court in Kumasi was thereafter blocked, but Muslim presence in Kumasi continued in the *zongo*,<sup>337</sup> whose leading members continued to serve as links between foreigners and the royal court.<sup>338</sup> However, under the new Asantehene, Osei Tutu Kwame (1800/01–1824), a pro-Muslim policy was once again applied: in 1808 the Asante government decreed the release and repatriation of all Muslim captives in Asante.<sup>339</sup> The relationship between leaders of the Muslim community in Kumasi and the Asantehene again deteriorated in 1818–1919 when the titular imam of the ‘strangers’ and head of the Muslim community, Muhammad al-Ghamba,<sup>340</sup> refused to accompany the Asante army in the invasion of Gyaman, a pagan state with a large Muslim population.<sup>341</sup> Despite the doctrinal reservations of Muhammad al-Ghamba towards Asante policy, he returned to Kumasi and resumed his former positions.<sup>342</sup> Subsequent imams seemed to have followed an accommodative policy towards Asante society. Neither ‘Uthmān Kamaghatay (also known as Kramo Tia), who was appointed by Asantehene Kwaku Dua Panin (1834–1867) as *Asante Adimen* (the Imam of Asante) in the 1844, nor his son and successor Abū Bakr ever publicly espoused or practiced any form of strict doctrinal orthodoxy.<sup>343</sup> Owusu-

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Kumasi were politically and commercially valuable to the Asante state, their faith was acceptable only in as much as its adherents were prepared to syncretize their doctrines to Asante demands and desires. See further McCaskie 1995, 136, 389 fn 170.

<sup>335</sup> According to Wilks (1975, 254), Osei Kwame was destooled already in 1798.

<sup>336</sup> On the unstable conditions in Asante, see the letter from Bābā to Mālik, Imam of Gbuipe, and the Imam of Daboya, Cod.Arab.CCCII, Vol.III, fo.5/WLH 1986.

<sup>337</sup> Wilks 1975, 310–311. For example, Muslim scholars from Hausaland and Borno were staying in Kumasi during the first decades of the nineteenth century.

<sup>338</sup> The Muslim community occupied at least one quarter exclusively in Kumasi during the early nineteenth century, later perhaps even two (McCaskie: the *nkraben* and the *sereboososakyi* quarters). Wilks 1961, 20–21; McCaskie 1995, 136, 149–150.

<sup>339</sup> On the pro-Muslim policies of Osei Tutu Kwame (Osei Bonsu), see Wilks 1975, 254–255, 257–258, 263.

<sup>340</sup> Muhammad al-Ghamba, “the Mamprussi”, more commonly known as Bābā (Bowdich 1819; Dupuis 1824; Wilks 1966a, 319), was both imam and *qadi* of the Kumasi Muslim community at the beginning of the nineteenth century. He had arrived in Kumasi in 1804 and became a member of the Asantehene’s council, handling the affairs relating to the Muslims and the northern grasslands. He also endowed a school which had some seventy pupils. Other Muslims who arrived at this period and who achieved prominence in the Asante administration and Muslim community were Abū Bakr Turay [Touré] and Muhammad Kamaghatay [Muhammad Karamo Toghma], who was a son of the imam of Gbuipe, both of them having Juula patronymics. Others were Abū Bakr Bamba, who was in charge of the affairs of Bamba, al-Hājj Mubārak al-Salghawī, Jalāl ibn Qudrī al-Burumī (from the Mbom country) and Ibrāhīm al-Yandī from Dagbon. See further Wilks 1961, 30–31; Wilks 1966a, 319–321, 328; Levtzion 1968, 182, 184; Wilks 1975, 260; Owusu-Ansah 1987, 152; Owusu-Ansah 2003, 255.

<sup>341</sup> Wilks 1961, 28–29; Wilks 1963, 415, 417; Wilks 1966a, 335–336; Wilks 1975, 268. However, Levtzion is doubtful about Wilks’ claim and argues that Muslims were still taking part in Asante politics in the late 1830s (Levtzion 1968, 185).

<sup>342</sup> Wilks 1975, 260.

<sup>343</sup> Wilks 1975, 278, 316; McCaskie 1995, 136; Owusu-Ansah 1996. Wilks further highlights the

Ansah even claims that the imamate of the *Asante Nkramo*, the ‘royal or Asante Muslims’, solely served the interest of the Asante rulers before 1874, the Asante Imam serving as the link between the ruler and the Muslim community.<sup>344</sup>

However, despite the fact that Islam never made any further progress in Asante, Muslims were never expelled from Kumasi.<sup>345</sup> One reason for this might have been that most Muslims in the Kumasi *zongo* came from the Voltaic Basin and that they were the representatives of Muslims from Gonja, Dagbon and Mampurugu. Furthermore, Muslims were able to perform important administrative and religious services for both the state as scribes and as communicators with foreigners as well as for the local population as producers of charms, protective amulets and talismans.<sup>346</sup> Hausa traders do not seem to have come to Kumasi until the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>347</sup> Arguably, the main reason for this was perhaps due to the fact that Asante traders themselves controlled the kola trade within Asante and the transport of kola to Salaga.

The Asante ‘double policy’ of both a negative attitude towards Islam and at the same time respecting the Muslim community was mainly due to the fact that Muslims and their services were perceived useful to Asante society at large. First, as Asante was a non-literate society, Muslim scholars were needed as scribes to conduct the diplomatic correspondence with other rulers and European companies. Second, and even more important, Islamic amulets and charms were highly valued due to the acclaimed special esoteric knowledge of the Muslim scholars. For example, during the crisis before the Anglo-Asante war of 1873–74, the Asantehene sent a special delegation to Salaga to seek a Hausa malam who could make charms, insisting that only a malam born in the Sokoto Caliphate would be acceptable.<sup>348</sup> However, as Owusu-Ansah claims, despite the fact that Muslim charms and amulets were in great demand and in widespread use in Asante, there is no evidence to suggest that Asante attributed any of its military success solely to their power. Instead, as Muhammad al-Ghamba was to emphasize to the British Residents, after the destoolment of Osei Kwame the Muslims of Kumasi were deprived of both economic and political influence. In contrast to the empires in the northern savannah, where Muslims

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close link between the Muslim intelligentsia in Kumasi and the Muslim scholarly centre in Buna during the nineteenth century, not least the fact that the scholarly community of Buna served as the intellectual and ideological background of the Kamaghatay family. See further Wilks 1975, 316–318.

<sup>344</sup> Owusu-Ansah 1996, 355–356.

<sup>345</sup> Wilks suggests on the basis of European descriptions, that the population of the Muslim quarter in Kumasi could have been about one thousand (Wilks 1966a, 319; Wilks 1975, 256).

<sup>346</sup> Wilks 1966a, 326–334; Levtzion 1968, 183; Lovejoy 1971, 542–543; Wilks 1975, 257–258; Owusu-Ansah 1987a and Owusu-Ansah 1987b.

<sup>347</sup> However, Goody assumes that the Hausa made up the majority of the Muslim community in early nineteenth-century Kumasi (Goody 1954, 20).

<sup>348</sup> Lovejoy 1971, 543; Wilks 1975, 239–240; Owusu-Ansah 1987b, 110; Owusu-Ansah 2003, 257. Another example of the recognized ‘power’ of Hausa Muslims was when the Asantehene asked one Malam Ma’azu from Hadejia to pray to God and make ‘medicine’ so that the town of Wenchi would prosper and become a market place (Wilks 1975, 297).

over time gained an increasing influence in both the economic and sometimes also the political sphere, especially when they were used as an instrument of the state for the regulation of the commercial and political activities of local subordinated groups. In spite on that, foreigners were never allowed to monopolize the control of commerce in Asante and due to the complex position of the chiefs and Asante ancestral veneration, Islam could never become a state religion there as long as the chiefly class (*ahenfo*) was able to block the influence of foreigners, Muslim or European.<sup>349</sup>

With the ever increasing influx of Muslim traders and scholars from Hausaland, Salaga's reputation as a Muslim centre of learning during the nineteenth century was established. The reputation of Gonja as being a kind of 'Eldorado' for a Hausa trader and Salaga as being a flourishing Muslim town is reflected in several Hausa texts. In *Wakar talauci da wadata*, the 'Song of poverty and wealth',<sup>350</sup> the audience is reminded of the fact that one can acquire wealth only by engaging in long-distance trade:

[T]ry to set out to look for wealth./ Make ready for a journey, go as far as Bantama./ Return to Atebubu, [then] come to Daboya./ Retreat through the bush, return to Dori./ Pass not too far from Mossi, come as near as Kaya./ Return to Salaga, go as far as Kumasi [...]/ Looking for wealth is incumbent on us/ So that we might enjoy living in this world.<sup>351</sup>

The *Wakar talauci da wadata* is an important local document that paints a vivid portrait of the mentality of the Hausa merchants. Following the song, the Hausa merchants followed a 'capitalistic' ethos rather than any other: for them, their main interest in 'Gonja' was to do business, not to be propagators of Islam. As will be discussed later on, the Hausa 'merchant' ethos of the nineteenth century might also explain why so few of these Muslim traders made any effort to play an active role in the reinterpretation of the relationship between Muslims and rulers in the Voltaic Basin and beyond.

<sup>349</sup> Owusu-Ansah 1987a, 154–158; Owusu-Ansah 1987b, 137–138; Owusu-Ansah 2003, 256–259, 262. However, according to the British Residents, the Kumasi Muslim community had a complete monopoly of the cattle industry and Wilks, too, argues that Muslim traders controlled a large sector of the distributive trade. He further notes that Asantehene Osei Tutu Kwame (ca. 1801/04–1824) in fact did much to encourage foreign traders to come to Kumasi by his 'liberal economic policies' – his intention being first and foremost to curb the growth of a native Asante merchant class whom he saw as an even bigger threat to the state and the political stability than the Muslims (Wilks 1966a, 326).

<sup>350</sup> Pilaszewicz 1974; Duffill 1986a. Interestingly, the text was written down by Imam Umar (Alhaji Umar of Kete-Krachi). Its original author, however, was one Darho.

<sup>351</sup> *Wakar talauci da wadata*, translated in Pilaszewicz 1974. Duffill's translation: "You should pay attention, make an effort and go and look for riches. You should rush off to Safara. You should even go to Fatoma, returning via Bobo you will come to Daboya. You should then turn and proceed to Jije, returning through Dori you should travel in Moshi coming even to Kaya. You should return via Salaga, going even to Kumashi [...] Seeking wealth is incumbent on us all; indeed even for the sake of wealth we arrange [our] living in this world (Duffill 1986a, 51–52)."



