Title: “The Kano Chronicle as history.”
Author(s): M.G. Smith
The Kano Chronicle, published first in an English translation by Sir H. Richmond Palmer and nearly twenty-five years later in a Hausa translation by Dr. Rupert East and his colleagues is unique among indigenous contemporary documents on Hausa history before the Fulani jihad of 1804-1810. There are a number of king-lists for Zaria, Katsina, Kebbi, and so forth, but these rarely report events for the reigns they list, and even fewer report any development during those reigns. Such king-lists are invaluable in the absence of any other data; but they often present more puzzles than answers, more questions than information.

The Kano Chronicle differs from these royal skeletons in summarizing for each of the reigns that it reports a varying collection of pertinent incidents and information. It is preceded by an introductory and speculative sketch of the culture and composition of the autochthonous population before the advent of an immigrant group led by a legendary hero, Bagauda, who is generally believed to have been the grandson of Bayajidda, the mythical founder of the seven Hausa states, who came from the east to Daura, where he married the queen, or Magajiya, and shared her rule. On this view, Bagauda came with his host from Daura to Kano, or rather to Sheme, where he died, some nine years after the chiefs of Gano, Dab and Debbi. A generation earlier Barbushe, the priest of Tchunburburai, who lived on Dala, had foretold the arrival of strangers who would subjugate the land and its people, the clans that clustered around the rock and worshipped Tsumburburai.

From these beginnings the Chronicle traces the emergence and evolution of the chiefdom of Kano until its conquest by the followers of Shehu Usman dan Fodio in 1807 after a long contest with the last Hausa chief, Muhammad Alwali II (1781-1807).

In the absence of any comparable history of a pre-jihadic Hausa state, the Kano Chronicle is of special interest, since it records the contexts and processes by which the polity of Kano emerged, and situates its development neatly within its wider geo-historical milieu. As Kano and Katsina occupy
the most favourable geographical positions for external trade and contacts of all Hausa populations, there histories and development are of particular significance for an understanding of the cultural evolution of Hausa peoples as a whole, since the latter often learn from Kano and reap the costs or benefits of Kano’s experience at some later date. Undoubtedly the pre-jihadic pre-Fulani history of Hausaland, as well as Kano, is bound up with our assessment of the historicity of the Kano Chronicle, that is, its validity and reliability as an account of the development and composition of the Kano people during the centuries between Bagauda’s arrival and the Fulani conquest of 1807.

There are those who would prefer that the official Fulani version of Hausa history and ethnography should be the only one on the market. They should naturally try to deny or denigrate in one way or another the historicity of the Kano Chronicle, since this document relates the development of Hausa Kano before the Fulani jihad without reference to that event and its consequences. Others who prefer to see the Fulani jihad and caliphate in this region as phases of the cultural and social evolution of this section of the central Sudan, may wish to know as much as possible about the pre-jihadic organization and culture of the peoples of this area. They should therefore greet with enthusiasm the prospect of illumination by the Kano Chronicle and any others that may be found in Hausaland.

However the problem of historicity is crucial. We have to ask, to what degree do these or similar documents accurately and objectively report events and developments among these peoples before the jihad launched by Shehu Usman dan Fodio in 1804 A.D.? Understandably, given its context, the historicity of accounts relating the pre-jihadic development of the conquered Hausa people is a matter of keen political interest to them and their rulers, especially since the Shehu Usman had condemned Hausa governments as unjust and non-Islamic and the people as syncretists, to justify his jihad. It is a matter of record that the Shehu’s followers destroyed and scattered many books or texts belonging to the Hausa people during this struggle, and perhaps selectively, since numerous pre-jihadic texts on religion and law were preserved, while hardly any documents on the history of the conquered peoples escaped. The conquerors were therefore free to fill this historical vacuum with their own accounts of the peoples they had conquered, as Muhammadu Bello did early in his Infaqu’ul Maisur and ‘Abd Al Qadir b. al-Mustafa in the Raudat al-Afsar. In assessing the historicity of the Kano Chronicle we cannot ignore the political interest that attaches to the evaluation of this document. However, as scholars we are concerned exclusively with the historical value of the Chronicle as an account of the development of Kano society, culture and polity between Bagauda’s coming and the Fulani jihad. We should therefore begin with the text of the document itself.
Besides Arabic manuscripts of the *Chronicle*, we have the two translations by Palmer and East into English and Hausa respectively. The Arabic texts translated by Palmer and East differ very little in organization and context, but mainly in spelling and one or two marginal notes. For example, while Palmer’s text contains a note linking Bagauda to Bayajidda as the latter’s grandson, East’s does not. Likewise, East’s translation lacks Palmer’s footnote on the praise-names of the Madawaki, Gwoji and Kosa in Yaji’s reign (1349-85 A.D.), and another on the first Fulani Emir, Suleimanu (1807-19 A.D.).

Palmer contrasts the text he used, which was found at Sabon Gari near Katsina, with another which Lady Lugard says was found at Kano, claiming that the latter manuscript was “not complete, since only 42 kings are mentioned” while that found at Katsina “goes down to, and breaks off in, the time of Mohammed Bello, the 48th king.” East, using a text owned by Zubairu, the son of Sarkin Kano Dabo (1819-1846 A.D.) and grand-uncle of the late Emir Abdullahi Bayero, who loaned it to him, notes that that text was written (rubuta) in the reign of the Fulani Emir Muhammad Bello (1883-1892), who had the *Chronicle* copied and extended up to his reign. In like fashion in his Hausa translation East extended the *Chronicle* beyond the accession of Abdullahi Bayero (1926-1953). Evidently these successive extensions by Muhammad Bello and Rupert East illustrate the way in which the *Chronicle* may have grown, for until Muhammad Bello directed that it should be brought up to date, the text had ceased with the reign of Muhammad Alwali, the 43rd and last Hausa chief listed in the manuscript which Bello extended. Thus the text to which Lady Lugard refers ceased with Muhammad Alwali but omits one of the reigns recorded in Palmer’s text. Writing around 1867, the Alkalin Kano Muhammadu Zangi comments briefly on a copy of the *Chronicle* which he had studied, which did not then extend Alwali’s reign. In short, besides, copyists’ errors, Arabic texts of the *Kano Chronicle* may differ in marginalia, in the number of Hausa chiefs they record, to a limited degree in their contents, and in their extension beyond 1807. It is tempting to project this scholastic pattern of growth backwards into the past and to assume that the *Chronicle* was brought up to date at irregular intervals from time to time, particularly when the reigning chief so wished.

In a note on the only three Arabic texts of the *Chronicle* that he could find, Mervyn Hiskett remarks that all three were traced to a single Kano mallam whose father, “Idris, was tutor to the royal family of Kano.” East’s report that the Emir Abdullahi Bayero instructed his grand-uncle, Zubairu, the son of Ibrahim Dabo, to lend East his copy of the *Chronicle*, confirms the known scarcity of copies of the Arabic text. When Hiskett
tried to borrow manuscripts to study, all three copies that were located came from the same son of Idris, from whom Palmer got the copy he translated. It is evident, then, that Arabic texts of the Chronicle did not circulate freely in Kano, for which reason Rupert East’s Hausa translation published in 1933 was greatly appreciated.

