Islam, Gender, and Slavery in West Africa 
Circa 1500: A Spatial Archaeology of the Kano Palace, Northern Nigeria

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One of the most important contributions geography has made to other social sciences since the 1970s has been to question the meaning of the term space. Such questioning allowed non-positivist human geographers to move beyond considering space as simply constructed socially to considering additionally how space constructed and constrained the social. As Massey (1993:146) points out, the “broad position—that the social and the spatial are inseparable and that the spatial form of the social has causal efficacy—is now accepted increasingly widely.” One way in which these positions have been theorized is through the metaphor of the “text” whereby the socio-spatial organization of material structure is seen to “write” or “speak” of and through certain power relations (Keith and Pile 1993; Daniels and Cosgrove 1993; Barnes and Duncan 1992; Duncan 1990). Moreover, social practice is increasingly seen as inherently spatial, an idea implied by the terms spatial praxis (Natter and Jones 1996). Despite these strides in geographic thinking, relatively little has been done to forge links with similar theoretical concepts and debates in disciplines such as anthropology (Ardeer 1993; Bourdieu 1992; Moore 1986), archaeology (Gero and Conkey 1993; Tilley 1991), and urban planning and architecture (Colomina 1992; Spain 1992; Roberts 1991), or with the most critical social thought of Michel Foucault.

In this paper, I attempt to marry critical geographical notions of landscape and spatial praxis with Foucault’s notion of “archaeology,” and to produce what is here deemed a “spatial archaeology.” Rather than remaining at a purely theoretical level, however, I do this through a case study of the Kano palace of northern Nigeria, perhaps the oldest, largest, and most important palace ever built in the sub-Saharan region (inset, Figure 1). Using a variety of field and other data that I collected between 1988 to 1990, I reconstruct the layout of the palace circa 1500, a time when Islamic scholars were beginning to have considerable influence on the state. Unlike other Foucauldian analyses, mine relies primarily on spatial rather than written textual data for a number of reasons. First, almost nothing has been written about the palace prior to the 1700s. There are no early documents that elaborate specifically on the palace or Kano City (birnin Kano), nor has there been any archaeological research. Moreover, scant archaeological information is available for Kano City proper (Last 1979; Darling 1989). The situation presents, therefore, a unique opportunity for treating extant spatial relations (specifically, those related to gender and slavery) as both textual and historical, and for broadening, empirically and theoretically, Foucault’s notion of archaeology.

The analysis suggests that the palace was built initially as a royal and Islamic household and house-of-state (a “state-household”) and that the layout and functions of the palace were shaped through the counsel of Islamic scholars. Internal palace organization pivoted around the seclusion of royal wives, the accommodation of massive slavery (including eunuchism and concubinage), and a strict gendered division of labor. Seclusion was especially important in that it promoted gendered and sexualized identities in stringently spatial ways. Royal women’s bodies were physically contained and thus more easily monitored, making their children’s paternity more certain. Paternity, something of heightened juridical importance in Islam, assumed increased importance as new territories were consolidated along paternal kinship lines through the capture and child-bearing of large numbers of...
concubines. At the same time, seclusion allowed for strict gendered spatial divisions of labor: Womanhood was identified with childbearing and the material reproduction of the “state-household” (grain taxation and counseling of the king-patriarch—especially with respect to royal marriages; also cooking, cleaning, spinning, and grounds upkeep) in heavily guarded “private” domains; manhood, in contrast, was associated with responsibilities of state (war, wall-building, nongrain taxation, and royal court functions) taking place in “public” areas outside the female domain. The analysis shows additionally that nonconcubine slave women were allowed to work in the “outside” world on behalf of royal women because they held no reproductive ties to the king. That their low status and mobility derived from their bodies not being marked as child-bearers of the patriarch-king, shows not only the degree to which seclusion and ideals of Islamic womanhood were underpinned by female “class” distinctions, but the degree to which the entire political economy of the new Islamic order prioritized the “seed” of the patriarch. Royal male-female interactions focused around producing and consolidating patriarchal kinship ties throughout the kingdom, and overall spatial divisions of the palace served to embody and promote heterosexualityized constructions of gender and the state. This interlocking of patriarchy and heterosexuality is
what Valentine (1993) refers to as heteropatriarchy.\(^2\)

The paper is divided into four sections. The first restates Foucault’s notion of archaeology within critical geographical conceptions of “space.” The next two sections discuss the historical-geographic sources on Kano and what they tell us about pre-Islamic life in Kano City and about the effects of Islamization and the building of the palace circa 1500. The final section interweaves sources, data, and methodologies into a spatial archaeology of the palace and an interpretation of Kano’s social constructions of gender, state slavery, and state formation. As will become clear, the analysis holds promise for eliciting new kinds of data that can be used in understanding the interrelations between space and power. This is especially important for studies of West Africa, where most of what does exist in the form of historical documents, is written by and for men, about male interests and places (Nast 1994).\(^3\)

**Making Foucault’s Archaeology Spatial**

The concept of “archaeology” appeared in Foucault’s earliest works (1967; 1973; 1970; 1974) as a metaphor for his explorations of discursive structures as conduits for power and knowledge. By discursive Foucault meant systems of written representation produced by particular political configurations that promote, and are tied to, specific epistemologies or ways of knowing the world. According to Foucault, discourses referred back to one another in ways that reinforce how events or things are recorded and hence constructed. Foucault emphasized the discursive because, for him, objects—be they social categories, human bodies, material things, or institutions—are known largely through written and spoken language, that is, by being named and brought into socially legitimate and disciplining linguistic realms (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983; Tilley 1991).

Thus, in *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault treats the term madness as a key word, the utility and meaning of which changed radically over time. He uneartns these changes by examining madness’s embeddedness in statements made by those in positions of authority.

He shows how specific political interests mediated the definition of madness (as an object) and the ways it was studied and treated. As discursive representations of madness changed, so did madness itself. In this way, Foucault reconceptualizes madness neither as a discrete entity having an absolute meaning nor as a thing whose meaning changes in gradual evolutionary ways, but as a discursive construction wrought from vastly disparate materials by vastly different political interests and power structures.\(^4\) The linguistic stability of the designation “madness” thus belies worlds of epistemic difference; madness assumes different meanings according to its epistemic context.

One of the drawbacks to Foucault’s early work is his treatment of the discursive domain as autonomous from non-discursive material realms. He does not consider materiality as part and parcel of signifying processes. He also sees historical discontinuities between discursive constructions (of “madness,” for example) as absolute. Former discursive pasts, in other words, are understood as historically contained such that they do not mediate future constructions (Tilley 1991). Foucault reworks some of these premises in his later work where he replaces the term “archaeology” with “genealogy.” As Tilley (1991:307) explains,

Foucault’s genealogical history can be regarded as supplementing or extending rather than contradicting his “archaeologies.” An “archaeological” study forms a necessary basis for carrying out a genealogical analysis. The major difference in Foucault’s later work . . . is that he is far more concerned than previously with the relationship between discursive and non-discursive practices . . . An emphasis on the supposed autonomy of discourse is abandoned by investigations which show how the discursive and non-discursive mediate or serve to form each other. Discourse is linked with power and forms of social domination. We might state that while archaeology is a descriptive analysis concerned with what statements are actually made, genealogy is a critical analysis of the social conditions of existence of these statements, their relationship to power . . . Genealogy does not revert to a search for deep meanings or an evolutionary trajectory in history. It rather questions the political status of meaning and discourse in relation to power.