**Plate 6.** Former bathing site of slaves outside Salaga; photo: Holger Weiss (HW). The site was pointed out to me by one of my informants in 2000.

But if the kola trade was to be the main interest of the Hausa merchants visiting Salaga and the activities of Muslim scholars laid the foundation of Salaga's reputation as a regional centre of Islamic learning, the history of the town as an important trade centre was also tied to the developments of the slave trade in the Voltaic Basin. Slaves were brought to Asante from the north where they had been taken captive in wars, were paid to the Asante as tribute, or bought from slave traders.<sup>352</sup> Generally, the stateless societies were regarded by the organized states in the Voltaic Basin as fair game for slave-raiding, and this perspective had no connections to Islamic norms. Neither the rulers nor the slave hunters would make a distinction between people who could be enslaved and those who could not based on Islam – a typical argument by Muslim scholars could have been that the enslavement of Muslims was unlawful whereas 'pagans' were free booty. Instead, slave-raiding and enslavement was not a moral issue at all, apart from the fact that the rulers of Kpembe, Yendi or elsewhere would rarely enslave their own subjects.<sup>353</sup>

The Atlantic as well as the Sudanic slave trade were undergoing tremendous changes during the eighteenth century which were also to affect the Voltaic Basin. There had been a steady increase in the demands for slave labour in the Akan region due to the expansion of gold mining since slaves were used as the workforce in the goldfields. The consolidation and expansion of Asante further added to the pressure

<sup>352</sup> Tamakloe 1931b, 268–269; *Oral traditions of Gonja* 1969, 13, 137; Wilks 1975, 66–68, 70, 197–198, 305–306; Der 1998, 11–15; Perbi 2004, 44–45.

<sup>353</sup> See further Perbi 2004, 31.

of obtaining slaves. In part, this development was tied to Asante foreign trade and Asante military innovation by heavily making use of imported European firearms and gunpowder. However, Asante trade with Europeans required payment in gold, which the Asante preferred to store and to use themselves in rituals and as a sign of wealth.<sup>354</sup> Therefore, the northbound trade in gold from the Akan goldfields more or less diminished to non-existence. On the other hand, Asante merchants preferred to obtain cloth and tobacco from the markets on the northern edge of the forest rather than from the coastal trading ports as northern merchants would barter kola nuts which were collected in the forests of Asante and brought to the northern markets by Asante traders.<sup>355</sup>

Nevertheless, Asante did not encourage the movement of European tradegoods, especially firearms and gunpowder, across its territory. Thus, by pursuing a strict control of the flow of these goods, the Asante army was able to make use of these military innovations and to a large extent counterbalance their lack of the most effective war machine in the region, a cavalry. Only reliable vassal states such as Dagbon, were allowed to establish new military units which were equipped with firearms – the *kambonse*.<sup>356</sup> It could be claimed, therefore, that the outfitting of new troops in Dagbon was a sign of the greater importance this vassal state was to play in the Asante political arena. Dagbon became a vassal state of Asante at the end of the eighteenth century, although Asante military pressure upon Dagbon had already started during the 1740s. The military attacks upon Dagbon culminated with the capture of Ya Na Gariba by an Asante army. Although Ya Na Gariba was released, he had to send a fixed number of slaves, cattle and sheep, and some cloth to Kumasi each year. In addition, an Asante representative was stationed at Yendi. Whether the character of the relationship between Dagbon and Asante was that of a subordinate (Dagbon being a vassal of Asante),<sup>357</sup> a kind of ‘indirect rule’ with little or no influence of Asante in Dagbamban internal affairs,<sup>358</sup> or a kind of politico-economic symbiosis rather than a conquest,<sup>359</sup> there is little discussion about the fact that Dagbon, on a more or less regular basis sent slaves – perhaps up to 200<sup>360</sup>

<sup>354</sup> Wilks 1993a, 133.

<sup>355</sup> Goody 1954, 20.

<sup>356</sup> Wilks 1975, 248. The *kambonse* were Asante-trained musketeers and constituted a ‘wing’ of the Dagbamban army. It is not clear whether they originally were trained in Kumasi or in Yendi. According to Rattray (II, 1932, 554), *kambonse* units were also established in Mampurugu.

<sup>357</sup> This is the position of Tamakloe (1931b, 269), Fage (1964, 180) and Wilks (1975; 1985, 498). A similar claim was presented in the Hausa manuscript *Laabaarin Dagonbaawaa*: “they [the Dagbamba, HW] were subject to the Asante people, the whole country (LD/P 2000, 225).”

<sup>358</sup> As claimed by Benzing 1971, 184, and Ferguson 1972, 40–41.

<sup>359</sup> Staniland 1975, 6. Such a position was also presented in the early nineteenth-century accounts of the British Residents in Kumasi, e.g. Bowdich 1819, 235; Dupuis 1824, xxxix.

<sup>360</sup> Tamakloe 1931a, 33; Tamakloe 1931b, 268; Benzing 1971, 195. Rattray’s informants claimed that Dagbon had to deliver 2,000 slaves annually (Rattray II, 1932, 564). See further Wilks (1975, 66–67, 432–432) on tributes from Dagbon (Yendi, Savelugu, Mion and Karaga).

a year – to Kumasi for a period of over a century.<sup>361</sup> Similar conditions prevailed in Gonja after the Asante attack in the eighteenth century.<sup>362</sup> The Kpembewura Nakpo (Nakawa) was taken captive in ca. 1751 but released after he had entered into a contract with Asante.<sup>363</sup> According to the *Labaarin Gurunshi*, another nineteenth-century Hausa text written by a Salaga scholar,<sup>364</sup> the rulers of Yendi, Kpembe and Mampurugu [N.B!] had to send one hundred and twenty slaves [each?] every year to the Asante.<sup>365</sup>

Thus, with the early nineteenth-century changes in the location of the Asante northern markets, the trade in slaves, too, was concentrated on Salaga and the town gained the dubious reputation of being one of the biggest slave markets in the interior of West Africa during the nineteenth century.<sup>366</sup> Among the key suppliers of slaves to the Salaga market were the rulers and chiefs of Dagbon. Most of the slaves supplied by Dagbon were captives or had been enslaved during slave raids. By attacking the ‘Grunshi’ or the various neighbouring people, Dagbon (as well as Gonja) solved the problem of providing their annual slave tribute to Asante. Other slaves came from the (northern) Mossi region. However, starting from the second half of the nineteenth century, the most dreaded slave raiders and traders were the Zabarima ‘adventurers’ (see below).<sup>367</sup>

The slave trade in the Voltaic Basin reached a new peak in the last quarter of the nineteenth century as a result of the Zabarima raids among the ‘Grunshi’. While the slave trade was to continue up until the end of the nineteenth century, the northern trade was to face huge changes after the mid-1870s.<sup>368</sup> In 1874, the British launched a military attack on Asante and looted Kumasi. The effect of the British attack was devastating from an Asante point of view. The northern vassal states, Dagbon and Gonja, cut their contacts with Kumasi and killed or expelled the Asante

<sup>361</sup> Wilks 1975, 305–307.

<sup>362</sup> LG/P 2000, 278. Levtzion 1968, 41.

<sup>363</sup> KG/WLH 1968, 106. According to nineteenth-century sources, Gonja tribute to Asante included slaves, cattle, sheep and cloth (*Kalām Mulūk wa Mamālikihim*/WLH 1986, 197). See further Wilks 1975, 66–67, 279, 431–432 [tributes from Yagbum, Bole, Daboya, Kong, Kpembe and Tuluwe]; WLH 1986, 143–144, 200.

<sup>364</sup> *Laabarin Gurunshi*, translated in Pilaszewicz 2000 [hereafter LG/P 2000]. Pilaszewicz assumed that Malam Al-Hasan could have been the author of the text. In fact, there is a reference in the text [“we have described it in the LD” (LG/P 2000, 282)] which clearly indicates that the author of the LG and the LD are the same person. The original work seems to have been completed before 1899 (Pilaszewicz 2000, 243).

<sup>365</sup> LG/P 2000, 276. This is the only text that includes Mampurugu among those states who had to send slaves to Asante.

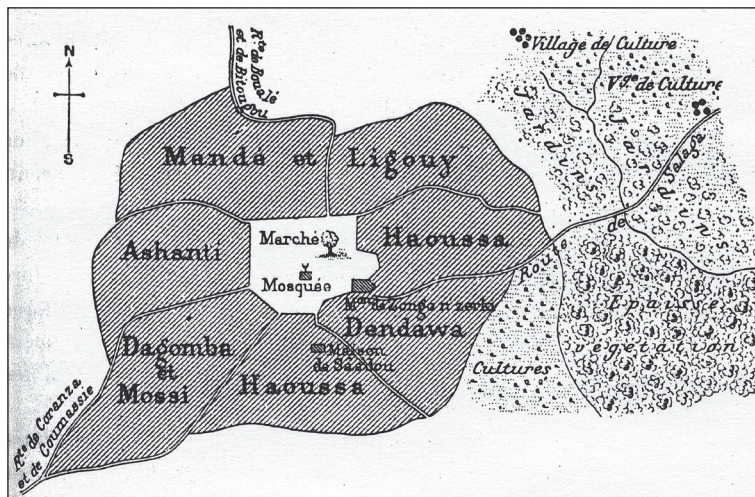
<sup>366</sup> Apart from the trade in slaves and kola nuts, the Salaga market was important for Asante as it obtained all its supplies in cattle, sheep, goats, Sudanic (Hausa) textiles and ivory from there (TNA CO 879/9, African No. 95. Dr. [V. Shipton] Gouldsbury’s Report of His Journey into the Interior of the Gold Coast, Colonial Office, May 1876, 6 [hereafter TNA/Gouldsbury 1876]).

<sup>367</sup> Johnson 1986, 342.