Given the close connection of Zubairu, Idris, and the Emir Abdullahi’s Alkalin Kano Muhammadu Zangi to the Fulani rulers, and the Chronicle’s successive extensions at the requests of Mamman Bello and Abdullahi Bayero, It seems probable that at least under Fulani rule the circulation of the Kano Chronicle was rather restricted. Probably when the first Basuleibe Emir, Ibrahim Dabo, seeking to consolidate and extend his authority during the revolts that greeted his appointment, obtained the approval of Sarkin Musulmi Muhammadu Bello to revive some of the critical institutions of the Hausa state, he had already studied a copy of the Kano Chronicle as a guide.20 Perhaps in this way the manuscript first came to the notice of a Fulani Emir, and was therefore preserved for its patent political utility. Thereafter it seems that few copies of the Arabic text continued to circulate among commoners in Kano or elsewhere. For example, as shown below, Mallam Adamu Muhammad el-Arabi, who completed the first draft of his unpublished history of Kano, Al-ilan bi tarikh Kano, in 1344 A.H. (1925-6 A.D.) and its revision in 1352 A.H. (1933 A.D.) on the eve of the publication of East’s Hausa version, evidently had no idea of the Chronicle’s existence.21

While the authorship of the Chronicle remains unknown, even for those additions made in the 1880s at Muhammadu Bello’s direction, Hiskett, following Palmer, believes that the author may have been a ‘Fezzani Arab’ who may have written in a Maghribi rather than Ajami script.21 If so then none of the texts so far identified can be the original. Moreover, since the entire Chronicle appears to be written in an easy and fluent “Tripoli and Ghadamis Arabic” 22 which differs sharply from that of Nigerian authors, it seems likely that at least in its present form, from the beginning the Chronicle was written in Arabic by native Arabic speakers. Given the intimate knowledge of Kano language, society and history the text displays, its author or authors must have lived long in Kano. It is thus possible that initially and in its periodic extensions the Chronicle was drafted by scholars from the small community of Ghadames Arabs who first settled in Kano under Yakubu (A.D. 1452-1463).24 But however plausible, this is mere speculation. We neither know who the original author or authors of the Chronicle were, nor when he or they compiled the basic trunk of the present text, nor can we identify subsequent contributors or date their contributions precisely before the time of Muhammadu Bello, though clearly such data are relevant to any assessment of the document’s historical validity.
Remarking the “almost complete absence of bias or partisanship” in the Chronicle’s account of the Hausa chiefs of Kano, and its author’s deep knowledge of the Hausa spoken at Kano, Palmer suggested that “the original may perhaps have been written by some stranger from the north who settled in Kano, and collected the stories of former kings handed down by oral tradition,” but says nothing about the likely date. Writing later as if the entire text had been put together in Muhammadu Bello’s reign, Rupert East says, “We do not know who wrote this book in the reign of Muhammadu Bello, but we think that the author did not create it entirely himself. Surely he followed other and older books which we no longer have ... The reason we say this is because we know that Wangarawa mallams began to come to Kano in the reign of the chief Yaji (around A.D. 1380); they brought Islam and knowledge (but Islam had already come to Katsina some sixty years earlier.) Given this, surely we could expect to find some mallams in each country recording the histories of their chiefs.” Thus East suggests that its original author collected information from several texts in preparing the earliest version of the Chronicle, in much the same way that later contributors, including himself, prepared their additions. In his view the first written records of Kano traditions and history probably dated back to the late 14th or early 15th century, following the arrival of Wangarawa (Mandinka) scholars and Islamic missionaries at Kano, some sixty years after Islam was believed to have reached Katsina.

However, since East wrote both dates and events have been challenged, though on differing grounds. Reckoning backward with the aid of the Katsina king list compiled by Landerroin, H.F.C. Smith dates the reign of the Sarkin Katsina Muhammad Korau, who is widely regarded as the first Muslim king of Katsina, at 1492/3-1541/2 A.D. instead of 1320-1353 A.D., as Palmer had reckoned. However, Smith’s new chronology leaves an unnecessary and unacceptable gap of c.40 years between the death of Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti (d.1505 A.D.) and his dates for the reign of Ibrahim Sura (1541/2-1543/4), whom al-Suyuti addressed his Risalat al-Muluk. Yet even if we adjust the chronology he suggests to account for this discrepancy, then Muhammad Korau could have ruled Katsina between 1452/3 and 1501/2, which is still much later than East had assumed for the effective introduction of Islam at Katsina. We shall have to reconsider this proposed Katsina chronology later on other grounds; but it is clearly of little relevance to the Chronicle’s report of Wangarawa first coming to Kano in the reign of Yaji (1349-1385 A.D.).

The Chronicle reports that this Wangarawa mission was led by Abdurrahman Zaite and lists several of his companions by name. However we now know that the mission led by Abd al-Rahman Zagaiti or Zaite arrived at
Kano during the reign of Muhammad Rumfa, which Palmer reckoned as spanning 1463-1499 A.D.\textsuperscript{31} According to the Chronicle, "in his time the Sherifs came to Kano. They were Abdu Rahaman and his people..... Abdu Rahaman lived in Kano and established Islam. He brought with him many books."\textsuperscript{32} At the same time Kano received an even more distinguished missionary, the Sheikh Muhammad bin Abd al-Karim al-Maghili of Tlemcen, who evidently arrived at Kano only three days before Zagaite and his large following.\textsuperscript{33} An interesting slip in the text of the Chronicle, which does not report his arrival, neatly confirms Maghili's presence with the remark that "When he had established the Faith of Islam and learned men had grown numberous in Kano, and all the country had accepted the Faith, Abdu Kari-mi (i.e. al-Maghili) returned to Masar (Egypt), leaving Sidi Fari as his deputy to carry on his work."\textsuperscript{34} Commenting on this history of Habe (Hausa) Kano in his Tazyib al-Akbar, the Alkaln Kano Muhammadu Zangi says "There are many errors in the names of the chiefs from Bagauda to Rumfa who was reigning when the Shehu Maghili established Islam in this country ....... Maghili left three sons at Kano, Muhammadu Muktari, Muhammadu Muku-mu and Sidi Fari. Their descendants are even now among us; and the descendants of Sidi Fari hold the office of Sarkin Sherifai at Kano until this day. It is said that Maghili first brought dates to Kano."\textsuperscript{35}

On leaving Kano El Maghili visited Katsina and then proceeded to Gao, the capital of the Askia al-Hajj Muhammad (1494-1528) whom he had previously met in Cairo. From Gao he returned to Tuwat where he died in 1504 A.D., according to Ahmed Baba, who adds that "In response to a request from the ruler of Kano he wrote a treatise on government," the celebrated Obligations of Princes – an Essay on Muslim Kingship – but whether for Rumfa or for his son and immediate successor, Abdullahi (1499-1509 A.D.), we cannot tell.\textsuperscript{37}