The most cited example of this transformation is Foucault’s analysis of Jeremy Bentham’s panoptical prison in which a guard, sitting in a tower set in the core of the round structure, single-handedly watches over prisoners sur-
The Kano Palace

rounding him in truncated wedge-shaped cells (Foucault 1979). In this example, Foucault shows how architectural arrangements embodied specific spatial expressions of power and how these in turn were linked to the Enlightenment’s emphasis on knowledge acquisition as a mostly visual process predicated on a strict dichotomy between subject (those in power who “look”) and object (those under purview). Hence, the later Foucault came to regard spatial and material relations as media of signification; his “non-discursive” realm becoming discursive and therefore subject to the kinds of interrogation he had once reserved primarily for the written word.

Nonetheless, Foucault mostly concerns himself with hegemonic institutional discourses, that is, statements and actions made by those in authority (Bartkowski 1988). Consequently, he seems primarily concerned with how the bodies and spaces of those in power are constructed. It is unsurprising, then, that Foucault pays so little attention to gender. As Barty (1988:63–644) points out in reference to Discipline and Punish (1979), Foucault treats the body:

as if it were one, as if the bodily experiences of men and women did not differ and as if men and women bore the same relationship to the characteristic institutions of modern life . . . . Women, like men, are subject to many of the same disciplinary practices Foucault describes. But he is blind to those disciplines that produce a modality of embodiment that is peculiarly feminine. To over look the forms of subjection that engender the feminine body is to perpetuate the silence and powerlessness of those upon whom these disciplines have been imposed. Hence, even though a liberatory note is sounded in Foucault’s critique of power, his analysis as a whole reproduces that sexism which is endemic throughout Western political theory.3

In some cases he also treats bodies and places as tabula rasa onto which discursive relations are inscribed, such that bodily experiences and negotiations of spatiality are subsumed by discussion of the effects of power across bodily surfaces.4 Space and bodies become transcendental objects ontologically distinct from language per se. Foucault’s works thus muffs the voices and marginalizes the places of those excluded from the dominant order of things, especially those of women.

This paper amends Foucault’s perspectives by emphasizing more forcefully the spatiality of discourse; it regards places and bodies not as transcendent categories, but rather as constructed through spatial praxis (Fraser 1991). Such a re-casting is premised on the assumption that every human act is at once spatial and linguistic; the spatial is linguistic (Nast 1994a). Accordingly, we may learn a great deal about political relations from spatial relations. By embracing spatiality as part of signification, we are better able literally to locate and thus “hear” those who are excluded from the dominant institutional circuits of knowledge and power production. Before discussing how spatial relations were analyzed archaeologically, however, I offer a brief overview of the sources for Kano City’s historical geography.

The Historical Geography of Kano

Archaeological Data and Written Sources

Kano City is located in the southern part of Hausaland, a linguistic subregion of present-day northern Nigeria and southern Niger (inset, Figure 1). In this region, Hausa is the primary spoken language and Islam is the dominant religion. Philips (1989:39–40) reminds us that the term Hausa does not refer to a single cultural or racial group, but rather an ethno-linguistic group (see also Lavers 1980). Barkow (1972:317) suggests that the term Hausa should be considered as a “general appellation for a number of overlapping subcultures all of which are characterized by mutually intelligible dialects of the Hausa language and often by some variant of a myth of origin known as the Daura (or Bayajida) legend.”

Ethno-linguistic origins of the Hausa are obscure. Linguistic analysis of loanwords suggests that Hausa was highly influenced by Kanuri, a language of the Kanem-Borno empire northeast of Kano which arose in the late 1200s. As Philips (1989:49) writes:

Words concerned with literacy, trade, urbanization, government, warfare, and even specialized agriculture are commonly from Kanuri. It thus appears that the influence of the Kanuri on the Hausa was important during the formative period of Hausa cultural development. The distinctive form of Hausa polity, a walled city-state with a Muslim, calvary-based aristocracy and a Muslim merchant class engaged in long-distance trade, apparently owes much to the influence of the old Kanem-Borno empire nearby. Considering the time depth
involved, it is not far-fetched to suppose that the adoption of these aspects of culture from the Kanuri is what enabled the Hausa speaking peoples to expand and spread their language and culture so rapidly during the past several centuries. The oral traditions of early dynasties in eastern Hausaland confirm this idea. . . . The legend of Bayajida has this great early ancestor . . . passing through Bornu and having a series of adventures there.

Loanwords from a wide number of sources additionally suggest that Kano was also in contact with Mali at this time (Philips 1989:53).

Within the context of Kano history, the problem of origins is heightened by the fact that few historical details are known about when and how Kano City was settled, or by whom (see Last 1979). The only "hard" fact about Kano City derives from radiocarbon-dating of ancient iron-smelting furnaces on the north side of Dalla Hill. These data show that the area was used as far back as the seventh century A.D. (Jaggar 1973). Most historical clues come from written sources. The most important early source in terms of this study is The Crown of Religion Concerning the Obligation of Princes (hereafter CR), a treatise on proper Islamic government written by the Algerian scholar al-Maghili for King Muhammad Rumfa (1463–1499). The text says nothing, however, about everyday Kano life or pre-Islamic customs. Most of what is known about the transition from pre-Islamic to Islamic life in Kano is gleaned from these sources: 1) oral traditions recorded in the "Song of Bagauda" (a long Hausa poem of unknown historical origins, one part of which consists of a kinglist); 2) the Kano Chronicle (the name given to a number of manuscripts that seem to have been copied from one another, all of which probably derive from the late nineteenth century (Hunwick 1994a; Lovejoy et al. 1993); and 3) Kano ta Dabo Cigar (a text written in 1958 by Alhaji Abubakar Wazirin Kano and based largely on materials in the Kano Chronicle; see Hunwick 1994a). The most important of these latter documents is the Kano Chronicle (hereafter KC).

The Kano Chronicle and The Crown of Religion Concerning the Obligation of Princes. The KC is somewhat like a king-list in that it lists the name and numbers of years that Kano kings reigned; it is different from them, however, in that it reports at some length on events taking place during each king's reign. For this reason it is an invaluable historical source. As Smith (1983:31) notes, "[i]n 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."

Originally written in Arabic, the KC spans the period from Barbush, a pagan king who supposedly lived on Dalla Hill in present day Kano City sometime before the tenth century, to the reign of Emir Bello (1882–1893). The actual text contains no dates, the dates provided in Palmer's (1967) English translation of the text having been derived by him through working backwards in time from a known date (the 1807 overthow of the last Hausa King, Alwali, by Fulani jihadists) using the regnal lengths as stated in the KC (Hunwick 1994a). Formerly, it was thought that the KC was a compilation of mostly written materials, the first section of which was recorded sometime in the mid-sixteenth (Smith 1983) or midseventeenth (Last 1983) centuries, the text being added onto periodically thereafter. More recently, however, it has been established that the text was compiled largely from oral tradition sometime in the late nineteenth century either by a senior slave official (Lovejoy et al. 1993) or by one or more malams working collaboratively with one or more palace officials (Hunwick 1994a). Hunwick (1994a:14) argues that the KC should "be viewed within the context of the nascent chronicle tradition of the 19th century . . . and should be seen essentially as the most developed form of that tradition."