<sup>368</sup> Goody 1966a, 3; Johnson 1968, 17.

officials and merchants in the region.<sup>369</sup> Thereafter, Asante control over its northern vassal states was rudimentary at best and the formerly Asante dominated parts of the Voltaic Basin entered a period of political confusion and instability.<sup>370</sup> Even worse, Salaga rebelled and all the Asante there were massacred by the local population, the roads towards Asante being blocked. The kola trade came to a virtual standstill as no more kola was brought from Asante to Salaga due to an Asante embargo on kola exports to the town.<sup>371</sup> Instead, a new outlet for the Asante kola trade was soon found at Kintampo and, to a lesser extent, at Atebubu. Kintampo, especially, became an important transit and kola market for the next decades.<sup>372</sup>

The rise of Kintampo resulted in the decline of Salaga as many of the Hausa merchants established themselves there. If Gouldsbury's account is to be believed, the shift of the market must have been felt drastically in Salaga: "At one time, that is when the Saharah [Salaga, HW] market was well supplied with cola nuts, as many as 10,000 people from the interior often entered Saharah in one day."<sup>373</sup> There are some eyewitness accounts of the decline of Salaga after the slaughter of the Asante agents. The Frenchman M. Bonnet, who acted as an Asante agent on his tour to Kpembe and Salaga in 1876,<sup>374</sup> estimated that the population of Salaga prior to the massacre and collapse of the kola trade must have been some 40,000–45,000 inhabitants, including the kola and other merchants and their retinues who seldom settled in the town. According to him, due to the redirection of the kola



**Plate 7.** "Sketch-map of Kintampo", illustration from Binger 1892, 137. The Muslim faction dominated at least the market: the mosque is next to it.

<sup>369</sup> Levztz 1968, 34–35; Wilks 1975, 306 (Dagbon), 279–281 (Eastern Gonja).

<sup>370</sup> Wilks 1975, 305.

<sup>371</sup> TNA/Gouldsbury 1876, 3, 6; Wilks 1975, 280–281, 284.

<sup>372</sup> Goody 1966a, 3; Arhin 1970, 365; Arhin 1974, 9; Wilks 1975, 286. According to British reports, Kintampo had some 3,000–4,000 Asante and some 30,000–40,000 Muslim inhabitants already in 1884 (Wilks 1975, 286).

<sup>373</sup> TNA/Gouldsbury 1876, 3.

<sup>374</sup> Wilks 1975, 283, 610–611. On his way to Kpembe, Bonnat met the "Chief of the Muslims" who visited him mounted on a horse "covered with amulets and curiously capasoned". Goody 1966a, 2.



trade, Salaga's population had dropped to about 15,000–18,000 inhabitants.<sup>375</sup> Still, the physical appearance of the town made an impression on Bonnat. Thousands of huts formed a large, compact line stretching for more than 1.5 km and tall trees gave shade to the houses. He counted two mosques, one with walls ca. 4–4.5 meters in height, with a sloping wall so that the muezzin could climb to the roof and call the faithful to prayer. However, about three-quarters of the houses were empty or in ruins, Bonnat stated.<sup>376</sup> Others were not so impressed. Johannes Müller, who visited Salaga in 1884, pictured the town as being decayed, a filthy and dirty location with some 10,000 inhabitants and no signs of any trade in slaves.<sup>377</sup> According to David Asante, the traders had abandoned the market and had moved to (Kete-)Krachi, Kpong and Accra. However, the 'Muslim identity' of the city landscape were still visible: two mosques and several Quranic schools, Asante noticed.<sup>378</sup>

From the 1880s on, Salaga had to share the prosperous slave trade with the other regional trade centres, such as Kintampo, Wa, Kete-Krachi and Bole. The crisis in Salaga culminated in the civil war of 1892, when many Muslims were killed, including one Uthmān who was the imam of Salaga,<sup>379</sup> and the invasion of Dagbon, at which time most of the Muslim merchants and scholars left the town and settled in Kete.<sup>380</sup>

### 3.2. The Zabarima:<sup>381</sup> Warlords, Enslavers and the 'End of Time'

For about three decades, beginning during the late 1860s or so, the northern Voltaic Basin was ravaged by endemic warfare and political insecurity. The main reason for the instability was a new factor in the region: the Zabarima. At this time, Ya Na Abudulai (ruled ca. 1849–1876)<sup>382</sup> began to employ a number of Zabarima horsemen to help in capturing people to make up the annual consignment of slaves for Kumasi.<sup>383</sup> During earlier decades, the arrival and settlement of Muslim traders

<sup>375</sup> Goody 1966a, 2. Gouldsbury estimated that Salaga had some 8,000 inhabitants plus an unspecified number of visiting traders (TNA/Gouldsbury 1876, 7).

<sup>376</sup> Goody 1966a, 3; Wilks 1975, 244.

<sup>377</sup> BMA D-10.36,5 Joh. Müller, Vorläufiger Bericht über seine Reise nach Salaga Jan/Febr. 1884 mit Dr. Mähli, Missionar Zimmermann und David Asante, Abschrift, page 2 (Copy of Johannes Müller's Report on his travel to Salaga, 1884).

<sup>378</sup> BMA D-10.5,7 Eine Reise nach Salaga und Oboose durch die Länder im Osten des mittleren Voltaflusses von dem Negermissionar David Asante. Mitgeteilt durch den Basler Missionar J.G. Christaller, 1884, pages 3, 7–8 (David Asante's report on his travel to Salaga by J.G. Christaller, 1884).

<sup>379</sup> QSTG/W 1962, 20.

<sup>380</sup> Goody and Mustapha 1967, 615–616; Levtzion 1968, 41.

<sup>381</sup> Zaberma is the Hausa name for the Jerma (or Zerma) people speaking a Songhay dialect in the region of Niamey and Dosso on the banks of the Niger (Levtzion 1968, 151). They are known in Ghana as Zabarima.

<sup>382</sup> Levtzion 1968, 198.

<sup>383</sup> Benzing 1971, 202; Staniland 1975, 9.

and scholars had caused little friction between them and their host communities. Neither Mande nor Hausa communities engaged themselves in military activities, apart from some scholars accompanying warlords and rulers in their wars and raids as performers of rituals and reciters of prayers. As was noted above, both Dagbon and Gonja used the Voltaic Basin as a hunting-ground for cattle, ivory and slaves – items which were sent as tribute to Asante, used as exchange goods in market transactions or were needed in the domestic economies of these states.

The activities of the warbands of the Zabarima can to a large extent be linked with a new phase of the Islamization of the Voltaic Basin. This time, however, the impact of Islam was problematic, and seen from a non-Muslim perspective, it was a highly negative one. Although the Zabarima never succeeded in establishing an ‘Islamic’ state in the northern Voltaic Basin, their leaders presented themselves as Muslims and saw themselves, at least partially, as propagators of the faith. The leaders of the Zabarima warbands usually, if not always, consulted their Muslim clerics, who formed a council of Muslim scholars. The leaders were either known to be Muslim scholars themselves, such as Alfa Hano and Alfa Gazari, or used Islamic titles for themselves, like Babatu, who was referred to as Amir Babatu by Malam Abu.<sup>384</sup> If one interprets Malam Abu’s text from a Muslim/Islamic perspective, it reads as an account of an attempt to establish an Islamic state in a largely non-Muslim territory. The Zabarima themselves formed the political-cum-religious ‘core’ of the emerging state whereas those non-Muslim communities – largely the ‘Grunshis’ and ‘Dagartis’ – were either clients, i.e., people who had submitted to the Muslim ruler, or potential targets for raids and warfare. Those who had been granted the position of tolerated subjects could be equated with *dhimmi* – they had to pay to the Muslim ruler an annual tribute (mostly in slaves and/or cattle). A clear division seemed to have existed in the mental geography of the Zabarima leaders and their Muslim scholars, namely between the *dar al-islam* of their own and other Muslim communities, and the *dar al-harb* of the surrounding country-side. Another indication of the Islamic nature of the Zabarima community was that the ruler was responsible for the welfare of his community, i.e., the Muslims, but not for his other subjects, or as Alfa Gazari at one time proclaimed: “I should protect the general welfare [*lafyya*].”<sup>385</sup> It has to be stressed that Alfa Gazari’s proclamation did not include the conquered communities. Instead, the Zabarima community turned out to be based on exclusivity – through ethnicity (Zabarimanness) and religion (Islam).

It is unclear whether the Zabarima leaders ever tried to establish a “state” in the northwestern Voltaic Basin.<sup>386</sup> What they certainly did was to carve out for themselves a territory over which they ruled by forcing non-Muslim communities

<sup>384</sup> ALA IV, 2003, 565.

<sup>385</sup> LZ/P 1992, 95. *Lafyya* (Hausa = health, prosperity, safety), synonym with *maslaha* (Arabic).

<sup>386</sup> Holden refers to Malam Abu’s term *asalin Zabarimawa* when he speaks about the Zabarima ‘state’ (Holden 1965, 60).

and settlements into submission. A distinctive feature of Zabarima activity was its military nature which, in the end, was based on a simple equation: to get slaves to trade for guns, ammunition and horses. Thus, what came into existence in about 1870 was a typical, ‘predatory’ state, where an equestrian community was able to sow terror and fear over a large territory but was unable to transform itself from a destructive to a constructive, consolidating force. Especially the last warleader, Babatu, was to be known as the “Ruler of the Grunshi” – admired by Muslims but feared by non-Muslims. The activities of the Zabarima warleaders, especially Babatu, resembled that of another ‘Sudanic’ conqueror and slayer, namely Rabih (Rabīh al-Fadlallāh), who in a similar way tried to establish a stable base for his mobile camp, first in the territory south of Wadai, then in Baghirmi and finally in Borno, during the latter part of the nineteenth century.<sup>387</sup> Both Babatu and Rabih considered themselves Muslim rulers, but their example and the impact of their moving and marauding war camp would more than ever before equate Islam with terror. In fact, neither Babatu nor Rabih ever officially or in public declared that the reason for their activities was thoroughly Islamize the subjugated and affected non-Muslim communities and societies.