Basing himself on an account of Sheikh Zagaiti's arrival at Kano, the Asl al-Wangariyin, recorded over 150 years later, in 1651, Muhammad al-Hajj concludes that "The balance of evidence according to our present knowledge about the spread of the Wangarawa, seems to favour the 15th century rather than the 14th\textsuperscript{38} presumably for their arrival at Kano. "The 15th century is the period in which Islam took a firm grip on Hausa-land."\textsuperscript{39} However, as the Asl al-Wangariyin relates, on arriving at Kano the Sheikh Zagaiti found Islam already established there. Indeed one leading local jurist, "Abdullahi, traced his lineage to the Wangarawa."\textsuperscript{40} In short, Zagaiti's group were not first Wangarawa to settle at Kano and it is thus possible that, as the Chronicle records, they were preceeded by others who converted the chief Yaji (1349-1385 A.D.), and assisted him in the conquest of Santolo, the last redoubt of his enemies. Even so, the sustained inaccuracy of the Chronicle's report of Yaji's conquest of Santolo with the assistance of Abdurrahman Zaite and his companions\textsuperscript{41} obliges us to treat
its accounts of preceding reigns as well with caution. Set beside its externally confirmed report of the visits of al-Maghili and Zagaiti during the reign of Muhammad Rumfa, this detailed but misleading tale of the battle for Santolo indicates firstly, that the original text of the Chronicle was not written before Zagaiti’s arrival in Rumfa’s reign; secondly, that it was not written by any member of Zagaiti’s or al-Maghili’s parties or their descendants; and thirdly, that the first version was probably drafted not along after Rumfa’s death, which following Palmer’s chronology, East sets in 904 A.H. or 1499 A.D. By then Kano had long known Islam and long been a vassal of the Muslim state of Kanem/Borno.

According to the Chronicle, the second chief to bear an Islamic name was Usmanu Zamnagawa, the son of Shekarau, who reigned briefly from 1343 to 1349 after killing his brother Tsamiya, the ninth chief, who ruled from 1307 to 1343 A.D. Having slain Tsamiya, Zamnagawa shut himself in the palace with the corpse for seven days, thereby provoking this nickname (‘the one who sits with the corpse’). The Chronicle says “it is not known how Tsamiya was made away with; whether Zamnagawa ate him or buried him, no one knows.” During his reign the Chronicle says the Maguzawa or pagan Hausa left the city for Fongui (Fankui), following which Zamnagawa appointed his son as chief of the ‘Rumawa’, another native community of Kano, at their request. Such Islamic labels and events neatly indicate that the Chronicle regards Zamnagawa as a Muslim on the basis of local tradition. An independent account by Mallam Adamu Muhammad el-Arabi in his history of Kano reads that Zamnagawa “killed many men as chief during his reign Islam came to Kano, brought by ‘ulama who taught him to say his prayers. This was the reason for his death.” The story, though well known may of course be untrue; but as Palmer noted, at that period the missionary impulse of the Mandinka state of Mali was probably at its height, and it seems quite likely that Muslim missionaries from Mali then visited Kano and Katsina with success.

At Kano, according to the Chronicle, the immigrants led by Bagauda had been forbidden connubium and participation in their rituals by the autochthonous people whom they strove to dominate through their superior political organization. While the Chronicle records many improbable details and events of this contest, the structure and character of this struggle between the immigrants under a co-ordinating central chiefship and the divided natives in and around Kano City seems clear and sound. Santolo, then perhaps as large or larger than Kano in population, may have developed some central organization to co-ordinate its resistance to the aggressive Gaudawa immigrants. Under such circumstances, the immigrant chiefs were quite likely to accept Islam for the ritual, military and political resources it promised to add to their power. This is certainly the impression conveyed by the Chronicle’s narrative of the continuing struggle of the immigrants for domination from Gijimasu’s day (1095-1134 A.D.) until Yaji’s (1349-1385
While the Chronicle’s details of this account are probably spurious, it seems unlikely that the protracted and bitter conflict it reports between the immigrants and the autochthonous people, at both ritual and secular levels, did not occur.

Bugaya, whose name indicates that he was a posthumous son, followed his full brother Yaji to the throne in 1385. According to the Chronicle, he dispersed the Maguzawa from the rock at Fungui, scattered them, and placed them in the hands of his Galadima. A devout Muslim, he was “the first Sarkin Kano who was buried at Madatani by his own request, having previously instructed the Liman Madatani . . . . . . to pray over his body and Lawal to wash it and Turbana, Jigawa and Kusuba to help him.” The Asl al Wanqaryin refers to Madatani as a place where the Sheikh Zagaiti was buried shortly before the ‘sultan’ Muhammad Rumfa; but with Bugaya, Madatani became the burial place of those Hausa chiefs of Kano who died in the City, all being Muslims. On this basis among others we must recognize the Islamic status of the chiefship at Kano before the end of the 14th century. By Rumfa’s reign some decades later, not only had the last centre of indigenous resistance at Santolo been eliminated, but Kano, then a vassal state of Muslim Borno, was firmly linked to the Muslim world of the Central and Western Sudan by trade, cultural and political ties of diverse kinds.

IV

Such interpretations of course presuppose the general validity and relevance of the Chronicle, despite our recognition that its chronology and narrative of the early reigns and centuries are not reliable in detail. The questions that arise because of this are, at what point in time does the record in the Chronicle achieve validity of detail and chronology as well as structure? When was the initial document compiled and how? Given the narrative’s unreliability for earlier reigns, is that uniform for all the subjects it then treats, and if not, in what areas can we place confidence? How far and in what respects is its account of later reigns superior and more reliable? Another set of questions relate to the organization and chronology of the Chronicle as a continuous account of a succession of chiefly reigns. Should these reigns be listed out of order, or should the Chronicle’s series contain errors of omission or commission, then its relative as well as absolute chronology will be correspondingly compromised. I cannot hope to deal adequately with all these issues in this essay. Nonetheless in assessing the historicity of the Chronicle, they have a central place.

Anticipating some of these questions, Palmer back-dated the reigns of Hausa chiefs from the terminal point in September 1807 (1222 A.H.) when the Fulani are believed to have entered Kano after Alwali’s defeat and flight. He then checked the reports of various reigns against external information where possible, as, for example, the visit of Al-Maghili to Kano in Rumfa’s reign, the arrival at Kano of Othman Kalnama, a deposed ruler of
Borno, in Daudu's reign (1421-1438 A.D.)\textsuperscript{51}, and references to Kano’s conflicts with Katsina, the Jukun (Kwararafa), Gobir, Zamfara and Borno. Altogether the Chronicle passes these tests with high credit. Nonetheless certain puzzles remain. For example as H.F.C. Smith points out, while Palmer dates the death of Muhammad Alwali I (also known as el-Kutumbi) in Katsina to 1648\textsuperscript{52} according to his own king-list of Katsina, Kutumbi and his successor Alhaji died during the reign of the Sarkin Katsina Ubanyari (Muhammad dan Wari). On Smith’s reading of the Katsina kinglist, Ubanyari reigned between 1704/5 and 1706/7 A.D.\textsuperscript{53}