While the recency of the document makes it difficult to ascertain the exactitude of many of the historical details described in the text, the chronology of events "at least back to c.1500, has been corroborated by dates from other sources for events mentioned in the KC" (Hunwick 1994a:14). Thus, for example, the KC notes that the renowned cleric from Tlemcen (Algeria), al-Maghili, visited Kano during the reign of Muhammad Rumfa (1463–1499), an event recorded in passing in the early 1600s by al-Maghili's biographer, Ahmad Baba (Hunwick 1993; 1994a). Based on comparative study, Hunwick (1994a:17) considers that "[t]he period of greatest accuracy in regard to both sequence and regnal lengths begins with
the reign of Muhammad Runfa [sic] and it would appear to be from his time (or a little earlier) that Islam began to become well established in Kano.” This is not to say that the KC contains no historical errors or omissions. The KC conflates al-Maghili’s visit to Kano, for example, with that of another Arab scholar, Abd al-Rahman, who may have visited Kano after al-Maghili’s departure (see Hunwick 1993). Last (1983; 1979), in particular, has been especially careful to point out the tenuousness of relying on this document alone. Disclaimers notwithstanding, he and other scholars draw extensively on the KC in exploring Kano’s early history. While most scholars have ascertained the factual accuracy of the KC by comparing it with other texts, this work concentrates more on comparing socio-spatial data collected in the palace with the socio-spatial data recorded in the KC.

The CR, written by al-Maghili who is believed to have arrived in Kano circa 1492, is said to have been written at King Muhammadu Rumfa’s (1463–1499) request. The text, which contains much information on proper Islamic rule, is part of a genre of Islamic political literature called “Mirrors for Princes.” According to Gwarzo et al. (1974/77:16), the latter are essays that “describe the qualities and behaviour of good Muslim rulers and equate the welfare of the ruler with the welfare of his domain... Al-Maghili’s ‘Mirror’ is also contemporary in time and similar in inspiration and content with The Prince, a prominent work of European political theory, written by Niccolo Machiavelli in 1513.” Again, while most scholars have dealt with this text in terms of political history, comparing it with other texts and oral traditions, I use it primarily as a source for clues to the spatial organization of the palace. What follows summarizes what little is known about pre-Islamic Kano based upon the preceding sources in conjunction with information provided in more recent studies on Kano. A brief overview of the Islamization of Kano is then presented. Both sections provide a backdrop for understanding the importance of the Kano palace.

Pre-Islamic Settlement Systems and the Rise of Kano

Last (1979) is one of the few scholars who has tried to elicit spatial information from the KC and integrate it with other geographical and archaeological data, much of which he and others have gathered. According to Last (1979), the Kano City region was in Late Stone Age times part of a settlement cluster associated with six hills, all north of the Challawa River (Figure 1). Dalla Hill, around which Kano City would eventually be built, was adjacent to the smaller River Jakara. The most prominent of the hills, Dalla was important as a source of iron-rich laterites used in early iron smelting. Initially, the larger Dalla settlement system was subordinate to more powerful ethnic groups in two hill systems to the southeast (Santolo and Fangwai) along the bend of the Challawa River. Last (1979:10) surmises that:

[with the start of iron-working in the first millennium A.D. the Chalawa Bend culture used Dalla hill and other sources of good laterite to the north for their supplies of iron ore, but the dominant industry remained farming, hunting, and probably fishing, though ritual objects appear to have been made now of iron.]

Spatial analysis of the remains of city walls and moats suggest that a circular wall around Kano was built sometime between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, perhaps out of hedges (Figure 2; Barkindo 1983). Last’s (1979) work suggests that wall-building signaled a decisive shift in the political and cultural composition of the area. In particular, he notes that the Dalla Hill settlement system emerged as a political force, defeating and dispersing Fangwai and Santolo settlement groups. Their victories stemmed in part from their location along a nexus of trade routes that ultimately linked them to Islamicized commercial and political centers in North and West Africa. Not coincidentally, it was at this time that many political and commercial leaders became Muslims, leading Last (1979:15) to deem the fourteenth century the “early Muslim period.”

To wit, Malian scholars and missionaries (the Wangarawa) arrived in the fourteenth century at a time when Mali was at its political and economic apogee (Barkindo 1983:4). Last (1979:17) suggests that:

Dalla’s iron-working may have attracted the Wangarawa, particularly if iron goods were currency; or Dalla may simply have been more convenient, with the Jakara [river] providing a better water supply or easier grazing. But it would also be consistent with normal Wangara practice to prefer the ritually less important Dalla as their base. Islam
King Bugaya (1385–1390) expelled the Maguzawa from Fangwai causing them “to scatter themselves through the country” (Palmer 1967:107).

During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Dalla’s contacts with West and North African kingdoms expanded. Especially important links were forged with the kingdom of Kanembu to the east, Dalla eventually becoming tributary to Borno during the reign of Abdullahi Burja (1438–1452; Philips 1989; Hunwick 1985). As Hunwick (1985:330) notes:

by the end of the fourteenth century horses were common enough in Kano to permit them to be traded against slaves with the Kororofa of the Benue valley [to the southeast]. Around this time too Kano [the walled settlement around Dalla Hill] is said to have acquired mail coats, iron helmets and quilted “armour” (litidi in Hausa from the Arabic lubd), probably through Borno and ultimately from Egypt. Such protection, and the larger stronger horses it presupposes, gave the state which possessed them a considerable advantage over their neighbors. It is no surprise, therefore, to find mention of large numbers of slaves coming into Kano in the first half of the fifteenth century. Stronger horses and better equipped warriors facilitated warfare on a larger and wider scale than hitherto; the captives taken in these wars and made into slaves could then be used in building, agricultural and other manual labours, while some could be exchanged for further horses.

Trade also expanded to the southwest. King Abdullahi Burja (1452–1463), for example, is said to have sent 10 horses to the king of Nupeland in exchange for 12 eunuchs, the first transaction of this kind recorded. Eunuchs were a very elite kind of slave reserved for royalty and are thought to have first entered Hausaland during the reign of King Dauda (1421–1438). Specifically, the KC states that the King of Nupe sent 40 eunuchs and 10,000 kola nuts to Queen Amina (the ruler of Zazzau [Zaria], a Hausa kingdom to the southwest) as tribute following her conquest of towns up to the Nupe border (Figure 3). The presence of eunuchs is important since it indicates that slaves were being used as state functionaries at this time.

Other important trade connections with Dalla were, established with the region of Gonja, a source of kola nuts and gold centered along that portion of the Volta River north of the gold fields and forests of Ghana. Dalla gained direct access to Gonja with the building of a direct Borno-Gonja trade route extending from Gazargum to Begho (Figure 3). The road
may have been established as a result of Wangarawa merchants/scholars in Dalla and Katsina seeking out a shorter route to central Ghana where other Wangarawa had been trading in gold and kola nuts since the latter half of the 1300s. The presence of the road, later Arab immigration to Dalla (principals in the trans-Saharan trade), and the prevalence of salt (the prime commodity used by the Wangarawa in gold-trading) at this time all suggest that gold became common in Dalla by the mid-1400s (Hunwick 1985:332–333). Additional and important trade connections to Dalla were forged with Egypt and North Africa through trade with the kingdom of Air to the north (Figure 3).

Thus by the fifteenth century, Dalla had gained ascendancy over the former Fangwai/Santolo settlement systems, the settlement around Dalla Hill had been walled and the area was connected through trade to Egypt and sahelian and North African kingdoms (Hunwick 1985; Last 1979). In addition, craftsmen, Islamic scholars and merchants (the latter two often associated), including the Wangarawa, Bornoans, Arabs, Tuaregs, Nupe, and Kwarara, had migrated into the walled settlement around Dalla Hill. This, along with increases in local productivity due to the use of iron in farming and hunting, presumably diversified and increased the population of Dalla settlement system. It is not known when the Dalla Hill settlement gained pre-eminence over the entire hill system or when it was first called Kano; the name Kano is first recorded in late fifteenth-century Arabic sources (al-Maghili and Leo Africanus), while early Borno sources still refer to the city as Dalla (Last 1979:14). Based on data in the KC, Last (1983) surmises that up through the first half of the fifteenth century the state was still not rooted to any single place and hence Dalla (Kano) was not yet its capital.