On the other hand, the Zabarima themselves had some decades before lived under similar circumstances that they were to produce in the Voltaic Basin. During the early years of the nineteenth century, the Zabarima home territory was shattered by the *jihād* of Usman dan Fodio. Before the militant Islamic reform movements in western Hausaland, the majority of the Zabarima had not accepted Islam. A small majority, however, were Muslims, and this community was to back Usman dan Fodio and his *mujahidun* in their fight against the local rulers. At an early stage of the *jihād* in Gobir, Fulbe attacks were launched against the Zabarima and for the next decades, the region was partly integrated into the Sokoto Caliphate. During the mid-nineteenth century, the Zabarima together with people in Kebbi and Dendi rose against the Caliphate. However, the revolt was crushed and some of the Zabarima decided to abandon the land due to the heavy destruction and devastation that had been caused by the invading armies. Among those who emigrated were two distinctive groups. One was that of the Muslim Zabarima, especially those who had backed Usman dan Fodio’s call for *jihād*, who engaged in trade and missionary activities.<sup>388</sup> The other became mercenaries and started a military career, e.g., in the service of the chief of Kotokoli and in the Kingdom of Dagbon.<sup>389</sup>

Among the emigrants were Alfa Hano and Alfa Gazari Takūra.<sup>390</sup> According to Malam Abu’s ‘The History of the Zabarima People’, Alfa Hano was the “owner of a book of prayers”.<sup>391</sup> Local traditions claim that Alfa Hano was a Muslim scholar

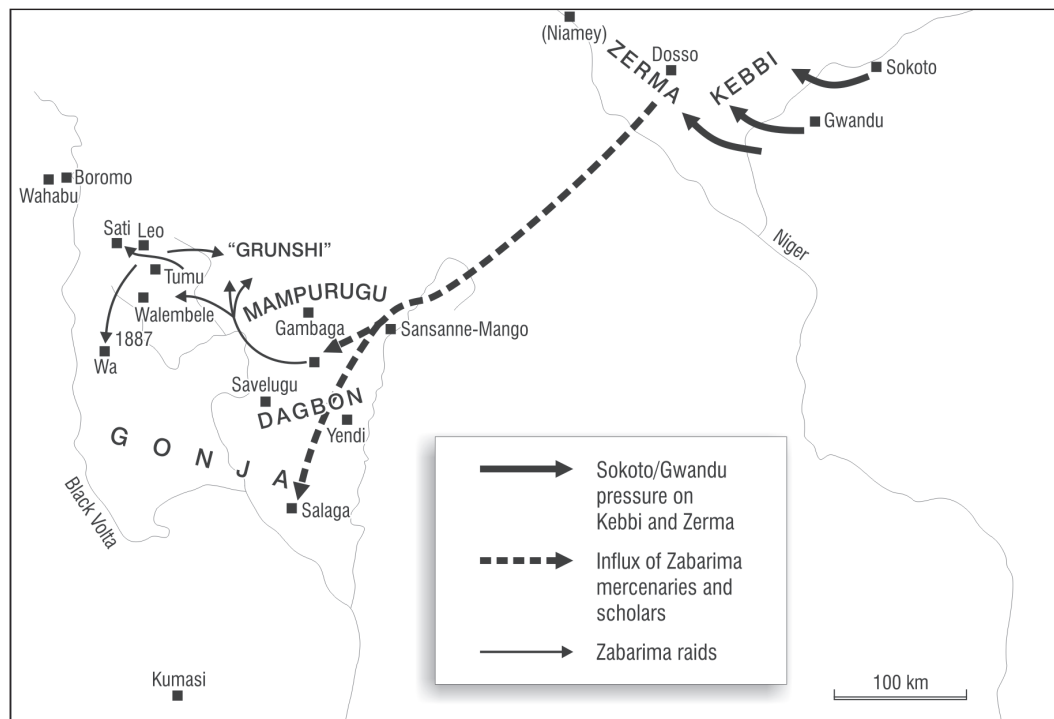
<sup>387</sup> On Rabih, see Adeleye 1970a and Adeleye 1970b.

<sup>388</sup> Holden 1965, 60–61; Wilks 1989, 108.

<sup>389</sup> Pilaszewicz 1992, 19. Also Levtzion 1968, 151–152.

<sup>390</sup> Holden (1965, 61): Alfa Hano dan Tadano and Alfa Gazare dan Mahama.

<sup>391</sup> Pilaszewicz’s identifies the book, *miy dala’ilu*, as *the Dalā’il al-khairāt* (“Proofs of Excel-



**Map 10.** The Zabarima raids, ca. 1870–1887.

from the Zabarima country east of the Niger Bend.<sup>392</sup> Malam Abu further claims that Alfa Hano had joined Gazari Takūra, “[a] man who owns rice, the wanderer, man of men. Gazari, one your bow is more [efficient] than a thousand of bows.” It seems that Gazari rather than Alfa Hano was the warrior and the subsequent leader of the Zabarima, as Malam Abu in another verse further praises [Alfa<sup>393</sup>] Gazari by calling him “the elephant, the bush wizard, [...] man of men, [...] the owner of thousands of spears.”<sup>394</sup> The position of Alfa Hano in Malam Abu’s account is not clear. At first, he and Gazari seemed to have met in Salaga where Alfa Hano was “studying many prayers”. However, when he and Gazari heard the news that Adama, the ruler of Karaga (Karaga Na Adama), was about to wage war on the ‘Gurunsi’ [‘Grunshi’], Alfa Hano and Gazari decided to join the warband. In Karaga, they were joined by the leaders of the local Zabarima community. In Karaga, too, they found one Malam Alabira who was the imam of the Zabarima community in the

lence”) of the fifteenth-century Al-Jazūlī (Pilaszewicz 1992, 108 fn 193).

<sup>392</sup> Holden 1965, 61; Wilks 1989, 103; Pilaszewicz 1992, 20. Local tradition even says that Alfa Hano and Alfa Gazari had made the pilgrimage before they settled in Salaga.

<sup>393</sup> Interestingly, Malam Abu never uses the denomination Alfa (=‘alim) when he mentions Gazari!

<sup>394</sup> LZ/P 1992, 104, 109. The difference between Alfa Hano and Gazari was also emphasized in the *Labaarin Gurunshi*, where it was noted that Alfa Hano refused to participate in warfare or fighting. Therefore, he was given by the ruler of Gelanko[?] a mare to ride – the typical sign of a learned person. Gazari and the other Zabarima leaders, on the other hand, were given stallions – the sign of a warrior (LG/P 2000, 280).

town. This reference of Malam Abu might indicate that Alfa Hano was not yet an established scholar or acting as an imam. In another verse, Alfa Hano is not even listed among the Zabarima Muslim scholars but among the “brave men”. Instead, “their malams were: Malam Alabira, Great Imam [Baban Līmāmī of Karaga?], Malam Mumini.”<sup>395</sup>

Other accounts of the beginning of the Zabarima intrusion into the northern Voltaic Basin add some further information. A Zabarima community consisting of scholars, traders and warriors seemed to have existed at least in Karaga in Dagbon. This community included future warleaders such as Ishaka Karaga, Hama Salaga, Hama Buruntuka and Wankoi.<sup>396</sup> Two Muslim scholars belonged to this community, namely Malam Alabira, who himself “was a Kano man” (perhaps even a Hausa?) and ‘Great Imam’ who was “a man of Karaga” (perhaps even Dagbamba?).<sup>397</sup> While Alfa Hano was studying in Salaga, a band of his countrymen, presumably horse traders, arrived in Dagbon during the reign of Ya Na Abdullahi (Abdulai, ca. 1849–1876).<sup>398</sup> They were persuaded by the ruler of Dagbon to assist their host in obtaining captives to pay the tribute which Dagbon owed to the Asantehene.<sup>399</sup> The Zabarima band started to raid the Grunshi but soon severed its links with Dagbon and established a stronghold in the Grunshi country.<sup>400</sup> According to Wilks, Alfa Hano joined the band at that point, according the Zabarima warband thereafter a certain religious legitimacy. Wilks, however, doubts whether the Zabarima campaigns were ever perceived as *jihad*.<sup>401</sup>

<sup>395</sup> LZ/P 1992, 108–109; Holden 1965, 63. A different interpretation of Alfa Hano is revealed by Wilks’ informants in Wa. According to his informant, Muhammad b. Abbas, who was born in the Zabarima base at Kassena in 1878, Alfa Hano originally came to trade and only later called for *jihad*. Alfa Hano was joined by a scholar from Katsina, Malam Ladan, who had also come to Gonja as a trader. Malam Ladan called one ‘Abbas b. Ibrahim [the father of Wilks’ informant], who was a man from Kano resident in Wa to join the Zabarima ‘to make prayers for them’ (Wilks 1989, 113).

<sup>396</sup> See Holden 1965, 61–63 for a list of the early Zabarima leaders.

<sup>397</sup> LZ/P 1992, 108. Holden (1965, 63) assumes that Baba Limam was *imam juma* or Friday Imam.

<sup>398</sup> Wilks 1989, 103; Pilaszewicz 1992, 19. According to the *Laabaran Gurunshi*, the first Zabarima to arrive in Karaga was one Hama and his son Ishaka (Karaga). These Zabarima were called upon to participate in the slave raids of Karaga-Na Adama against the ‘Grunshi’. Alfa Hano, Gazari and Babatu as well as Garanke, Musa Himma and Takku Buba are said to have belonged to a group of Zabarima horse traders who arrived at Karaga when Ishaka was the leader of the Zabarima community there. After having traded their horses for slaves, the newcomers went to Salaga where they sold the slaves. Thereafter, the group returned to Dagbon, at first settling in different places, but joining together again when a combined raid of Karaga, Gelanko and Yendi against the ‘Grunshi’ was launched. LG/P 2000, 279–280.

<sup>399</sup> According to Tamakloe (1931b, 272), little had been done to meet the payment of the slave tribute to Asante during the previous rulers. According to his version, Ya Na Abdullahi was forced to resume the slave tribute by the Asante representative in Yendi, who threatened with the destruction of the capital if the slave tribute was not fulfilled. Three different rulers are mentioned by Tamakloe of having organized the slave raids: the Ya Na himself, the Karaga Na and the Kumbungu Na.

<sup>400</sup> Also LG/P 2000, 281–283.

<sup>401</sup> Wilks 1989, 103.

When Alfa Hano died in or about 1870,<sup>402</sup> Gazari (Alfa Gazari dan Mahama from Kara) was chosen by the ‘council of the community’ as the new leader.<sup>403</sup> At the beginning of his leadership, the Zabarima were attacked and defeated by troops of Na Savelugu. “Gazari ran away,” Malam Abu declared, and so did his community. In Sati, they found shelter with Mūsā [of] Sati, a local Muslim scholar whose community was also in the process of enlarging its territory. Together with Mūsā Sati’s troops, the Zabarima were able to inflict a humiliating defeat upon the Savelugu army and chased them back to Dagbon.<sup>404</sup> Gazari also made contacts with Al-Hājj Mahmūd Karantaw who was a renowned scholar.<sup>405</sup> Before he had left for Mecca, he was known to follow the Suwarian tradition, but when he returned from his pilgrimage, he embraced a militant ideology and made a call for *jihād*.<sup>406</sup> Interestingly, he further seems to have abandoned his affiliation with the Tijaniyya and joined the Qadiriyya.<sup>407</sup> Be that as it may, Gazari, Mūsā Sati and Al-Hājj Mahmūd formed an alliance. Al-Hājj Mahmūd served as the spiritual leader and gave four amulets to Mūsā Sati and three to Gazari.<sup>408</sup>

As noted above, the affiliation of Alfa Hano and Alfa Gazari with the Zabarima warlords gave the community a certain religious legitimacy. The alliance with Al-Hājj Mahmūd further underlined the religious features of Zabarima activities. Although there perhaps never was an outspoken desire to refer to their raids as *jihād*<sup>409</sup>, the activities of the three Muslim leaders were at this time solely directed against non-Muslim societies. None of them propagated an accommodationalist approach towards non-Muslims but instead, a rejectionalist one. While Al-Hājj

<sup>402</sup> Holden 1965, 66. Levtzion (1968, 153) puts the death of Alfa Hano in ca. 1874.