According to Palmer's Katsina text, Ubanyari died on a “Monday 1018 A.H.”\textsuperscript{54}, a date which Smith prefers to read as 1118 A.H. or 1706/7 A.D.\textsuperscript{55} However, according to the Kitab ila Ma'arifat Umara Katsina, Ubanyari died on the 10th night of Jumada al-Aula in 1082 A.H., that is on August 17th, 1671 A.D. Since Ubanyari had ruled Katsina for “31 years 5 months and 7 days” according to that text,\textsuperscript{56} it is thus quite likely that the date assigned by Palmer for Kutumbi’s death, 1648 A.D., is correct. Moreover, Palmer’s Katsina king-list says that Kutumbi’s successor, Sarkin Kano Alhaji, also died in the struggle against Ubanyari and Katsina. The Kitab ila Ma'arifat Umara Katsina, on the other hand, having mentioned the deaths of the Treasurer of Kano and the Emir Kutumbi in Ubanyari’s reign, only records the “capture of his successor Alhaji.”\textsuperscript{57} As regards Alhaji’s end in 1649 A.D., in the Kano Chronicle we read that he “ruled Kano eight months and 24 days, then he was deposed – the reason I do not remember. He went into the country to live at a place called Dan Zaki.”\textsuperscript{58} This follows an equally perplexing report on Kutumbi’s death. “As regards Sarkin Kano (Kutumbi) some people say he was killed in Katsina, others say that he died at Kano. The latter is the better account. In any case he died within three days of the battle.”\textsuperscript{59} In short, the author of these entries in the Chronicle wished to register his uncertainty about Kutumbi’s death and the end of Alhaji’s reign. It seems evident then that these entries were recorded many years after these events, and therefore that the document to which they were added had been drafted at the latest before or shortly after Kutumbi’s accession in 1623 A.D. If so, then the first version of the Chronicle was probably drafted in the 16th century during or after the reign of Muhammad Kisoke (1509-1565 A.D.) Internal evidence relating to the reigns of Muhammadu Shashere (1573-1582) and his successor Muhammadu Zaki (1582-1618) suggests that the account was probably brought up to date during or shortly after the reign of Muhammadu Nazaki (1618-1623), Kutumbi’s predecessor.\textsuperscript{60}

In his brief comment on the Chronicle the Alkali Muhammadu Zangi notes cryptically that “it is said that the interval between Rumfa and Alwali (II) is 348 (Moslem) years.”\textsuperscript{61} Alwali succeeded in 1195 A.H. (1781 A.D.) and ceased to rule in 1222 A.H. (1807 A.D.), while Muhammad Rumfa
reigned between 867-904 A.H. (1463-1499)⁶² Thus the interval between the accessions of Rumfa and Alwali on Palmer's reckoning is 328 years against 348 that Zangi presumably refers to. At most then, beginning with Muhammad Rumfa, Palmer's dates should be spread over another twenty Muslim years to meet Zangi's reservation. However, Zangi himself seems rather uncertain on this point. While such a change could place Rumfa's reign between 847 A.H. and 884 (1443/4-1479/80 A.D.), those dates would not square with what we know of al-Maghili's movements, and, as we have seen, Kutumbi's death could not be back-dated correspondingly without parallel adjustments in the Katsina dynastic chronology derived from Kitab ila Ma’arafat, at least as regards the dates of Ubanya's reign. However, among the external evidence provided by Kano's relations with Borno, Katsina, Zamfara and Gobir, the reign-dates Palmer assigned to rulers from Dauda (824-841 A.H.; 1421-1438 A.D.), and perhaps from Usumanu Zamnagawa (1343-1349 A.D.)⁶³, until Alwali seem sufficiently near the mark to merit acceptance as historical unless convincingly shown to be wrong. It follows then that at least a far back as Dauda's reign we can accept the absolute chronology of the Chronicle as historically adequate. Before that date, for reasons indicated above, it could be argued that the dates assigned to the reigns of Usmanu Zamnagawa (1343-1349 A.D.), Yaji (1349-1385 A.D.), Bugaya (1385-1390 A.D.), Kanajigi (1390-1410 A.D.) and Umaru son of Kanajigeji (1414-1421 A.D.)⁶⁴ also merit acceptance, despite insufficient external tests to validate them.

The claim that reign lengths and dates in the Chronicle from Usman Zamnagawa forward are reliable rests partly on the presumption that the initial text was drafted during the 16th century in or shortly after the reign of Muhammadu Kizado, who died in 1565. From my experience, even without any historical texts, it is not difficult to develop tests and adjust such chronology for such major events as the accessions and deaths or depositions of chiefs for the preceding 200 to 250 years from oral sources. Inevitably, in such a process much detail of developments in these reigns will be forgotten, garbled, or sometimes misplaced. Whether and to what degree the contents of the Chronicle's reports on these reigns from Usman Zamnagawa forward to Rumfa represent actual historical events and experiences of Kano is thus another question. Certainly insofar as they are confirmed by such external checks as the Borno records of Othman Kalnama's deposition and departure for Kano in 1425 A.D., we must accept their validity. The problem is that most of the developments reported in the reigns under consideration lack such certifiable external checks. Some such as Yaji's eviction of the Sarkin Rano from Zamnagawa,⁶⁵ though readily confirmed from Rano traditions, cannot be dated firmly by invoking external checks. Many more, which narrate events or identify particular officials by title and name, are now obviously beyond verification.
In a brilliant recent discussion of the *Chronicle*, Murray Last obliquely suggests that it is best regarded as a rather free compilation of local legends and traditions drafted in the mid-seventeenth century by a humorous Muslim rationalist who almost seems to have studied under Levi-Strauss.\(^6^6\) There are a number of cross-cutting binary sets in the "analogical geographies" the *Chronicle* apparently reveals, but more triangles with oppositions and mediators a la Levi-Strauss. Yet surely even if structuralism describes the universally valid pattern of human thought, this would not dispense with the ordinary criteria and aims of historicity. Though Last does not conclude that the *Chronicle* is poor history, many might readily assume that this is implied, from the style and organization of his discourse. His paper itself does not support such a view, however, despite its analysis of the differing traditions recorded in the first ten reigns of the *Chronicle*, during which the immigrants led by Bagauda struggled to dominate and destroy the native community of Kano. All this is of the greatest value. Together those reigns cover the period from 389 A.H. or 999 A.D. to 743 A.H. and 1343 A.D. — that is, the legendary first three and a half centuries of Kano’s history, following the arrival of Bagauda and his ‘host’. While the events and symbols recorded in the *Chronicle* to express the opposition of immigrants and natives are all probably in some sense ‘untrue’, the nature and intensity of that opposition cannot be gainsaid *a priori* or on available records. The immigrants were determined to conquer and rule the acephalous peoples of Kano, just as the latter, called Abagiyawa, were determined to resist as best they could. It might of course be argued that there was no such invasion of Kano by ‘Bagauda’ or others at this period; but there is sufficient evidence of cumulative population movements within and around this region between the 7th and 11th centuries A.D. to suggest that such a flat, fertile and attractive country as Kano would be very likely to receive substantial immigration from the north and east.