Data in the KC also indicate that by the 1400s a somewhat elaborate state structure was in place, having developed during and after the
reign of King Bagauda’s 11 (999–1063) son, King Warisi (1063–1095). The latter is said to have had a number of title-holding counsellors who were also warriors and territorial chiefs, among them Galadima, Maidawaki, and Makama, titles which still exist today. Soon thereafter a number of other titles were conferred on princes, both groups’ titles developing and expanding over succeeding years eventually to form a single pool of shared state titles. In addition, some form of taxation may have been exacted as early as King Naguji (1194–1247) who is said to have levied a grain tax equalling one-eighth of production, presumably on farmsteads in and near the city (see Palmer 1967:101; see, however, Garba 1986 who claims this may be a century or two too early). Court protocol also seems to have become more elaborate: long horns were first employed during the reign of Tsamia (1307–1343), while drums, trumpets, flags were introduced through the agency of an exiled Bornon prince during the reign of King Dauda (1421–1438). One can infer that the introduction of eunuchs and increases in state slaveholdings in the 1400s additionally led to a larger and more intricate state bureaucracy, though there is little evidence that slaves held high state titles at this time. Lastly, by the mid-1400s marriages as political tools were used increasingly to strengthen territorial alliances. Thus Abdullahi Burja is said to have been the first king to marry daughters of three local kings and one of his territorial chiefs, Galadima.

Given that many of these changes came about as the result of Kano’s trade with the Islamic world, it is reasonable to surmise that Islam had some impact at the state level. King Yaji (1349–1385), for example, is said to have observed Islamic times of prayer and to have appointed one or two mosque officials, though there is evidence that the KC may have confused events occurring in his reign with ones 150 years hence. The KC also tells us that King Umaru (1410–1421) was a very religious man who left most administrative tasks to his Galadima. Lastly, the KC tells us that Fulani scholars arrived from Mali during the reign of King Burja, bringing with them:

books on Divinity and Etymology. Formerly our doctors had in addition to the Koran, only the books of the Law and the Traditions. The Fulani passed by and went to Bornu leaving a few men in Hausaland, together with some slaves and people who were tired of journeying. (Palmer 1967:111)

 Nonetheless, it is doubtful that Islam had much impact on governmental structures in the city or on personal beliefs of those in the hinterland and non-Muslim areas of Dalla City. Perhaps the largest impact on the latter groups was a negative one: non-Muslims were deemed Maguzawa (a word deriving from the Arabic word Majus or “pagan”) and were regularly raided.

This chronology provides the backdrop for an overview of pre-Islamic cultural life in the region and Islam’s effects upon it with the building of the palace and the consequent establishment of an Islamic sultanate during the reign of King Ruma (1463–1499).

The Maguzawa

The term Maguzawa designates: 1) those “pagans” expelled from Kano in the fourteenth century; 2) those who resettled in nearby outlying regions; and 3) more generally those who never accepted Islam. The term encompasses a variety of ethnic groups of unknown origin, many of which still reside in the Kano region and surrounding areas (see Barkow 1972:318). Understanding the shared characteristics of these non-Islamic groups (hereafter designated as Maguzawa) is helpful in assessing Islam’s affects on indigenous peoples.

One of the most striking characteristics of contemporary Maguzawa is the ancient practice of bori. As Paden (1973:46–47) notes:

The cult of bori [a spirit worship cult] is primarily related to healing and medicine. Religious authority is vested in bori priests and priestesses who, through intensive drumming and dancing, create a hypnotic state of ecstasy. At the point of ecstasy, the supplicant is believed able to communicate directly with the particular spirit (iska) being solicited. . . . Palmer [a colonial administrative official during the early 1900s] suggests that bori religion is animistic in the technical sense: “Bori is a Hausa common noun, and means a sacred and occult force which resides in matter.” Succession to bori leadership is not necessarily inherited. Anyone who can demonstrate special powers is regarded as a legitimate bori priest or priestess. . . .

Barkow’s (1972) comparative research on two neighboring rural communities, one Muslim the other Maguzawa, suggests a number of ways in which Islam affected early non-
Muslim peoples. Most importantly, Barkow notes that Maguzawa women are not se-cluded. They carry out most of the heavy agri-cultural labor of family fields in the day and they work their own “private” fields at other times (see also Greenberg 1946). Additionally, they engage in spinning, weaving, and beer-brewing activities. The emphasis on farming means they devote significantly less time to intensive crafts production, unlike their se-cluded Muslim counterparts.

Pre-puberty daughters of Maguzawa women also participate in farming, again unlike their Muslim cohorts whose daughters serve as trade intermediaries hawking crafts made by their secluded mothers. Through Islamic seclu-sion, then, an age- and gender-based division of labor is cultivated that paradoxically pro-motes craft labor specialization, in the process allowing women to create and retain larger value-added contributions to the local cash economy. Unlike adult Muslim women, how-ever, Maguzawa women do frequent local markets and their daughters are less stringently restrained and disciplined in their sexuality, bodily gestures, and daily movements.

Like their Islamic counterparts, Maguzawa women are able to divorce their husbands, but they generally do so more frequently. Maguzawa men meanwhile may marry more than one wife, but they typically have fewer wives than their Islamic counterparts whose faith limits them to four. Significantly, Maguzawa relig-iou practices include women in important ways. Women are charged with some religious functions even though compound heads serve as priests of religious rituals related to the gods and spirits of respective clan (rites vary sub-stantially with clan affinity). Most importantly:

the spirit possession cult (bori) is almost entirely the domain of women. Only a woman who is also a cult member may serve as an intermediary. The possession cult serves in addition as a society curing and divining, especially useful in cases of barrenness. (Barkow 1972:326)

Perhaps related to women’s significant religious roles is the notable absence of gendered architectural divisions in Maguzawa com-pounds, though there is a gendered division of labor (Barkow 1992). Thus, Maguzawa women intermingle spatially with men both inside and outside the house, albeit such intermingling is structured according to roles of age and kin-ship. The results of Barkow’s study suggest that Islam affected gender relations in substantial socio-spatial ways in all spheres of life with perhaps the most striking differences deriving from wife seclusion. While seclusion was prob-ably not implemented all at once as Islam spread among ethnic groups in the region, my research on the palace indicates that its origins stem in part from the socio-spatial model first established in the Kano palace.

The Islamization of West Africa: The Kano Palace and Muhammadu Rumfa (1463-1499)

The coming of Islamic scholars to Kano outlined above was not an isolated event. Between approximately A.D. 1000 and 1600, Is-lamic scholars, traders, and missionaries migrated from North Africa to much of West Af-rica primarily in search of gold and salt re-sources. The close association of religious and commercial endeavours resulted in the partial Islamization of West Africa (Hunwick 1985; Clarke 1982; Fage 1969). The reign of Muhamadu Rumfa (1463-1499) is especially important in this regard in that he is recognized in the KC and other oral traditions as the king who firmly established Islam in Kano at the state level and during whose reign Islam became more widely accepted (Hunwick 1994a:14-17).

Last (1983:70) claims that just prior to Rumfa’s reign, the region contained two main political factions, neither of which stayed in one place for very long and neither of which considered Kano its formal capital. The first faction, which was Muslim and associated with the Wangara, derived from the reign of King Yayi (1349-1385) and lived near Dalla Hill. They were affiliated politically with towns west and south of the city. The second faction derived from the reign of King Kanajeye (1390-1410). Based in southern and eastern Kano, this faction was allied with groups north and east of the city, including the Tuareg and Sao. Though Rumfa’s origins are not known, Last (1983:70, 72), drawing primarily on information in the KC, suggests that he was not a native of Kano:

It is possible he had Berber or Tuareg links—not necessarily by birth but by employment—or was generally of Aspen origin. . . . Thus Rumfa’s nick-
name "balabareb Saraki" (the Arab King) might be more than a mere metaphor.