<sup>403</sup> LZ/P 1992, 110.

<sup>404</sup> LG/P 2000, 285–287; Levtzion 1968, 152.

<sup>405</sup> Holden 1965, 67–68. Al-Hājj Mahmūd of Wahabu is said to have converted Mūsā Sati (Levtzion 1968, 154). According to Holden (1965, 71), Al-Hājj Mahmūd’s father was a Marka scholar from Jenne who had settled in the area in 1790. After the arrival of more Markas from Jenne, whom, it is claimed, Al-Hājj Mahmūd had invited in about 1840, he launched his *jihād*.

<sup>406</sup> ALA IV, 2003, 557: reference to an account of the *jihād* of Al-Hājj Mahmūd b. Muhammad Karantaw of Wahabu namely *Ikhtilāf rijālāt* by Muhammad Fodi Mori known as al-Hājj Marhabā (1896–1981). Levtzion (1968, 150) suggests that he might have been influenced by the *jihād* of Seku Ahmadu in Masina, but one could also argue that he could as well have taken up the example of Al-Hājj ‘Umar Tal.

<sup>407</sup> Wilks 1989, 101–102; ALA IV, 2003, 579. Al-Hājj Mahmūd succeeded in creating a small Muslim polity based upon Wahabu (Wahaba ‘Ilah), Boromo (Dar al-Salam), Koho and Nanu in present-day Burkina Faso. In fact, as Levtzion suggests, one could identify Al-Hājj Mahmūd’s polity as a Wangara state since most of the inhabitants of the settlements were Muslims of Mande (Wangara) origin – Boromo was inhabited by Yarse-Mossi and some Dagara-Dyula, Wahabu by Marka-Dafing, and Koho by Dagara-Dyula or Kantosi (Levtzion 1968, 149–150).

<sup>408</sup> LZ/P 1992, 111. Some times later [Malam Abu does not say when] Al-Hājj Mahmūd’s troops were defeated in an attempt to conquer the Kayoro people, which caused Gazari to launch an attack on the Kayoro and defeat them (LZ/P 1992, 102–103). According to Levtzion (1968, 149, 154), Al-Hājj Mahmūd’s nephew Mukhtār Karantaw (Karamoro Mukhtār) continued to cooperate with the Zabarima and conducted a number of joint campaigns with them.

<sup>409</sup> Although at least one of Wilks’ informants in Wa, Muhammad b. ‘Abbas, says that at least Alfa Hano called for *jihād* (Wilks 1989, 113).

Mahmūd and perhaps also Mūsā Sati had a vision of the forceful propagation of Islam – conquering the country and building mosques in every village and town – the Zabarima leaders do not seem to have embraced such a policy.<sup>410</sup> On the other hand, at least Alfa Hano was seen by other Muslim communities as a potentially valuable ally. For example, the Imam of Wa (Wa Limam), Siddīq b. Mūsā, opted for cooperation with Alfa Hano and was in contact with him,<sup>411</sup> whereas one Malam Idris from Wa even joined him. Initially, the Kantonsi (Grunshi) Muslims of Wa followed Malam Idris with a hundred guns, and the Wa Na sent 57 guns and 23 horses to Alfa Hano. However, as Wilks has noted, the support of some groups in Wa for the Zabarima must be interpreted as an attempt to join the latter in their slave raids, not in a joint attempt to establish a large Muslim territory.<sup>412</sup> Al-Hājj Mahmūd Karantaw also entered into an alliance with Babatu, the Zabarima leader who followed Alfa Gazari.<sup>413</sup>

Whereas Zabarima political and military activities little resembled those of a *jihad* and the establishment of an Islamic state, the internal structure of the Zabarima community came close to that of a Muslim one. One obvious factor was that the community was led by Muslims: most, if not all, of the warleaders were Muslims or at least called themselves such. Furthermore, the imams held a rather high position in the Zabarima war camp and seemed to have formed a separate council which all three leaders, Alfa Hano, Gazari and Babatu, used to consult before waging war. Their task was to prepare the leader spiritually [?] for a military engagement or raid and to decide on the appropriate date for an attack. In his turn, the ruler would remunerate the imams openhandedly for the services they provided. On one occasion, when Gazari was planning to attack a town called Zabere, he summoned his malams – Malam Alabira, Malam Baba and ‘Great Imam’ – and asked them to prepare him for the war.<sup>414</sup> Gazari gave them “one thousand and five hundred [cattle or kola nuts? – Malam Abu does not say]” after which they agreed and told him the propitious day for the attack.<sup>415</sup> On another occasion, the council of the imams was split and disputed the timing for an attack on the Kipirsi people. The quarrel proved fateful – Gazari was killed.<sup>416</sup> According to Wilks, this occurred in about 1878.<sup>417</sup>

<sup>410</sup> After the establishment of their base in the ‘Grunshi’ country, the Zabarima allied themselves with local Isala groups. At first, the Zabarima were called to fight in the cause of local Isala chiefs, such as those of Dolbizan and Nebiewale, at other times they were called to intervene in disputes among the Isala (Levtzion 1968, 153).

<sup>411</sup> Holden 1965, 66.

<sup>412</sup> Levtzion 1968, 155; Wilks 1989, 103, 105.

<sup>413</sup> Holden 1965, 72.

<sup>414</sup> Other malams who belonged to the council were Malam Mumini and Malam Sani, who was said to be a man from Kano (LZ/P 1992, 102, 106).

<sup>415</sup> LZ/P 1992, 105. According to Malam Abu’s account, Gazari also consulted the council of the Muslim scholars before the attacks on Parata, Kayoro, Zabere and Zurutumī as well as on the Kayoro people and the Gumi country (LZ/P 1992, 102–106).

<sup>416</sup> LZ/P 1992, 106–107.

<sup>417</sup> Wilks 1989, 106.

The Muslim scholars also intervened and mediated in internal disputes. On an occasion during Babatu's rule, when Babatu quarrelled with his younger brother Sulaimanu, Malam Mumini calmed their anger. On another, 'Great Imam' separated the disputing Hamā Kilaini and Hamā Gazari. When Babatu was furious about Ishaqa Karaga's action in Koumborogo (he had taken away 20 loads of cowries which had been sent to Babatu), Malam Mahama Bayoribi, who was Babatu's *malam*, calmed the ruler's anger.<sup>418</sup>

A third example of the Islamic character of the Zabarima community was the way in which Gazari's death was handled. He was buried at Dio, where a house was built over his grave. It seems as if his tomb was meant to become the site of a memorial,<sup>419</sup> similar to the tombs of 'holy men' elsewhere in the Muslim world. Thereafter, the Zabarima returned to their stronghold at Kassena, where they distributed alms in accordance to Muslim funerary traditions.<sup>420</sup>

After the death of Gazari, a new leader had to be chosen. Again, the council of the malams held a crucial position: "[The followers of Gazari] gathered the community of the Zabarima people and held a council on the matter of chieftaincy. Their malams said: Babatu is a [new] ruler." All the Zabarima war leaders seemed to have acknowledged the decision of the malams and thus Babatu dan Isa was chosen. Like Gazari, Babatu was hailed by Malam Abu as a powerful man: "owner of beans cooked with flour and of drinking water. Babatu, there is none like you. Babatu, a European of black people."<sup>421</sup>

After his election, Babatu summoned his malams and presented them his plans for future activities. His speech – at least in Malam Abu's presentation – reads like an outline of an ambitious, grand plan:

Malams, help me to get possession of the Gurunsi country [of its] eastern part. Help me to get possession of [its] western part. Help me to get possession of what is on the right hand side. Help me to get possession of what is on the left hand side.<sup>422</sup>

As during Gazari's rule, the decision and the prayers of the imams' council was crucial, and according to Malam Abu, the malams were quite aware of their position and influence:

His malams assembled, held a council and said he should give [them] one hundred head of cattle, one hundred head of sheep, one hundred goats, one million and one thousand [cowries?] and one hundred slaves. This is what Babatu offered them. The malams prepared him for the war and helped him to get possession of the world. They helped him to get possession of the Gurunsi country.<sup>423</sup>

<sup>418</sup> LZ/P 1992, 95–96.

<sup>419</sup> Tamakloe 1931, 48. The section on the Zabarima is missing in Tamakloe 1931b!

<sup>420</sup> LZ/P 1992, 107.

<sup>421</sup> LZ/P 1992, 107.

<sup>422</sup> LZ/P 1992, 72.

<sup>423</sup> LZ/P 1992, 72.



Like Gazari, Babatu would also summon his imams and malams to consult them before confronting his enemies or launching an attack.<sup>424</sup> According to Malam Abu, the following scholars belonged to Babatu's council of scholars: Malam Alabira, Great Imam (Babban Limani) and Malam Waki.<sup>425</sup>

Babatu's character and position is somewhat puzzling. Malam Abu, in his account, usually refers to him as Amir [*amir*] Babatu, i.e., indicating that he was a Muslim ruler but not necessarily a Muslim scholar. However, on one occasion, Malam Abu refers to Babatu as Malam Babatu, indicating that Babatu was also regarded as a Muslim scholar.<sup>426</sup> Perhaps this was the case during the early phase of the Zabarima community when he held the position of one of the Zabarima leaders and, together with Gazari, belonged to Alfa Hano's council.<sup>427</sup> Malam Abu relates a story when Malam Babatu successfully intervened and separated two disputing parties, namely the Hausa [Muslim] community of Kassena and the Zabarima warlord Tuni Fikidubu.<sup>428</sup>

Malam Abu's account, at least, indicates that Babatu certainly wanted to behave as a Muslim ruler should. Being Muslims themselves, the Zabarima war leaders were describing their wars against non-Muslim societies as 'rightful wars', although perhaps not as *jihad*. However, a problematic situation arose when they entered a locality that was ruled by a Muslim ruler or where its population were Muslims. This was the case with Walembele, a Sisala town whose population had converted to Islam earlier during the nineteenth century.<sup>429</sup> The people of Walembele approached Babatu after he had conquered Sakulo, another Sisala town, and brought him a lot of gifts. The outcome was a peaceful arrangement: Walembele – "having a truthful ruler as well as truthful Muslims" – was entrusted to the Tuni Fikidubu.<sup>430</sup>

Although a clash between Muslims was avoided at Walembele, a few years later Babatu was to break religious and ethical codes when he started to wage war against Mūsā [of] Sati. As noted above, the Zabarima leader Gazari had even formed an alliance with Mūsā Sati and at least on one occasion, the two forces cooperated when they launched a joined attack on the Koroboro people.<sup>431</sup> However, after Gazari died, Babatu "put an end to all the promises," an act which Malam Abu heavily criticized: "Babatu, the wicked one, Babatu, the ruler who destroys the world."<sup>432</sup> In

<sup>424</sup> LZ/P 1992, 75.