Concluding that the original draft of the *Chronicle* was made not long after 1650 A.D., Murray Last distinguishes three preceding periods in its account of Kano history that differ significantly in the sources, status and reliability of the data on which they are based. For the period before 1450 A.D. he has little confidence in the *Chronicle’s* historicity; and he questions its accuracy for the following century, 1450-1550 A.D. From 1550 onwards, despite reservations, he has increasing confidence in the document’s validity; and from 1650 A.D. he is satisfied.\(^6^7\)

Last supports this evaluation of the *Chronicle* by comparing the numbers of rulers and lengths of reigns it records with similar data from the *Song of Bagauda* and Dr. Baikie’s king list for the periods before 1430 (i.e. before Dawuda), between 1430 and Soyaki’s accession in 1652, and since then.
Finding a "near-total consistency in rulers and reign lengths... after 1652" between these three sources, Last regards this as strong evidence in support of his principal thesis, and interprets the remark that Alhaji the son of Kutumbi was removed "for a reason I forget" as internal evidence which can surely only imply the author was writing some 10 to 20 years later.

These arguments are hardly persuasive; for first, if the chronicler had really forgotten why or how Alhaji lost the throne ten to twenty years earlier, he could surely have found that out by asking surviving officials who either took part in the event or had some direct knowledge of it. It would be curious for such a diligent researcher as the chronicler appears to have been to have failed to follow this up. It is in truth far more likely that the writer did not know how or why Alhaji lost the throne in the first place, and could not find out; for since Alhaji's capture by the Katsina army was unprecedented in Kano history and transparently implied the treachery of his senior officials, free and slave, the state councillors, instead of announcing his capture and thus compromising themselves, simply declared that he had been deposed and sent to live away from Kano, but gave no reason for his deposition, as they dared not reveal the truth. Moreover, by thus 'deposing' Alhaji and appointing Shekarau, the state councillors simultaneously precluded Alhaji's return to the chiefship, and put themselves in a position to make a peace with Katsina, while appearing to disassociate themselves from warmaking policies of Kumbari and Alhaji.

As regards Murray Last's claim to find a 'near-total consistency of rulers and reign lengths... after 1652' between the Kano Chronicle, Baikie's king list and the Song of Bagauda, my study of these three lists yields different conclusions. For example, for the period stretching from Soyaki (1062 A.H.; 1652 A.D.) to Alwali's death in 1222 A.H.; 1807 A.D., the Chronicle lists 11 rulers inclusive, whose reigns together total 160 Moslem years or 157 Christians ones. As printed, Dr. Baikie lists 10 rulers between Soyaki and Alwali but places Kukuna (Kakana) ahead of Soyaki, omits Dauda Abasama (1776-1781), Alwali's predecessor, credits Baba Zaki with 78 years on the throne instead of 8 as given in the Chronicle, and names Taukari instead of Alhaji Kaboe (1743-1753 A.D.) as Kumbari's immediate successor. Altogether Baikie's list for this period, including the reigns of Kukuna and Alwali, gives a total of 203 Moslem years and 10 months as against the Chronicle's 160. The Song of Bagauda differs even more widely from the Chronicle for this period. Though agreeing fully with the Chronicle's list of rulers, the Song credits them with a total of 313 Moslem years as against the Chronicle's 160. Evidently, whether sung or unsung, local king lists may differ as widely in detail after 1652 as before.

We are particularly fortunate in being able to check these conflicting interpretations of reign lengths in the Chronicle, the Song and Baikie's list...
against the rich and directly relevant data to be found in the Al-ilan bi tarikhl Kano of Mallam Adamu Muhammadu el-Arabi. Mallam Adamu completed the first draft of his history of Kano in 1344 A.H. (1925-6 A.D.) and its revision in 1352 A.H. (1933 A.D.) shortly before the publication of East’s Hausa translation of the Chronicle. In his attempt to reconstruct the history of Hausa Kano, as well shall see, Mallam Adamu collated information from five different king lists which did not include the Kano Chronicle, the Song of Bagauda or Baikie’s king list. For each ruler mallam Adamu reports the agreements or disagreements of the various king lists on the length of his reign details the ruler’s parentage on both sides, and often gives a brief character sketch and notes on outstanding events in the reign. As regards the order and lengths of reigns from Soyaki to Alwali inclusive, the five king lists consulted by Mallam Adamu differ as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Ruler</th>
<th>2 lists give 2 months 6 days</th>
<th>1 list gives 66 years</th>
<th>1 list gives 15 years</th>
<th>1 list gives 6 years</th>
<th>2 lists give 8 months</th>
<th>2 lists give 30 years</th>
<th>1 list gives 7 years 20 days</th>
<th>4 lists give 11 years</th>
<th>1 list gives 30 years</th>
<th>3 lists give 33 years</th>
<th>1 list gives 9 years</th>
<th>3 lists give 30 years</th>
<th>1 list gives 40 years</th>
<th>All lists give 10 years</th>
<th>All lists give 9 years 9 months</th>
<th>All list give 3 years</th>
<th>3 lists give 9 years</th>
<th>2 lists give 20 years</th>
<th>2 lists give 1 year</th>
<th>1 list gives 5 years</th>
<th>2 lists give 9 years</th>
<th>All lists give 27 years</th>
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<td>Soyaki</td>
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<td>Bawa</td>
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<td>M. Dadi</td>
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<td>M. Sharefa</td>
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<td>Baba Zaki</td>
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<td>Dawud</td>
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<td>1 list gives 5 years</td>
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<td>Alwali II</td>
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Thus as regards the reign lengths of the last 11 Hausa chiefs, including Alwali, the five king lists consulted by Mallam Adamu disagree seven times on the lengths of their reign. For three of these seven reigns, the five king lists offer three or more alternatives, for the remainder only two. Compared with the Chronicle, Dr. Baikie’s king list, which Last consulted, disagrees equally for these reigns. As against this, the Song of Bagauda cannot be said to agree with the lengths assigned by the Chronicle more than twice for these reigns — namely for Alhaji Kabe, whom the Song lists as Muhammad Kubari, and
for Alwali II. Such data do not illustrate the "near-total consistency in rulers and reign lengths" of these various king lists which Last leads us to expect after 1652, and on which most of his critical comments on the Chronicle depend. Moreover it is clear from the details of these last 11 Hausa reigns that five king lists consulted by Mallam Adamu did not include either the Kano Chronicle, Baikie's king list or the Song of Bagauda. In effect the diversity of opinion about the lengths of the various reigns from Soyaki to Muhammad Alwali II is even greater than we would suspect, had we restricted our attention to Baikie's list, the Kano Chronicle and the Song of Bagauda. Detailed comparison of the rulers listed, the order in which they are listed, and the lengths of their respective reigns as given in the Chronicle, in Baikie's list in the Song of Bagauda and in Mallam Adamu's unpublished collation for the first 15 reigns from Bagauda to and including Dauda (1421-1437) yields an equivalent level of disagreement as to the reign lengths, compounded by certain differences in the names and order of the chiefs listed in the various texts. Evidently there are at least two distinct traditions and lists of Kano chiefs before the reign of Yaji (1349-13385 A.D.).