Though Rumfa may have been originally employed by the eastern faction or its allies, he was a Muslim presumably acceptable to the existing Muslim faction. Indeed he seems to have been a "new man," not strictly identifiable with any particular role or group.

Rumfa’s reign was particularly eventful in part because of his engagement with Islamic scholars and trade. One of the most renowned scholars said to have counselled Rumfa was the North African, jurist and scholar al-Maghili from Temcen (Algeria) who wrote “The Crown of Religion Concerning the Obligation of Princes” specifically for Rumfa. Al-Maghili stayed in Kano several years before moving on to Songhay to counsel and write for the Askia Muhammad I (1493–1528). Another renowned scholar of Arab origins who may have passed through Kano either during or just after Rumfa’s reign was Abd al-Rahman, born in Granada but raised in Fez. According to al-Rahman’s biographer, Ahmad Baba, al-Rahman lived in Kano for several years prior to 1518, after completing the hajj (or Islamic pilgrimage) to Mecca and a scholarly sojourn in Egypt. While al-Rahman’s presence cannot be established with certainty (the account conflicts with the Kano Chronicle which states that he arrived during the reign of Rumfa [Hunwick 1993]), the fact that he is mentioned in two separate sources as having visited Kano is significant in that it points to the importance of Kano at this time as a center of Islamic learning.

Rumfa is credited in the KC with a number of religious, economic, and political reforms, many of which speak of a strong Islamic influence deriving ultimately from North Africa and/or possibly the Ottoman Empire. In terms of religious reforms, a Friday mosque and minaret were built over a pagan religious site and standard Islamic religious festivals were instituted. Rumfa also constructed the central city market (Kurmi Market) on former pagan religious grounds along the banks of the River Jakara. Most importantly, Rumfa built the massive Kano palace, an historic site that for the first time rooted the state to one place. Its permanence and enormity facilitated the growth and stability of the state along with an elaborate and Islamicized political culture (Figure 2).

The siting of the palace outside the walled city in a separate walled suburb was unique and, according to Lavers (1981), held religious significance, namely, the symbolic and physical distancing of the aristocracy from pre-Islamic practices in the city. The untraditional rectangular shapes of the suburb and the palace walls also held religious meaning: The linearity of the walls enabled the southern portions to be aligned so as to point to Mecca, a physical sign of the state’s commitment to Islam (Lavers 1981). Last (1983:68) points out that these arrangements were not unusual in North Africa nor in Europe:

such a plan—castle, bailey and attached walled town with its mosque opening onto the market place—was the lay-out standard at this time in north Africa (at Tunis for example) and Europe, and demonstrates the way Kano was very much part of the international world. Indeed in the mid-16th century Kano was described as being one of the three main towns in Africa, on a par with Fez and Cairo.

Lavers (1981) suggests that the suburban location and rectangular plan of the palace may have derived from Temcen (Algeria), which was surrounded by a number of such suburbs, the model perhaps being proposed by al-Maghili. Al-Maghili had in fact warned the King against pagans contaminating Muslims through contact with them in public places such as markets (see Hunwick 1985:338).

Within the palace, Rumfa introduced a number of innovations in political culture that speak of additional North African Islamic influence, even if mediated through Western empires. Rumfa instituted royal wife seclusion along with massive concubinage, the latter institutions being of similar magnitude in Songhay under Askia Muhammad I (1493–1528; see Hunwick 1958:347). Moreover, the first formal (and all male) state council or Tara ta Kano (“the Kano Nine”) was instituted which, according to Fika (1978:9), signalled the building up of an Islamic sultanate. Institution of the council was doubly significant in that it effectively precluded women’s direct participation in kingship succession and other executive-level decision-making (see Sa’id 1978:52). In a decisive break with princely precedents, the Kano Nine was made up of non-royal chief or slave lineages—a clue perhaps to the rise of a state slave bureaucracy similar to that which existed in other Islamic sultanates such as Songhay and the Ottoman Empire. Most important among these councillor-slaves were eunuchs, whom Rumfa
was the first to appoint to high state office. Rumfa appointed four or five additional eunuchs to the first Islamic state treasury or beit-al-mal—positions which would have required literacy (Palmer 1967:112). Such an appointment presumably derived from al-Maghili’s injunction that the king appoint “trustworthy treasurers to collect money and pay out money and book keepers and accountants who will keep their books up to date” (Gwarzo et al. 1974/77:18). Intriguingly, sultan Murat II (1421–1451) had decades earlier instituted a similar eunuch-run treasury in the Ottoman Empire, indicating that political intelligence about the training and deployment of eunuchs may have derived from this area (Izveddin 1962:110). Many other eunuchs were also entitled and assigned important domestic and state tasks (see Fika 1978:10; and below). As Fika (1978:10) suggests, eunuchs were more useful than princes or other nobility in centralizing state powers because eunuchs had no children on whose behalf kingly allegiances might be divided.

Rumfa is said to have begun the traditions of prostration and the throwing of dust on one’s head before the king, of the royal attendance of an additional horse and cadre of mounted slave bodyguards when he was on the battlefield, and of pomp and ceremony in court life—the use, for examples, of special trumpets known as kakaki and ostrich-feather sandals. Kakaki were also reserved for royalty in Songhay during the reign of Askia Muhammad I (1493–1528) who introduced the horns after his first trade expedition to Air, an entrepôt tied to both the Maghrib and Egypt, connections suggesting that the horns derived from North Africa (see Hunwick 1985:349). Such a provenance accords with Last’s (1983:69) remark that the traditions begun by Rumfa were typical of other parts of the North African Islamic world:

[The pomp, for which some traditions criticise him as being un-Islamic, was common enough in the Hafsid Tunis or the Mamluck Cairo of the period. . . . Rumfa earned himself the nickname of “the Arab king” . . . perhaps in recognition of those models.]

Lastly, it was al-Maghili who urged the king to employ “spies and bodyguards.” Rumfa’s various innovations undoubtedly required a substantial increase in slave functionaries. Intriguingly, Islamic scholars are also said to have introduced clitoridectomy into Kano around the time of Rumfa (Last 1983:69). As Boddy (1993; 1989) has pointed out with respect to contemporary northern Muslim Sudan, clitoridectomy—and more specifically in the Sudanese case, infibulation—is a cultural means through which gendered bodily differences are physically inscribed. By cutting away genital tissues thought to protrude and thus resemble a man’s, feminized bodies are appropriately marked, secured, and sanctified. Obversely, “the male body is masculinized, uncovered, opened to confront the world.” Such gendered bodily aesthetics are mimetically reproduced in Sudan at a number of material levels. For example, “the female body . . . is both metonym and icon for village society, defended from external threat by her own scar tissue, compound walls, and the defensive efforts of local men” at the same time that the inner household domain for women is designated as the belly or womb. While it is impossible to ascertain the cultural significance of clitoridectomies during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in either place, there are many striking parallels between the metonymic associations of women and men with “inside” and “outside” domains, respectively, (as described by Boddy), and the gendered associations I describe with respect to the palace, below.

A number of bodily and socio-spatial innovations reminiscent of Islamic political culture were thus introduced into Kano during Rumfa’s reign, and these were concentrated around palace life. Many of these innovations revolved around the creation of gendered and slave-based divisions of labor appropriate to a new Islamicized model of state rule.