<sup>425</sup> LZ/P 1992, 76.

<sup>426</sup> The *Labaarin Gurunshi* (Hausa version) never refers to Babatu as *malam* or *amir*!

<sup>427</sup> LZ/P 1992, 109. Other members of Alfa Hano's war council were Ishaqa Karaga, Hama Zuma, Wankoi, Hama Salaga, Mai Gizo, Hama Buruntaka and Tuni Fikidubu. When Gazari was the Zabarima leader, Babatu held the position of *galadima*. During his own leadership, Ishaqa Karaga became *galadima* (LZ/P 1992, 94, 97; LG/P 2000, 288–289).

<sup>428</sup> LZ/P 1992, 98. The leader of the Hausa community in Kassena, Isma'ila, was another member of Gazari's war council (LZ/P 1992, 103).

<sup>429</sup> Holden 1965, 71; Levtzion 1968, 155.

<sup>430</sup> LZ/P 1992, 73.

<sup>431</sup> LZ/P 1992, 104; Holden 1965, 69.

<sup>432</sup> LZ/P 1992, 97.

fact, Babatu and Mūsā Sati had already quarrelled during Gazari's lifetime when both of them wanted to take possession of a town called Kuzamma. At that time, Gazari was able to intervene, but the relationship between the Zabarima and Mūsā Sati started to become strained.<sup>433</sup> When Babatu was in Sabuyi (present-day southern Burkina Faso), Mūsā Sati sent one Malam Amīru of Koalaga to salute Babatu, but the Zabarima leader required that Mūsā Sati ransom his town. When Mūsā Sati replied through his envoy that he and Gazari had made an agreement, Babatu replied: "There is no treaty save the gun." What followed was a one-year [Holden: almost two year] struggle before Babatu defeated and killed Mūsā. Thereafter, Sati was made into his new stronghold. Although Babatu had strengthened his control of the area, he had suffered a great loss of prestige for having attacked (and killed) a Muslim ruler, and, even worse, having broken a treaty between two Muslim rulers.<sup>434</sup> But worse was to come.

In about 1887, Babatu launched an attack on Wa which culminated in the battle of Nasa and the capture of the Muslim cities of Wa, Nasa and Visi.<sup>435</sup> Various reasons have been put forward for the rupture of the earlier relations between the Zabarima and the Wala state. According to Tamakloe, Babatu and the Wala prince Bazori had a disagreement whilst on a joint expedition against the Dagarti. In addition, the Wa Na was accused of refusing to hand over Dagaba refugees and the Wa people of having attacked a Zabarima emissary to Wa.<sup>436</sup> Malam Abu accused the Wa chiefs and malams of talking peace while preparing for war against Babatu.<sup>437</sup> Holden further argues that Babatu's decision can also be seen as a straightforward desire for territorial aggrandizement.<sup>438</sup>

Be that as it may, the outcome of the Zabarima attack was a disaster for the Wala state. The Wala army fled, the Wa Na committed suicide, Wa was taken, its mosque was burned down and its leading Muslims were executed for treachery; Nasa was pillaged, its mosque destroyed and the town never regained its earlier position.<sup>439</sup> The area was put under military occupation for over a year. As with earlier Zabarima attacks and occupations, the effect was the loss of a large amount of people and property.<sup>440</sup> The attack against Wa also led to a deterioration of Babatu's relationship with Walembele, whose ruler refused to send men for the campaign. At first, Walembele had to pay a ransom of humans to be sold into slavery, which was paid, but when Babatu demanded another 500 men, Walembele refused. Faced with an attack by Babatu, the leading families in Walembele, Muslim and non-

<sup>433</sup> LZ/P 1992, 97.

<sup>434</sup> LZ/P 1992, 82; Holden 1965, 75; Levtzion 1968, 154–155.

<sup>435</sup> Wilks 1989, 107–108.

<sup>436</sup> Tamakloe 1931a, 50–51; Levtzion 1968, 155.

<sup>437</sup> LZ/P 1992, 85.

<sup>438</sup> Holden 1965, 76.

<sup>439</sup> Wilks 1989, 107; Maier 1996, 328.

<sup>440</sup> Holden 1965, 76–77; Wilks 1989, 106–108, 116; Maier 1996, 328.

Muslim, fled to Kundugu where they remained until Babatu's reign was ended by the European imperial powers.<sup>441</sup>

Babatu's control of the north-western Voltaic Basin reached its peak at the beginning of the 1890s. However, internal friction as well as external pressure resulted in the collapse of his rule during the same decade. Babatu's unsuccessful attempt to give his 'predatory' state a rudimentary administrative structure by imposing (new) taxes on 'Grunshi' towns and villages which had long accepted his authority led to an open revolt in ca. 1893/94. The leader of the revolt was a Builsa chief, Amariya,<sup>442</sup> who was supported by the Awuna, Dagarti, Isala and Kassena. Amariya was even assisted by two Muslim scholars of Wa, Alhaji Nuhu and Alhaji Abu.<sup>443</sup> The only groups remaining loyal to the Zabarima were the southern Isala and most of the Builsa with the Wala taking an ambivalent position. The situation in the northwestern Voltaic Basin was further complicated in 1895 with the advent of a large contingent of Samorian troops (*sofa*) under the command of Samori Ture's son and commander, Sarantye Mori. For a time both Amaria and Babatu tried to ally themselves with the *sofas* and Sarantye Mori, but eventually Babatu decided to reject Samori's offer of enlisting him and his troops into the Samorian army.<sup>444</sup>

The advent of British and French colonial troops in 1896–1897 further confused the situation in the north. Whereas the French were about to enlarge their sphere of control in West Africa, the British seemed to have been worried about both the French expansion and the unsettled state of affairs in the Asante hinterland.<sup>445</sup> British interests in the region were based on Ekem Ferguson's treaties with Buna and the Lobis, Wa and the Dagartis, Mamprussi [Mampurugu], Mossi and the Chakosi [Chokosi] of 1894.<sup>446</sup> Babatu and the Zabarima state was already a problem for the British, and the advent of Samori's troops made the situation even more complicated from a British perspective. The French, again, had signed a treaty with Amariya, and were in any case the sworn arch enemies of Samori. Babatu, who tried to ally himself with the British, was the loser in this new situation. The British made treaties with Tumu, Dolbizan, Gworu, Sankana and Achillon, all of whom requested protection against the Zabarima. Thereafter, the British commander, Lieutenant Henderson, moved against Babatu and ordered him out of 'Grunshi' and Dagarti. Babatu, who was defeated by the French and their 'Gurunsi' allies at Yaro and Kajanga, tried at first to accede to British demands and promised to give military assistance to the British if and when they would attack Samori. However, Babatu's opportunities

<sup>441</sup> Holden 1965, 77; Levtzion 1968, 157.

<sup>442</sup> Amariya was a Builsa from Kanjaga who had been captured by the Zabarima as a young boy. He grew up in the service of Gazari to become a commander of the Zabarima army and also converted to Islam. (Levtzion 1968, 157)

<sup>443</sup> Wilks 1989, 118, 126.

<sup>444</sup> Holden 1965, 78–81.

<sup>445</sup> See further Goody 1998.

<sup>446</sup> Arhin 1974a, xviii, 108–114.

for manoeuvring in the northwestern Voltaic Basin were lost: the foundations of his state had crumbled. Facing difficulties in finding provisions for his troops, he continued to raid villages which had now been put under British and French protection, with the effect that the British troops launched an attack against him. Babatu fled to Dagbon with a few hundred horsemen, was routed several times by a British expeditionary force and their Mossi mercenaries, and eventually ended up in Yendi at the moment when Dagbon was facing increased pressure from German colonial troops. In 1899, the German colonial troops disarmed the Zabarima and forced them to settle peacefully in Yendi. Babatu died about two years later and was buried in Yendi.<sup>447</sup>

The formation of the Zabarima polity in the north-western Voltaic Basin was, in the end, an aborted attempt to create what might be defined as a Muslim state. However, the definition of the Zabarima polity as a being a Muslim one is somewhat problematic, especially if it is compared to the states that had been established in the Sudan savannah during the era of Muslim militant reform movements, for example, the Sokoto and the Hamdallahi Caliphates. In both of these states, the position of the Muslim scholars was crucial and both of them had been created after a successful military campaign against the ruling establishment. Muslim scholars were the core elements in the military movements and their political programme was based on the call for renewal and revival of Islam and Islamic dogma. According to the leading religious-cum-political Muslim scholars of this movement, Usman dan Fodio, Abdullahi dan Fodio and Muhammad Bello in Hausaland and Seku Ahmadu in Massina, the political as well as economic structures of their states were to be Islamic whereas the ‘mixing’ of local traditions and Islamic norms was forbidden.<sup>448</sup>

The Zabarima case was different. Although it seems as if some, if not all, of the Zabarima leaders were Muslims, it is questionable whether the motive of the Zabarima was to create a Muslim state. None of the Zabarima leaders, Alfa Hano, Alfa Gazari or Babatu, ever seemed to have felt the need to give an Islamic explanation for their activities. While Usman dan Fodio wrote several treatises about the conditions for ‘just’ and ‘unjust’ rule, about the need for the rulers to obey to Islamic Law, about the rightfulness, if not obligation, to reject oppressive (i.e., non-Muslim) rulers and the ultimate consequence of a *jihad* against these rulers, none of the Zabarima scholars seems to have produced such treatises.<sup>449</sup> Furthermore, as noted above, none of the expeditions of the Zabarima seems to have been launched or termed as a *jihad* against the infidels, a call which, from a Muslim perspective, would have made the Zabarima cause a Muslim one.