In Mallam Adamu's history of Yaji's predecessor Zamnagawa (1343-1349 A.D.) is said to be the son of Randamasu (Tsamiya) and Kumaimaya. His nickname was 'Gafe-Gakuma', who is listed in the Song of Bagauda as the 19th chief who reigned for 60 years. According to Mallam Adamu, Zamnagawa as chief killed many men; presumably this, rather than the story related in the Chronicle, led to his nickname. Between Yaji who followed Zamnagawa and Soyaki, i.e. from c.1349 A.D. to 1652, the Chronicle lists 22 reigns of Dakauta and Atuma in 1452 A.D. and conflates the two reigns of Mallam Kukuna which the Chronicle correctly separates, as Soyaki ruled for three months between them. According to the Chronicle the interval between Yaji's accession and Soyaki's is 303 Muslim years. On Mallam Adamu's reckoning it is either 316 or 326, since his sources credit Kutumbi's son Alhaji with either 10 or 20 years on the throne, presumably due to an error in copying; or it might be 356 or 366, if Da'ud, listed in some texts as reigning 40 years, is included, despite Mallam Adamu's decision not to do so. Notably Mallam Adamu's account indicates no disagreements between the five king lists he consulted for any reigns between Zamnagawa and Sheshere. Different estimates of reign length are first reported for Muhamman Zaki and then for Alhaji, the son of Kutumbi. Beyond Soyaki's reign the incidence of such disagreements increases sharply, as noted above. In other words, Mallam Adamu's collation supports the view that from Yaji to Abubakar Kado (1565-1572 A.D.) there is far greater agreement on the sequence and reign lengths of Hausa chiefs of Kano than before or after, until 1807. Despite its omission of Dakauta and Atuma, and its displacement of Yakubu and Dauda Abasama, Mallam Adamu's account agrees with the Chronicle that the reigns from Yaji to Abubakar Kao total 228 Muslim
This tends to support the view that the original *Chronicle* was compiled in the mid-sixteenth century from various documents and oral sources having special knowledge of the chiefdom’s history. Thereafter, on my reading in relation to other histories and king lists of Kano, the *Chronicle* was periodically updated at irregular intervals of between fifty and a hundred or more years, sufficient to ensure comparable degrees of inaccuracy, incompleteness and unreliability in the earlier reigns of each new section, from Yaji’s time onwards.

VI

Murray Last correctly identifies a number of anachronisms and hesitations in the *Chronicle*’s account of developments at Kano before 1450 A.D., attributing these to 17th century writers. Some are rather superficial, for example reference to guns (*bindiga*) in Dauda’s reign (1421-1427 A.D.). Likewise, “In the days of Yaji, it is said, Sarkin Debbi, Sarkin Daba and Sarkin Gano brought horses to Kano, but this story is not worthy of credence.” Nonetheless its account of the siege and seizure of Santolo makes frequent reference to horses. Though clearly such titles as Madawaki and Dawaki (i.e. commanders of calvary) in the reign of Warisi, Bagauda’s son (1063-1095 A.D.) are anachronistic, so too are the titles of Galadima, Barawa, Magayaki, Makama, Jarumai, Barde in that reign. Such titular anachronisms provide no firm basis for the conclusion that horses were not known in Kano. The Bayajidda legend tells of his coming to Daura on a horse and seeking to water his horse before killing the dreaded snake. In the passage just cited, the chiefs of Debbi, Dab and Gano, who according to the *Chronicle* arrived in Kano country nine years before Bagauda, are said to have brought horses during Yaji’s reign, perhaps from Borno. There are other questionable attributions, such as Gijimasu’s wall-building and slaughter of a hundred cattle on the first day.

Murray Last performs a valuable service in drawing attention to the many anachronisms, uncertainties and errors in the *Kano Chronicle*, and especially for the first 400 years of its record, which suggests that the document was originally drafted in the 16th century. He also identifies various omissions or failures in the record; but such omissions are not confined to the earlier centuries, they apply equally well to the last two hundred years of Hausa rule at Kano. Altogether his analysis of the historicity of the *Chronicle* for the period of Hausa rule at Kano is a contribution of permanent value to historical studies of this region, however, the limitations of this critique, which are sometimes expressed but more often assumed by its author, should not be ignored. What Murray Last argues is that the current version of the *Chronicle*, whether in Arabic, English or Hausa, basically dates from
the mid-17th century, and conveys as faithful an account of the history of Kano till then as its author or authors could provide, using conventional Muslim canons of scholarship and modes of thought. Against this I have argued that the initial draft of the *Kano Chronicle* was probably made a century earlier, and that the text was thereafter subject to periodic revisions and updatings at irregular intervals, as illustrated in its latest extenstions by Rupert East in 1933, and in 1882-1893. If I am correct, then even without political bias, such periodic additions should concentrate hesitation, omissions and errors of reporting unequally in the earlier reigns of successive sections, thereby ensuring an erratic distribution of error throughout the entire text. On Murray Last’s analysis, omissions, anachronisms and other errors should predominate over historically valid information in the first six or seven centuries of the *Chronicle*, while from 1652 to 1807 and more so from 1807 onwards the reverse should obtain. Thus these alternatives deliver quite different assessments of the *Chronicle’s* historicity.

There is no question that the first three centuries of the *Chronicle* deal mainly in legend and not history. The central questions then are, why do they deal as they do, when, how, and for what audience? If the *Chronicle* was first recorded in the latter half of the 17th century, then presumably it was written by and addressed to the political elite at that time, namely in the period following Kumbari’s defeat and death in the war with Katsina, Alhaji’s disappearance (by deposition and exile according to the *Chronicle*), and the instability at the throne represented by the swift successions of Shekarau (1649-1651), Kukuna son of Alhaji (1651-52), Soyaki (3 months in 1652), and by Kukuna’s restoration in 1652. This was surely a period when the prestige of the dynasty and the throne was at a low ebb by contrast with the relative grandeur of the regime at Kano during the reign of Muhammad Kisoke (1509-1565 A.D.) when, besides resuming its independence, a number of Muslim clerics came to Kano from Borno, from Tunis, from Zaria and elsewhere.\(^4\)

Anachronisms in the *Chronicle* cluster in its earlier reigns and centuries. Why such anachronisms were committed is another question but it seems likely that they were present in the earliest texts and traditions even before the first draft of the *Chronicle* was written in the mid or late 16th century. As regards omissions, these occur at all levels and stages of the pre-Fulani history of Kano. For example, we know from Leo Africanus that Askia Muhammad el-Hajj of Songhay (1493-1528) “waged war against the king of Kano, whom after a long seige he took and compelled him to marry one of his daughters, restoring him again to his kingdom, conditionally that he should pay unto Kano the third part of all his tribute; and the said king of Tombukto hath some of his courtiers perpetually residing at Rano, for the receipt thereof.”\(^5\)
Following the Askia we know that Kano, having formerly been subject to Borno,86 fell under the domination of Kebbi, which under Kanta first threw off Songhai’s yoke in 1516 A.D. and then rapidly established its dominion over western Hausaland, namely Gobir, Katsina, Yauri, Zamfara, Zazzau and Kano.87 Nowhere does the Chronicle mention this, though the extraordinary singing which Muhammadu Kisoke launched on the walls of Kano following the withdrawal of the king of Borno celebrates Kano’s independence from them both.88 Neither does it record any famine from Barbushe’s day to Alwali’s (1781-1807), who is the first ruler reported to have experienced famine. Nor does it mention the plague (waba) that swept Kano for four years on the death of Kisoke (1565 A.D), and took his successors Yakubu and Dauda Abasama in less than a year.89

However, parallel omissions also occur in the Chronicle’s account of 18th century Kano. For example, we are told that in Kumbari’s time (1731-1743 A.D.) the ‘Mai Ali’ of Borno came to Kano to war. “He encamped at Faggi (Fage) for three nights without a battle being fought, since Shehu Aniru and Shehu Bunduu prevented it. He returned to Borno.”90 We are not told that Kano then lost its independence and became for a second time a vassal state of Borno, and remained thus until the Fulani jihad.91 Thus at least the Chronicle’s omissions are not restricted to any period. It says far less about Baba Zaki (1768 1776) than Mallam Adamu does, and gives an extraordinarily terse account of the Fulani jihad at Kano. “In Alwali’s time the Fulani conquered the seven Hausa states on the plea of reviving the Islamic religion. The Fulani attacked Alwali and drove him from Kano, whence he fled to Zaria.”92 No briefer history of the jihad exists.