The Kano Palace Circa 1500: A Spatial Archaeology

The organization of palace life was derived from the interplay of various spatial and social data from a number of different time periods. I interrogated how physical areas of the palace were built up and/or used for different purposes over time. I also questioned how particular kinds of power relations imbued places with political and cultural significance and how these relations and their place meanings gradually changed or ruptured. I linked these ques-
tions to others, e.g., how did the physical positioning and official titles (almost everyone holds a title which defines their position within the palace division of labor) of individuals change historically and what do these changes have to say about economic and political changes, especially in the context of slavery and gender. In this way I "reconstructed" successively older "layers" of material relations and meaning within the palace landscape.

Most of the field data was collected with the assistance of members of the palace community. Field and other materials were elicited from a variety of sources, written and material, and these sources were used and queried in relation to one another. Written materials such as the KC and CR, for example, were used in conjunction with colonial archival maps, photographs, and reports (1903–1960) and with oral interview data, field information on palace places, architectural types, and visible ruins, as well as contemporary aerial photographs, maps, and settlement plans. Much of the palace field data was discussed at length with members of the palace community (see Nast 1992). In general, the further I went back in time, the more I relied on "objective" kinds of data (e.g., maps, aerial photographs, and historical sources; Figure 4). The focus on different kinds of sources over time, and the interweaving of material, spatial, and written sources helped me "peel back" the layers of palace history, exemplifying what I earlier described as a "spatial archaeology." In this way, I was able to derive clues on the intersections of gender relations and state formation, something I would not have been able to do had I relied only on written sources authored exclusively by men and detailing masculine exploits and places.

**Primary Data Types Used for Different Time Periods in Spatial Archaeology**

- **Present Day**
  - The Colonial Period
    - 1903–1960
  - Post-Colonial Period
    - 1960–present

- Pre-Colonial "Fulani" Period
  - 1807–1903

- Pre-Fulani "Hausa" Period
  - circa 1500–1807

- **Aerial Photographs**
  - Settlement Pattern Maps of Kano
  - Etymological/Linguistic Data
  - Secondary Sources (1500s–present)
  - Modern-day Vernacular House Plans

- **Ethnographic Data**
  - Mapping Ruins and Places in Archival Photographs
  - Mapping of Architectural Types

- **Mapping Contemporary Places**
  - Ethnographic Data
  - Colonial Archival Documents

**Figure 4.** Spatial archaeology: a diagrammatic depiction of the data and methods used in the analysis of the Kano palace. While different methods were generally deployed for different time periods, the data secured were commonly compared across time periods, this interplay producing additional insights.
Perhaps the clearest case of how archaeological endeavors were conducted concerns the peeling back of nineteenth-century landscape "layers" in order to reveal clues on earlier ways of life (Figure 4). Accomplishing this involved primarily detailed field mapping of relevant places, structures, slave hierarchies, and place names using mostly the "subjective" methods of in-depth interviewing, field study of palace ruins, co-operand identification of sites in archival photographs, mapping of architectural types, culling spatial clues from primary to secondary historical sources (such as Barth 1890; Clapperton 1928; Ferguson 1973), and so on. I was interested to know not only the names of places and who lived there, but how the socio-spatial structures were interlinked. Why, for example, was a place here and not there? To what other places was it linked? In what way did these linkages among places facilitate or constrain certain social and political relations? Moreover, did the meaning, function, or significance of particular places, place names, and royal or slave titles change, despite an unchangingness in formal spoken signifiers? Obversely, if the siting, materiality, positionality or existence of places, place names, and titles changed, how was this related to changing political and social circumstances and movements? Through such relational questioning, I reconstructed a socio-spatial archaeology/genealogy of gendered divisions of palace labor for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (note that there were substantial political and spatial changes during these centuries; for example, Nast 1994b; 1993; 1992).

The exercise in part revealed that the present-day southern palace entrance was only built in the mid-nineteenth century (it was opened to facilitate linkages to a Fulani pastoral slave estate) and, secondly, that the opening up of the new entrance was tied to a massive re-orientation of the palace towards the south. Re-orientation was tied to the construction of a number of new southerly palace structures, including a large eunuch colony, adjacent monumental chambers for the king, and a large male slave community. "Subtracting" these domains significantly aided in understanding what the palace did not look like prior to 1800.

Before going on to discuss how pre-nineteenth-century socio-spatial structures were derived, the difficulties of analyzing this period should be noted. Part of the problem is that no one I interviewed knew anything about life prior to 1800. This was primarily so because a completely different ethnic group, the Fulani, had replaced the Hausa in 1807 following an Islamic jihad. Moreover, among the slave men I interviewed (slaves being mostly of non-Fulani descent), none were old enough to remember myths of the pre-Fulani past. I was therefore compelled to rely more heavily on information in the KC and CR, along with topographic data on floor depths (the deeper the building floor, the older it is relative to surrounding structures), aerial photographs, and maps containing settlement data (Figure 4). I also conducted etymological analyses of past and present words which were used for describing particular places or social hierarchies. Floor plans of vernacular homes in Hausaland provided additional invaluable insights. In particular, there is evidence that Hausa households adopted seclusion on a wider scale during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, mimicking (and thereby providing clues into) the first palace structure (Figure 4).

The Pathways from the Palace

It is clear from a number of sources that the Kano palace originally had two entrances facing northwards, both serving as nodal points for pathways connecting the palace to key city sites in the late 1400s. These palace-city linkages are clearly evident in aerial photographs (Figure 5). A northwesterly pathway led past the new city mosque to the central city market (Kummi Market) which Rumfa had established. It was here in the market that the important female official of state, known as Korama, was stationed. Korama, who may have been of slave descent, controlled city grain prices and volumes. According to Aminu Kano (cited in Sa'id 1978:52), "[s]he was the only woman who, on her appointment, was provided with a caparisoned horse, a robe and an alkayamba or mantle. Korama visited the palace every Friday accompanied by a large retinue of grain sellers, both men and women." Alkayamba, it should be noted, were reserved only for the highest-ranking court officials (see Lavers 1985).

Korama seems to have been an ancient title common to other nearby Hausa states in Hausaland, such as Daura and Zazzau, though
in these places the status and responsibilities of the official seem to have varied (Smith 1978). In Daura, for example, since at least the eighteenth century, *Korama* was an elderly free woman appointed by, and subordinate to, the Chief Butcher (*Sarkin Pawa*). Besides presiding over grain sellers, volumes, and prices, she collected as tax portions of articles sold by measure from market vendors (Smith 1978:117). She also collected a daily tribute of grain from vendors which she then used to feed single women, prostitutes, and *bori* cult members for whom she was responsible for providing accommodation. The latter two groups had overlapping membership. Whether the presence of *Korama* in other states antedates her appointment in Kano is not known. The appointment of a woman to this position is significant, however, and suggests that the practice harks back to pre-Islamic times when women traditionally controlled grain production and marketing, much like the West African market queens. As noted below, the association between women, grains, and pre-Islamic religious practices is a common one.

A second pathway to the northeast led to what was, at the time, the outer perimeter of the first circular city wall. The connection was a vital one since it linked the palace and palace slave officials in charge of armaments and military arrangements with the main city defenses (Figure 5; see also below). The northwesterly pathway was therefore “female” and grain-oriented, while the northeasterly one was “male” and military—a gendered spatial asymmetry.

The northerly location and gendered characteristics of the palace pathways provide important clues into other aspects of palace design, especially the location of the secluded domain. More specifically, the two pathways converge at a boundary wall known to have existed since at least the early nineteenth century (see Figure 5). Path convergence suggests that some kind of boundary wall also existed there during the fifteenth century. Given that the palace entrances were located to the north and given Rumfia’s goals of seclusion and concubinage, the secluded domain must have been located south of the boundary wall, that is, in the large rectangular-shaped area furthest from the public part of the palace.