<sup>447</sup> Holden 1965, 82–85; Levtzion 1968, 157; Goody 1998, 231–233. On the partition and conquest of Dagbon, see Chapter III.

<sup>448</sup> Weiss 2003a, Chapters IV and V.

<sup>449</sup> Although it is possible that such texts have not yet been found.



**Plate 8.** “Salaga market”, illustration from Binger 1892, 96/97.

However, from an internal perspective, the Zabarima polity was a Muslim one. It can be argued that the rudimentary political and administrative structures of the polity were based on an Islamic foundation. The core of the state was the cosmopolitan Muslim community, including the Zabarima and other Muslims such as Hausa, FulBe and Wangara. Within this community, the process of Islamization had affected not only individuals but also the political and religious structures of the community. The council of Muslim scholars was the political manifestation of the Islamic order in addition to the fact that Islamic Law – presumably – was applied within the community and in connection with other Muslim political entities. Thus Babatu, tried to give an Islamic explanation for his attacks against the Muslim strongholds of Sati and Wa: its scholars and rulers had made compromises with non-Muslims and therefore could be regarded as backsliders. However, Islamic norms seemed only to have been applied when dealing with other Muslims. ‘Tactical’ alliances with non-Muslim rulers, which had been the case during the time of Alfa Hano and Alfa Gazari, seemed to have been as important.

The Islamic nature of the Zabarima polity can also be identified in their dealings with their allies and subjugated groups. Those groups and villages that were willing to submit to Zabarima rule – either voluntarily or not – had to pay tribute in slaves and cattle and enter the service of the Zabarima. Consequently, those who paid were not attacked but were seen as allies. Following an Islamic interpretation, this tribute was *jizya*, i.e, a kind of poll-tax that non-Muslims had to pay to a Muslim ruler for their protection. By paying *jizya*, non-Muslim groups were allowed to keep

their religion and received a kind of internal autonomy. Therefore, from an internal administrative perspective, the Zabarima polity was a Muslim state. Whether or not the Zabarima and their Muslim scholars regarded themselves as propagators of an idea of militant Islam is, on the other hand, questionable. It is obvious that some individuals regarded conversion to Islam as a requirement for societal advancement in the Zabarima state. Additionally, local recruits to the Zabarima troops learned to pray, but Levtzion doubts if any of the others apart from the more important military commanders ever became ‘real’ Muslims<sup>450</sup>. Be that as it may, at least among the Isala, the closest allies of the Zabarima, the end of the nineteenth century marked the beginning of the spread of Islam with Muslim settlements emerging in Chalho, Santie, Gyigyen, Sakalo, Dolbezan, Halembalea, Katoa and Kosale.<sup>451</sup>

Muslim or not, from the perspective of the local population in the northwestern Voltaic Basin, the Zabarima polity was just another ‘predatory’ state. Slave raiding and the trade in slaves was the economic foundation of the state,<sup>452</sup> and the promise of capturing slaves in the raids served as an important draw for individuals to join the Zabarima. Not only Muslim slave raiders joined the ranks of Alfa Gazari’s and Babatu’s troops but also local ‘Grunshis’, some voluntarily, others by force. At the height of their might, the bulk of the Zabarima forces consisted of local ‘Grunshi’ people. With their troops, the Zabarima controlled ‘Grunshi’ and referred to themselves as masters of ‘Grunshi’. However, for those villages not allied to the Zabarima, their control was nothing more than a continuous series of raids and disturbances, bringing devastation, depopulation and loss of property – and, understandably, a hostile attitude towards Muslims.<sup>453</sup>

#### 4. MUSLIMS AND RULERS IN THE LATE PRECOLONIAL VOLTAIC BASIN

Muslim communities had emerged all over the Voltaic Basin at the end of the nineteenth century. However, the spread of these communities was uneven. Most of the communities were located in the various chiefdoms and stratified societies in the region; few Muslims had settled among ‘stateless’ societies. Almost all of these communities can be described as autonomous enclaves: both the Wangara and later, the Hausa trader-cum-scholar settlements were ‘stranger communities’ which made few attempts to mix with the rest of the local population. Only their leaders, usually the imam and other scholars, served as a link between the Muslim community and the local court. In most cases, the relationship between the Muslim leaders and the local ruler and his court was a reciprocal one: the scholars performed religious

<sup>450</sup> Levtzion 1968, 157.

<sup>451</sup> Rattray II, 1932, 473.

<sup>452</sup> Johnson 1986, 34.

<sup>453</sup> Der 1998, 20–23; Howell 1998, 43–51.

services for the ruler and the state in exchange for the community's cultural and religious autonomy.

The degree of Muslim influence was uneven. Whereas there is no doubt that some local individuals turned to Islam and became Muslims, Islamization as a societal process, i.e., the transformation of a society or a state into an Islamic one, happened only in a few places. The most obvious case was Asante where Islamization was effectively blocked although the Muslim community and especially the scholars were called several times by the Asantehene to perform valuable ritual services. However, the conversion of a ruler or a member of the Asante state hierarchy was unthinkable. In the northern savannah states, Dagbon, Mampurugu, Gonja and Wa – but obviously not Nanun – the situation was a different one. Especially during the early eighteenth century, Muslim influence peaked in both Dagbon and Mampurugu but, as previously stated, with clear differences between these two states. While the ruler of Dagbon, Na Zangina, converted to Islam, the ruler of Mampurugu, Na Atabia, did not. Yet, it has to be underlined that Na Zangina's conversion did not result in the Islamization of Dagbon. Most, if not all, members of the ruling estate in Dagbon never became Muslims, not to speak about the commoners. The situation had not changed much one century later. Although it is very likely that the number of Muslims in the northern kingdoms had increased due to the expansion of long-distance trade and the influx of Muslim traders and scholars, none of the rulers or their courts are described in the local texts as being Muslim.

In all of the savannah states the position of the Muslim clerics was a much more influential one than it was in Asante. Though the leader of the Muslims in Kumasi was a lesser member of the court of the Asantehene, a much more elaborate Muslim court hierarchy evolved, especially in Dagbon and Wa, and to a lesser extent in Mampurugu and Gonja (but not in Nanun).<sup>454</sup> Goody describes the Muslims in Gonja as the 'third estate', which highlights their position as being between the ruling class and the 'ordinary' commoners.<sup>455</sup> Skalnik's presentation of the Muslim 'stranger communities' in the southern and northern Mossi states is analogous with Goody's on Gonja: the Muslim community was separate from the local society but their leaders were included in the court hierarchy.<sup>456</sup> Nevertheless, as Goody already stated, no Muslim could ever become a chief,<sup>457</sup> and it seems that members of the ruling class, who converted to Islam, were excluded from being possible candidates to succeed a ruler or to be given a political position. On the other hand, as Davis has noted for Mampurugu and Ferguson for Dagbon, close ties were to evolve between the local ruling house, some courtiers and the leading Muslim scholars.<sup>458</sup> In Dagbon, the Ya Na had his personal Muslim scholar, the Ya Na Imam (Ya Na

<sup>454</sup> Wilks 1965, 91.

<sup>455</sup> Goody 1967.

<sup>456</sup> Skalnik 1978.

<sup>457</sup> Goody 1966a, 20.

<sup>458</sup> Ferguson 1972; Davis 1986, 238.

Liman), who prayed for him and the prosperity of the state, and other high-ranking members of the Dagbon State Council also had personal Muslim scholars, such as the Zohe Na (the Zohe Limam) as did the Divisional Chiefs, whose court structure mirrored that of the Ya Na in Yendi.<sup>459</sup> In Mampurugu, Muslim clerical families established marriage ties with the *nabisi*, the ‘princes’ or sons of former rulers, and became involved in the political affairs of the court. Muslim families supported different gates: a Hausa family were supporters of Mahama Na Kurugu (ca. 1750) and his descendants and supplied imams for these rulers whereas the Samsu family aligned themselves to Sulayman Na Pisi (ca. 1755–1765) and his gate.<sup>460</sup>

The close relationship between the Muslim clerics and the local rulers, especially in Dagbon and Mampurugu, was emphasized by their ritual court duties. A key symbolic and religious act was performed by Muslims during the funeral of a deceased ruler and in the installation ritual of a new ruler. In Mampurugu, it was the duty of the *mangoshi* to wash the corpse of the deceased ruler while the imam said prayers and the Chief Butcher skinned the slaughtered animal to prepare the meal for the deceased.<sup>461</sup> In Dagbon, the close relationship between the Muslims and the ruler was highlighted during the installation ritual of a new ruler. At the end of the ceremonies, the bond between the Ya Na and his Muslims was reinforced and the position of the Muslim scholars as religious specialists is highlighted, as described by Rattray:

The Na is handed the Koran and says: ‘To-day I have reached the skin of my grandfather and father. May God save me from war. May God save me from epidemics. May God give rain, and everything else in his heart.’ He then hands back the Qur’ān to the Muslims, and, after a prayer, the cakes are divided among them.<sup>462</sup>

Ritual services by the Muslim clerics involved economic transactions. Muslim specialists would be given presents by rulers in exchange for their services. A typical story of reciprocal exchange was related by Malam al-Hasan in his text ‘The Origin of Gambaga’, when a certain Malam Gado was asked to find a suitable location for a new market and to make a charm, the *Kafin Gari* (“Eye of the Town”), to protect the place from the ravages of war. For these services, the local people bestowed upon him two hundred cattle, a thousand goats and a thousand sheep.<sup>463</sup> In another text of Malam al-Hasan, he recalls a situation when a certain Muhammad Gamaji,

<sup>459</sup> Blair 1932, Appendix J. List of Tribunals of the Dagbon State. Muslim scholars, i.e., imams (*limams*), are listed as members of the court in Sabzugu, Nantong, Tolon, Kumbungu, Karaga, Savelugu, Sambu and Nakpali. Other Muslim officeholders in the state council of Yendi were the Waligu Na and the Zemole (Ferguson 1972, 192, 195).

<sup>460</sup> Davis 1986, 239–241.

<sup>461</sup> Davis 1986, 237. For the role of Muslims during the funeral rites in Dagbon, i.e., the washing of the deceased king’s body by the *yidan-Kamara* and prayers of the Muslim scholars, see Cardinall 1921a, 89, and Rattray 1932, II, 581; Levtzion 1968, 95.