As for later errors and omissions, to substantiate my interpretation, Muhammadu Bello’s extension to the Chronicle says that Alwali’s successor, the first Fulani Emir Suleiman, went to ask the Shehu Usman dan Fodio’s permission to occupy the Hausa palace.93 Palmer’s text corrects this in a footnote – “He did not go to Sokoto but sent a message.”94 As for omissions, Bello’s extension totally omits the major attack on Kano in 1826 by the Shehu El Kanemi of Borno which threw the caliphate into great fear.95 It omits any mention of the treachery of the Sarkin Filani Dambarta Dan Tunku and of Alwali’s Ciroma Dan Nama, which ensured his defeat at the final battle of Dan Yayya.96

At the other extreme, the Chronicle illustrates the Muslim identity and bias of its authors. At its very beginning we are told that “Barbushe never descended from Dalla except on the two days of Idi when he would normally sacrifice either black dogs, fowls or he-goats at popular request.”97 In effect the Chronicle reinterprets the history of Kano in Muslim terms to conform with Islamic models of heathenism and reform in religion and government. Prematurely from Yaji’s day and more securely from Muham-
mad Rumfa's, the arrival at Kano of learned Muslims is recorded in the *Chronicle*, together with their appointments to office or their interventions in political affairs, normally at the request of the ruling chief.

At the same time the *Chronicle* is sometimes inaccurate in its references to developments in nearby states such as Zaria and Gobir. For example, it reports the conquests of Queen Amina of Zaria during the reign of Dauda (1421-1438 A.D.), whereas these are normally placed in the 16th century. In short, we may expect the *Chronicle* to omit certain important developments altogether, while misplacing others, to indulge anachronisms in the earlier reigns, and to impose Islamic concepts and categories on events and organization in pre-Islamic Kano, thus displaying Murray Last's 'historical metaphors' and 'geographical analogies' by labelling ethnic groups as Magazzawa, Gazazawa, Rumawa etc. on the one hand, and by dividing the territory to correspond on the other. However, such divisions could hardly have been initiated by the chronicler. They first had to be present or instituted by the political leaders of the emerging state. Gazazawa, for example, is the name of a place and not a ethnic group. Nonetheless we should recognize that the *Chronicle* is neither a transparent nor a fully complete and reliable account of Kano history under the Fulani or the Hausa, both as regards its chronology, its ideology, its Islamic interpretations of non-Islamic peoples and events, its anachronisms, its religious, ethnic and political biases, and otherwise. The questions that emerges from such a critique is simply, what historical value, if any, does the document have, given its various defects?

The answer is very brief, the more so, surely, because of the historical naivete illustrated above. Altogether the *Chronicle* of Hausa Kano provides the richest and most authentic account of the political organization of the Hausa chiefdom available to us; given the circumstances, the most illuminating and comprehensive account we could hope to have. There are of course a sufficient number of external checks on the validity of reports in the *Chronicle* concerning Kano's relations with such nearby polities as Asben, Borno, Katsina, Gobir, Zaria or the Jukun to accredit the document generally. As regards its data on the composition and development of the Kano polity itself, one critical test is the fit between the *Chronicle*’s account of Kano under Alwali and the fullest account we can muster from other sources of the state and its organization at that time.

VII

In 1959 attempting to reconstruct the social and political organization of Kano on the eve of the Fulani jihad, I relied primarily on documents and
oral data available at Kano, together with reports of explorers, and such
gleanings from the jihadic literature of the conquering Khadiriya as I could
find. This done, my problem was to check the validity of this reconstruction,
to identify its omissions, false reports, anachronisms and other limitations.
and perhaps to enrich its scope and detail, while correcting its errors by
reference to an independent authentic body of precise information with
which these comparisons could be systematically made. Whereas elsewhere
independent successor-states of former Hausa chiefdoms overrun by the
Shehu’s jihad, such as Zango in Daura, Maradi, or Abuja had supplied
information of this kind, to control my reconstruction of their pre-jihadic
regimes and allow direct comparison with the 19th century Fulani states,
for Kano I lacked such resources, since the defeated dynasty was never able
to establish a successor-state. Indeed, when I visited the Hausa Sarkin Kano
in January 1959 at Maradi, he was unable to distinguish the traditions
of Kano from those of Hausa Katsina, that still flourished in Maradi.
Fortunately, together with certain other texts, old and new, the Chronicle
offered an independent check on the validity and completeness of my ten­
tative reconstruction of Kano under Alwali that had emerged from the oral
and documentary studies. Being by far the richest continuous account of
Hausa Kano, it was central to this corpus of materials. Naturally to amplify
my account of Kano and to strengthen it, I took note of every credible
source of information on the political history and organization of Hausa
Kano available to me. That done, the significance and distinctions of much
detailed documentation of official personnel and family lines remained
obscure. For clarification and verification the best and often the
available resource was the Kano Chronicle. This document, though often
anachronistic, illuminated some of our central puzzles, and especially those
that concerned the relative status and significance of titled offices of
different kings present in Alwali’s and earlier reigns.

Nonetheless we should ask why, in every moderately long reign, does the
Chronicle list by name and title so many contemporary officials, warriors
and assistants of the chief? Clearly, given its limited public circulation, such
detail had greater significance than public exposure. From its beginnings
the Chronicle dwells particularly and in detail on the identities and titles of
individuals who figured prominently in the reigns of successive chiefs. Indeed
the Chronicle overwhelms one with such details, which are often juxtaposed
in odd relations. In evaluating the document it is important to consider
what function or purpose its detailed listing of individuals, places, titles, and
the like fulfilled. Palpably these titles, persons and places could not be
fictitious without placing the chronicler at risk of exposure as a fraudulent
historian. While none of these lists pretends to be complete, many are rather
extensive. The structure and content of such catalogues are of special signifi­
cance, given the political status and character of this document, and indicate.
some of the principal interests that created and shaped the *Chronicle*. It assigns such offices as Galadima, Barwa, Madawaki, Magayaki, Makama, Barde, Jarumai and Dawaki to the very earliest reigns, when clearly those offices did not then exist. Of Gijimasu (1095-1134) we are told that “He ruled all the country as far as the lands of Sarkin Gano, Sarkin Dab, Sarkin Debbi, Sarkin Ringim, Dan Bakonyaki. Santolo alone stood out against him, for his people were many and pagans. No one was able to rule over them. The Sarkis (chiefs) of Gano, Dab and Debbi came to Hausaland (sic) nine years before Bagauda. But Buram, Isa, Baba, Kududufi, Alhassan and others of the Kano chiefs, men of the princely clan came with Bagauda.” The footnote reads, “For this reason all their descendants were called after these, their forefathers, and the names have remained as titles of princes to this day. Such titles as Dan Buram, Dan Isa or Dan Baba, Dan Akasan, Dan Kududufi and others like Dan Dermai and Dan Goriba.”