Presumably the northern rectangular zone accommodated the hundreds of slave men (including eunuchs) who Rumfia had recently appointed to a number of domestic and state posts. This pattern was maintained following the Fulani conquest, at which time it was known as Gateway of the North (*Kofar Arewa*; Figure 5). Continuity is inferred in part from the fact that the layout of the area speaks of institutions established specifically during Rumfia’s reign. Moreover, nineteenth-century sources show that the Fulani reestablished most of the male slave institutions and the places in which they functioned because slave men historically had run much of the state machinery and their knowledge was indispensable to Fulani rulers (Nast 1992; see also Palmer 1967). Thus, the KC notes that the first Fulani emir sought counsel with a titled palace slave who told him that unless the emir lived in the palace, he would not be able to rule effectively (Palmer 1967:127). Interestingly, Leo Africanus described a similarly placed large courtyard in the palace of the Askia Muhammad I in Gao, the capital city of Songhay, circa 1508, again suggesting strong political cultural links between Kano and Songhay (see Hunwick 1985:348).

These gendered usages of space beg further questions on the palace’s socio-spatial order. By collating information in the KC, oral interview data (indicating Fulani adaptations of the system), and spatial patterns interpreted in the context of written records and the palace’s physically positioning vis-à-vis the city-at-large, we peel away yet another layer in this spatial archaeology.

**The Gate of the North: The Male Domain**

Slave men living in the gateway held posts related to territorial expansion and governmental rule—responsibilities facilitated through their location nearest the public (Nast 1993; 1992; Fika 1978). Collectively these men formed the backbone of the military, held high executive and bureaucratic state posts, boarded post-pubescent princes, and trained them in state politics, responsibilities, and royal protocol (princes, like all boys, were not allowed into the secluded domain after puberty, instead living with slave men in the gateway). While these officials worked together to assure the king of their loyalty and thus to receive kingly rewards (e.g., trusted positions of state,
Figure 5. The relationship of the palace to the walled city of Kano in the 1500s as evidenced in settlement patterns from archival sources (upper left panel); aerial photographs (upper right panel); and contemporary field data (lower left panel). The data were compiled to derive key city features of the city circa 1500 (right panel). Of special interest are the two pathways leading from the palace inside to the main city walls and the central city market also built by Rumfa. Sources: Kenting Air Services Kano 1984 composite aerial photograph of 1982 flight data (upper right panel); a 1932 colonial city map from the Kano State Ministry of Works and Housing, Lands and Surveys Division, Map Section, Map K.N.T. 798 (upper left panel).
state lands, and the best slave labor obtained in battles or markets), they also competed among each other for prestige and political gain by using the powers at their disposal.

The continuity in the socio-spatial organization of slave men is remarkable since they seem to have occupied the northern gateway from Rumfa’s reign to the end of the 1700s. This persistence is evident in the striking spatial divisions in the gateway created by the cross-cutting of the pathways; the spatial relations between the gateway and city; the location of certain ancient sites in the gateway; the detailed information on nineteenth-century slave divisions of labor; and the slave titles recorded in the KC. This is not to say that certain labor divisions endured unchanged nor that princely or slave statuses were immutable. Notwithstanding these changes—especially those associated with the new southern slave domain of the nineteenth century—a significant degree of continuity seems to have prevailed.

Males in the gateway occupied one of three main households, each led by a powerful title-holding male slave of state who oversaw specific military tasks and/or administrative duties at state and state-household levels (Figure 5). The slave occupying the eastern third was responsible for the royal stables including the spare horses that accompanied the king onto the battlefield. The title of this slave may have been Sarkin Dawaki Tsakar Gida (“King of the Horses in the Middle of the House”), who was among the first appointees to the Kano Nine. The stable was attached to but distinctly south of this administrator’s quarters, namely in the palace labyrinth. This slave may also have trained and housed the saddle carriers and armoured soldiers and safeguarded palace armour. The proximity of the stables to the stable-keeper’s quarters and the positioning of both places along the path leading to the main city defenses (the circular city walls and moat) was clearly strategic, allowing for the spatial streamlining of military duties.

Eunuchs seem to have been concentrated, though not restricted to, the central part of the gateway. Although the provenance of these eunuchs is not known, the KC tells us that they were obtained from Nupeland. It is possible that the King of Nupe merely re-exported eunuchs obtained from trade centers in Songhay to which he was connected by the Niger River. At any rate, many of the eunuchs would have required considerable knowledge of Islamic political culture since they administered the treasury (a post that required literacy and numeracy), held high state posts, and had jurisdiction over important territorial lands. Such privileges may have been accorded them because of their castration, which disabled them from forging kinship-based alliances that might threaten the king. Castration also meant that they could enter the secluded domain to serve the king amongst royal women without posing a reproductive threat to him.

There were a number of titled eunuchs, including Sarkin Jarumai (“King of the Brave Ones”), Sarkin Bai (“King of Slaves”) and Turaki (untranslatable)—three eunuchs appointed to the Kano Nine. These and other eunuchs held key military positions or carried out administrative tasks for the state or state-household, e.g., arranging official appointments with the king, turbanning and enrobing state officials, arranging for mats to be placed where the king would sit, carrying messages to and from the king, maintaining some of the kingly chambers, and physically disciplining royal wives, concubines, and children (Nast 1992; Fika 1978; Palmer 1967). Other title holders included Ma’aji (“Treasurer”) and four others appointed to the state treasury (including Turaki) (see Fika 1978:9, 25; Palmer 1967). At least a good portion of the treasury derived from land taxes paid in grains exacted from urban and peri-urban dwellers and stored in granaries located in the secluded domain.

It is surmised that the enormity and permanence of the palace as well as the large state bureaucracy entailed a fiscal policy which exacted greater amounts of taxes either through more rigorous collection methods and/or through extending taxation into the hinterland. Increased grain taxes would have been needed (along with agricultural slave estates) to sustain the increased number of slaves, eunuchs, and concubines. Some indication that taxation assumed greater importance comes from the CR which outlines in detail an Islamic plan for taxing grain and non-grain holdings (Gwarzo et al. 1974/77). Increased taxation may explain why Rumfa instituted the first state treasury staffed by a large number of eunuchs, different eunuchs perhaps being charged with different kinds of taxation goods. Fika (1978:10), using interview data from the 1970s, claims that eunuchs administered grain tax col-
lection from farmsteads, though as I shall argue, this may have been overseen by, or done in tandem with, royal concubines.

Which slave occupied the western gateway is much less certain. Administrative changes made by the Fulani in the early nineteenth century suggest that previously the area was occupied by a slave guardian of the royal family. The slave may have administered royal family matters, assigned slaves obtained in war to nobility, trained unmarried princes in royal protocol and state politics, and arranged princes' circumcision and marriages. He may also have overseen maintenance of the city walls. Notably, high-ranking eunuchs also presided over princely marriages in the Ottoman Empire during the late 1400s (Izveddin 1962:115) and in the Hausa kingdom of Maradi (to the north) since at least the 1700s (Smith 1967:108). In any event, the gateway was separated from the female secluded domain by a wall and an em-bayed labyrinth.

The Labyrinth

Sandwiched in between, and partitioned off from, the gateway and the secluded women's domain was an em-bayed and highly guarded labyrinth (Figure 6). The placement and geometry of the area created strategically inaccessible and secure places in which to conduct state-related activities. The area probably contained court chambers for the Kano Nine, for example, along with royal stables, and eating areas for princes and nobility. The labyrinth also served as an extended checkpoint for those attempting to enter or exit illicitly the inner harem. In this sense, the labyrinth was a buffer zone in which gender distinctions were continually marked out.