<sup>462</sup> Rattray 1932, II, 586.

<sup>463</sup> HG/Withers-Gill, 8.



who was the head of the Hausa community in Yendi, was asked by Na Abdullahi to produce a powerful charm during his struggle against the Basari. For this, he was “loaded with presents” by the Ya Na.<sup>464</sup> Similar stories of gifts and payments by (non-Muslim) rulers and societies to Muslim scholars are not uncommon throughout the Sudan savannah.<sup>465</sup>

Many of the presents and transactions that involved Muslims can be termed ‘ritual reciprocity’. During the funeral of a Ya Na, meat of the second cow that was slaughtered was given to the Muslims. Another cow was given to the Muslims to slaughter after a new Na had been chosen. During the following ceremonies and rituals of installation, the malams received a great variety of gifts for reading the Quran and praying for the newly installed king: cakes, 100,000 cowries, kola nuts, and a cow. The meat and the cakes that are handed over to them during these rituals were called *sole sagam* or *sagante*.<sup>466</sup> Following a Muslim interpretation, these gifts could be termed *sadaqa*, which is not impossible as the Mampruli term *sara* (gift) is a corruption of *sadaqa*, alms.<sup>467</sup>

The performance of rituals and religious services at the court and for the well-being of both the ruler and the host society made Muslims visible and influential. However, outside the Muslim community, their position was always that of the stranger and, thus, had to be constantly renegotiated. A critical attitude of Muslim scholars towards the ruling elite for their half-hearted or lukewarm attitude towards Islam, if not outright rejection of the faith, held little promise for the success of the majority of the Muslim community, i.e., the traders. Thus, Wilks’ argument of an accommodationalist policy that most of the Wangara applied in their relationship with the non-Muslim rulers and societies, had developed until the nineteenth century as the normative strategy for how Muslims could live among non-Muslims without losing their religion. I would even claim that the approach of most of the Hausa scholars, especially before the *jihad* in Hausaland in 1804–1808, was a similar one. It seems as if the call for the ‘renewal of Islam’, i.e., orthopraxis, and the condemnation of forbidden innovations (*bida*) and the ‘mixing’ of Islam and local traditions (*urf*), which was to be connected with the militant Muslim reform movements in the Sudan savannah of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, had little effect on the Muslims in the Voltaic Basin.<sup>468</sup> Interestingly, the situation in the Voltaic Basin was rather similar to that in the Gambia River area. Here, too, the Juula established a merchant-cum-scholarly network and, as in the Voltaic Basin, the scholars (*moriya*) and the traders (*julaya*) did not mix. Some itinerant Juula traders became ‘marabouts’, i.e., Muslim specialists in the making of charms and talismans,

<sup>464</sup> HM/Withers-Gill, 11. However, during the following day when the battle continued and Muhammad Gamaji attacked the Basari, no one followed him and he was killed.

<sup>465</sup> See, for example, Tamakloe 1931b, 258 on the presents that were given to Fati Morukpe.

<sup>466</sup> Rattray 1932, II, 579–586.

<sup>467</sup> Rattray 1932, II, 463.

<sup>468</sup> Haight 1991, 451.

though this seems to have been the case mainly in societies where the penetration of Islam had been minimal and where the Islamic ritual practice (*asrar*) would be in great demand. In societies where there was a continuous contact with Muslims, one would find resident ‘marabouts’.<sup>469</sup> The analogous situation with the Voltaic Basin is striking: here, too, there was a general division between Wangara (and Hausa) families and groups that were specialists in trade, warfare and handicrafts, and distinguished scholarly families.

Orthopraxis was tied to knowledge and position and for a Muslim, in theory, should stem and reflect Islamic Law. However, in none of the precolonial states in the Voltaic Basin was *shari’a* ever introduced as state law. Although at least in Dagbon and Wa, certainly also in Mampurugu, juridical affairs within the Muslim community were handled by the Muslim scholars, in most cases with the imam acting as judge (*qadi*). This was also the case in the Muslim community in Kumasi. However, although at least the Muslim scholars at the court of the Ya Na in Yendi were consulted in legal cases, as Ferguson has convincingly demonstrated,<sup>470</sup> the application of Islamic Law and the use of Muslim scholars as judges and arbitrators at the royal court did not mean that Dagbon had become an Islamic state that applied Islamic law by the end of the nineteenth century. Though it seems evident that Islamic family law and law of contracts and transactions was at least applied in cases involving Muslims, Islamic penal law, constitutional law and laws on taxation and warfare were certainly not applied.<sup>471</sup> Thus, if Islamic Law was applied, it was only in its rudimentary and community-centred form, and did not necessarily involve the state or the local political authorities, especially as the Muslim community was culturally, legally and religiously autonomous.

The working relationship between the Muslim community and the non-Muslim ruler in the Voltaic Basin was challenged as a consequence of the militant Muslim reform movements in the Sudan savannah during the nineteenth century. The old Suwarian tradition of accommodation was questioned and came under attack from scholars that had been influenced by the Torodbe and other ‘radical’ scholars. Although only Al-Hājj Mahmūd Karantaw openly confronted local non-Muslims and launched a *jihad* to establish an Islamic polity, other scholars were at least sympathetic to the cause of ‘militant Islam’ as a means for achieving orthopraxis. Malam al-Hasan, in one of his texts, describes the internal rift among the Muslim community living among the Mossi in the northern Voltaic Basin which emerged when a certain FulBe scholar from Futa Jallon, Modibo Muhammadu, settled in

<sup>469</sup> Wright 1977, 39.

<sup>470</sup> Ferguson’s informants claim that *shari’a* was widely observed in precolonial Dagbon and that the two Muslim officers at court, the *Waligu Na* and the *Zemole*, were also asked to give their opinions in cases involving non-Muslims. Apart from dealing with civil and criminal cases, the Muslim *qadis* in Yendi were also asked to give their opinions on political cases. *Shari’a* courts continued to exist under the Germans but were abolished by the British. See further Ferguson 1972, 201–203.

<sup>471</sup> For a general discussion, see Schacht 1964.

a town called Lagu and started to preach. He soon gathered a large following and after some time, sent a messenger to the King of Bulusa, one of the subchiefs of the Mossi king, calling upon the king to follow Allah and His Prophet. Modibo Muhammadu's activities were not unlike those of similar Muslim reformers at that time: asking the ruler to convert to Islam and doing his utmost to eradicate 'pagan' customs, especially forbidding the brewing and selling of beer. Soon the situation between the ruler and the scholar deteriorated to the point that the King of Bulusa launched an attack against Modibbo Muhammadu, but was beaten back. At this point, Modibbo Muhammadu declared that he was fighting a *jihad*. The King of Mossi, Naba Kurtu, summoned all his Wangara scholars and asked for help.<sup>472</sup> Malam al-Hasan's account of his request to the Muslims gives an interesting insight into the background of the conflict:

Behold, a Mallam, a stranger, has come to us and told us to follow Allah. We have said we follow him. He has told us to abandon practices which are not good, and we have given them up. We have shewn him every respect because he is a stranger and we have honoured his companions because they are stranger-guests. Now they are returning evil to us. We have been patient because they are guests as well as Mallams. He told us Allah forbade the drinking of beer and we stopped it in our markets. Now he wishes to snatch away our Kingdom, so that Mahomedanism may overcome paganism.<sup>473</sup>

In fact, Malam al-Hasan's text is not an account of the war between Modibo Muhammadu and the King of Bulusa and the Moshi king Naba Kurtu but encapsulates the different positions that the Muslims could take when dealing with non-Muslims. With the spiritual assistance of the Wangara Muslims, for which they received ample alms,<sup>474</sup> Modibo Muhammadu was defeated, his community destroyed and he himself died after having been tortured. The fate of the Modibo Muhammadu and his community, however, was not mourned by the Wangara scholars, Malam al-Hasan explained. His mosque, and thus his community, too, was demonized as being one of treachery and not of truth. His corpse was dug out of his grave and thrown into the bush where it was eaten by hyenas. Naba Kurtu regarded this as an act of violence against his order and the customs of his people: as a malam he should be buried and his grave should not have been violated. The reply by Naba Kurtu's imam sheds light on both the conflict between the 'accommodationalists' and the 'rejecters' as well as summarizes the Suwarian position of accommodation: "the man was not a Mallam for Mallams do not fight with the heaven."<sup>475</sup>

Not always did the arrival of 'radical' scholars lead to a conflict. Scholars from the Sokoto Caliphate were most likely to follow a strict Islamic praxis, but none

<sup>472</sup> HM/Withers-Gill, 15–18.

<sup>473</sup> HM/Withers-Gill, 18.

<sup>474</sup> One hundred selected cattle, one hundred robes, one hundred horses, and a hundred slaves, in addition to clothes, fowls, grain in baskets and food of all sorts.

<sup>475</sup> HM/Withers-Gill, 19.

of the Hausa scholars who arrived in the southern Voltaic Basin are known to have propagated for a breach in the relationship between the Muslims and the rulers. Instead, much of their criticism was directed against local Muslim practices and the low standard of Muslim knowledge and learning of the local scholars. Their critique was mainly directed against those scholars who allied themselves too closely with the local rulers. However, their condemnation was articulated in the community, not in public. Hausa scholars, such as Imam ‘Umar (Alhaji Umar of Kete-Krachi) would criticize the scholar, never the ruler. This was the case in one of Imam ‘Umar’s critical poems which he wrote after the Salaga Civil War when he criticized those Muslims who backed the attacker:

But God does not answer the man who prays,  
If he is a sinner and a rebel.  
Their town resembled a corpse,  
Which a magician comes and touches  
To make his spirit return to his body – which then refuses to do so.  
They were destroyed by their tyranny,  
And buried under their own filth.<sup>476</sup>

Despite the criticism of some Muslim scholars, most of the Muslims had little interest in changing the religious and political structures in the Voltaic Basin. The interest of Muslim merchants and traders was concentrated on the safety of the markets and trade routes and in making a good profit out of their activities. As long as the inner autonomy of the Muslim communities was not questioned by the non-Muslim society, there was little need to attack local customs or to be involved in local quarrels. This was the benefit of a stranger community: the links to the host society and its order were limited, if not minimal. As merchants and traders, they knew that it was not the religion of the ruler but his ability to promote peace and stability that counted most.

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<sup>476</sup> Imam ‘Umar, *Tanbīh al-ikhwān fī dhikr al-ahzān* (‘A warning to the brethren concerning afflictions’, ca. 1894), translated in Braimah and Goody 1967, 201.