Detailed comparison of the information on Rausa Kano in the *Chronicle* with the fullest reconstruction I was able to achieve on the basis of the available oral and written information for Kano in Alwali’s day showed first that the *Chronicle* contains within it more information essential for the accurate reconstruction and valid understanding of the Hausa chiefdom in its final phases than we can expect to find elsewhere; and secondly, that it neatly and convincing relates the processes through which the Hausa state and government emerged and developed, territorially and structurally. Though the *Chronicle* is incomplete and erratic in its coverage, it seems less so than alternative sources for that period. Anachronisms such as those noted above are rather innocent and easy to identify and correct. What is really irreplaceable if lost or abandoned is the *Chronicle*’s oblique but sustained account of the evolution of the political structure of Kano from its earliest beginnings in the conflict between the immigrants under Bagauda and the autochthonous people who rejected them as ritual or social equals, thereby defining the terms and outcomes of this basically ethnic conflict, to the centuries that followed the arrival of Islam and Kano’s successive subjugations to Borno, Songhai and Kebbi, with their curious, unacknowledged consequences for the throne, illustrated perhaps by the brief anomalous reigns of Dakauta (1 day) and Atuma his son (7 days) in 1452 A.D., immediately after Kano accepted Borno’s suzerainty under Abdullahi Burja (1438-1452), eleven years before the accession of Muhammad Rumfa.

The *Chronicle* also shows how the Hausa chiefdom survived two civil wars over the succession in 1565 and 1652, both fortunately brief and restricted in scale, together with a number of revolts, beginning with the Sarkin Gaya Farin Dutse in the reign of Muhammadu Dadi (1670-1703) and continuing thereafter with revolts at Kiru, Dutse and elsewhere, some of which, such as the revolt of Ada Gwauro, the Fulani Sarkin Ringim during the reign of Muhamman Kumbari, are omitted from the record, much as later
accounts of the reigns of the Fulani emirs who followed Alwali make little reference to the rebellions and revolts they had to deal with.

In short, the *Chronicle* by itself is neither a fully reliable nor a comprehensive guide to the history of Kano under its Hausa or Fulani chiefs. Fortunately it is now no longer the only source; and we should therefore exploit it with all others available to us, such as the *Asl al Wanjariyin*, the *Al-ilan bi tarikh Kano, Kano ta Dabo Cigan*, Alkali Zangi's *Taqyid al-Akbar*, and any others, local or ‘foreign’, which can check, enrich or shed light on these dark centuries of Kano and Hausa history. It would of course be quite absurd to treat any single document as the sole and authentic account of French or British history before or after the Roman withdrawal. Yet if so, why then, and for how much longer, will we discuss the *Chronicle* as though it is the sole document or source of information on Kano’s history before the Fulani conquest?

The *Chronicle* does to an extraordinary degree document the historical derivation of various hereditary offices (*sarautu*) which together provided the administrative framework of the chiefdom, distinguishing those of royal rank from others of clerical, noble, commoner, slave or eunuch rank, and distinguishing women’s titles from others. It documents their emergence, status and roles, noting the various lapsed offices that formed part of the Hausa officialdom in Alwali’s day and in previous reigns. The *Chronicle* by no means supplies a comprehensive account of the Hausa polity at Kano. As noted, it says very little about Baba Zaki’s fundamental reorganization of the officialdom and its communication structure, though fortunately Mallam Adamu records this, and in 1959 details could still be recovered from oral accounts.

Alone, the *Chronicle* can neither fully and accurately report the political history of Hausa Kano nor its political ethnography at Alwali’s day. However, for any understanding of the development and vicissitudes of the Hausa chiefdom or its organization on the eve of the Fulani jihad, it is not merely indispensable but irreplaceable. Without it, allowing for all the other available documents and sources of information, we should not have sufficient data to check externally the validity of any reconstruction we might make of the Hausa polity at Kano on the eve of its conquest and replacement. Neither would we be able to trace the processes of its evolution as a formation developed over several centuries to resolve struggles between an aggressive patrimonial chiefship and the oligarchies of competing aristocrats and slaves on which its rule was based, and with which the chiefship was closely associated. In the absence of a successor-state to Kano, the *Chronicle* still provides the finest and fullest independent check on the validity of historical reconstruction derived from inquiries within the contemporary state that scholars could ever hope for or expect. Moreover, as mentioned above, the *Chronicle* nicely documents the rebellions, revolts, civil wars and
other conflicts through which this political pattern emerged, perhaps because these were among the principal foci of interest for the authors, audience and contributors to that document. So whatever its chronological inaccuracies, Islamic anachronisms, historical metaphors, geographical analogies and other intellectual defects, this \textit{Chronicle}, like all other histories, not only represents the disorientations of its authors, but conveys, initially in broad outlines and later more specifically, the evolution of the Hausa polity at Kano over a period of several hundred years, not all of which were fully independent, though the \textit{Chronicle} almost ignores the difference between vassalage and sovereignty.

Several cultural developments recorded in the \textit{Chronicle} more or less accurately refer clearly to other Hausa states as well as Kano; for example, the opening of the caravan routes from Borno to Gonja and beyond in the 15th century A.D., as well as those running north to south; the arrival of Islam in the 14th century, with all that that implied; and its successive phases of consolidation under and after the Askia Mohammed throughout this area, until the jihad of the Shehu Usman dan Fodio. It records the engagement of Hausa states and economies in the southern-oriented trade of slaves for guns and cowries initiated at Kano under Sharefa (1703-1731), the continuous risk of dynastic conflicts, of civil war, rebellion, internal revolt and the like, given the oppressive nature of traditional Hausa regimes, based as they were on ideologies of descent, religious and ethnic difference. The radical distinction Islam enjoins between ‘believer’ and ‘heathen’ pervades the \textit{Chronicle} retrospectively, re-interpreting much of the early experience of Kano Hausa in categories far removed from their and our consciousness. Nonetheless, some of these categories, according to the record, were imposed on the subjugated peoples, for example their classifications as Maguzawa, Rumawa, Rumfawa and Gazarawa. Later under the leadership of the Shehu Usman dan Fodio, the Fulani promulgated and imposed another classification on Kano as a syncretistic or heathen state to be overrun, destroyed and done away with. Muhammad Alwali II (1781-1807 A.D.) was appointed by fate to deal with this challenge. The \textit{Chronicle} does less than justice to his indecisions and his efforts, but merely reports his defeat. To improve our understanding of this event, and many others reported in the \textit{Chronicle}, we have to look elsewhere for information and illumination. But does this differ in any material respect from the ordinary practice of historians in other countries?

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