The existence and composition of the labyrinth can be deduced from a number of sources. First, ethnographic data suggest that state court chambers known as Soron Fadanci were abandoned as such in the mid-1800s, being retained for secondary religious functions (Nast 1992). That some form of court area persisted from the reign of Rumfa until taken over by the Fulani is suggested from socio-spatial linguistic evidence. The word fadanci stems from the word fada which means speaking as well as quarreling, the two meanings being differentiated phonetically. In the palace, however, the word fada is applied to the actual royal court session. On at least two occasions, the KC refers to the “gate of the royal court” or kolar fada (indicating a place fronting a court area) and a nearby kolar bai or “gateway of slaves,” a socio-spatial juxtaposition reminiscent of that between Soron Fadanci and the northern gateway (Figure 6). Thus, for example, the KC speaks of an attack on the palace during the reign of Dadi (1670–1703; Palmer 1967:122):

The Galadima said to the Sarki [King], “Rise up! The Kwararafa have destroyed the best part of your town and have killed many men! They have penetrated to the Kurmi [market], and will attack the ‘palace.’” The Sarki mounted his horse and [from the palace interior] went out and came to the Kolar Fada with the Galadima and eunuchs and Jarumai [court members]. There he met all the Kanawa [presumably an allusion to the Kano court]. He went to Rimi Bundu [Rimi may have been the head slave official of the western gateway] . . . and hastened to Kofa Bari [gate of slaves or the rectangular area of slaves].

Such placement of a court area at the margins of a large walled-off slave domain is also reminiscent of court areas described by Leo Africanus circa 1508 at the palace at Gao, the capital city of Songhay:

Between the public [outermost] and private gates [leading to the secluded domain] of his palace is a large courtyard surrounded by a wall. On each side of this courtyard is a gallery used for audiences. Although the king deals with all his affairs himself, he is assisted by numerous functionaries—secretaries, counsellors, captains, treasurers and stewards. (cited in Hunwick 1985:348)

Existence of the royal stable is inferred from additional information in the KC. The latter states that Rumfa began the custom of bringing spare horses to battle, indicating that some sort of royal stable must have existed in the palace during his reign (Palmer 1967:112). Nineteenth-century sources show that a stable east of the labyrinth was tended to by male slaves in the eastern portion of the gateway. That the nineteenth-century stable location dates from Rumfa's reign seems likely given that the stable was sited nearest the slave settlement that oversaw the stables and along the eastern pathway leading to a portion of city-wall defenses present only during Rumfa's reign (above). Development of the stable may have derived from al-Maghili's advice that the king "establish secure fortresses and cavalry of
strong horses with well-trained back” (Gwarzo et al. 1974/77:19). In general, then, both the gateway and the labyrinth accommodated male sites of state, and these sites facilitated a competitive interlinking of the male slave community which as a whole was administratively poised toward public functions.

A special cadre of slave women known as jakadu probably guarded the labyrinth and catered to the needs of secluded royal women, much as they did during the nineteenth century. These were older women who had already raised families and whose loyalty was assured. The passageways which these women guarded (probably 3 to 5 in number) were entered via massive doorways high enough to allow passage of the king, soldiers, and other nobility on horseback. At night jakadu locked the doors using massive locks. In this case, the labyrinth had similar functions to the “many doors” leading into the harem of the Topkapi palace of Istanbul which were guarded and locked nightly by a special cadre of eunuchs.\textsuperscript{23} The latter may suggest alternatively that eunuchs originally guarded the labyrinth and attended the needs of secluded women, with jakadu taking over this responsibility at a later date. According to Last (1983:68), one of the royal women of Rummâ’s household (it is not clear if she was a wife or a concubine) eventually established a eunuch market next to the palace, presumably to procure new eunuchs.

**The Household Inside**

South of the gateway and labyrinth was the secluded royal domain. This domain, known as the **cikin gida**\textsuperscript{24} or “the stomach of the
house,” made up the largest portion of the palace. The domain consisted of a “male” enclave amidst a much larger “female” area within which were living quarters for royal women and children (Figure 6). Each of these areas had distinctive political and socio-spatial characteristics.

The “Male” Enclave. The discovery of the location of the “male” enclave nicely illustrates the virtues of spatial archaeology. The insight began to unfold with the recognition that one of the three present-day “eunuchs” (recruited hermaphrodites or impotent men) known by the nickname dan ciki (“son of the [secluded] inside”) held the formal title Turakin Soro, a title instituted by Rumfa and referred to throughout the KC. Using archival photographs, his current home was identified as an original (albeit small) remnant of a much larger eunuch colony built in the southern portion of the palace in the mid-nineteenth century (Figure 6). Interview data and information in the KC revealed that the Fulani emir, Abdullahi dan Dabo (1855–1883), built the colony as part of a larger project of rebuilding a number of sites previously occupied by Hausa kings as well as of creating new ones. The newly built-up area was sited in the southern half of the palace and associated with a new southern palace gate (Nast 1993; 1992).

According to the KC, the rebuilt Hausa sites had been in ruins since the beginning of Fulani rule (1807). These ruins included “the mosque and the house of the Turaki Maiyaya [an especially important title-holding eunuch] which Abdullahi rebuilt early in his reign” (Palmer 1967:131). Both of the latter structures were visible in the field in 1990, though by the end of the year what remained of an eunuch colony, of which Turaki’s household was one part, was apparently slated for levelling to make room for newer cement block buildings. These data suggest therefore that 1) the place where Turakin Soro lived in 1990 is the same as where a eunuch bears his title lived in the mid-nineteenth century; and 2) the latter’s location was originally chosen according to pre-Fulani precedents.

According to the KC, it was King Mohamma Zaki (1582–1618) who first built a house for Turakin Soro next to his own chambers in the secluded domain, facing a nearby mosque. The compound was part of a larger eunuch-inhabited security enclave that Zaki built after he and his men forced their way into the inner palace and overthrew reigning King Shashere (1573–1582; see Palmer 1967:116). The account implies that prior to Zaki’s rule there were no eunuch compounds in the secluded domain (Figure 6). Moreover, the fact that the KC mentions a mosque next to eunuchs’ chambers during Shashere’s reign indicates that the similarly positioned mosque rebuilt by Abdullahi (1855–1882) was also an original feature of the palace, although there is evidence that King Zaki changed its positioning slightly after his coup (Figure 7).

Establishing the position of the mosque and eunuch colony also provides clues on the location of Rumfa’s kingly chambers. In particular, the fact that Abdullahi built his quarters next to the mosque and colony is echoed in the KC with respect to Shashere’s reign. If we assume Shashere inherited this arrangement, the king’s quarters would have been located in the east central portion of the palace—a placement that is confirmed by other palace features (Nast 1992). Additional data in the KC show that a residence for a palace liman was also established next to the mosque during Rumfa’s reign. As Fika (1978:31) explains, a liman was “a scholar official [who] usually accompanied military expeditions, serving as battlefield Imam and travelling judge” (Figure 7). Over the next two centuries, this enclave of king-mosque-liman would become the nucleus for other male-oriented religious activities and institutions, including a Qur’anic study area or school (Nast 1992).

Culling through the CR yielded more spatial clues about the organization and care of the king’s quarters. The placement of the king’s chambers near the center of the secluded palace interior, for example, is in keeping with the common refrain that “THE HEIGHT OF AFFLICTION IS THE ISOLATION OF THE RULER FROM THE SUBJECTS” (capitalization in original; see Gwarzo et al. 1974/77:18). In addition, the CR counsels the king to allow only the most “pious and trustworthy to come near” him, presumably an allusion to Islamic scholars, which is in keeping with the placement of the king’s chambers near those of the liman and mosque (Gwarzo et al. 1974/77:20). The CR also tells the king not to “move far from your coat of mail and your weapons,” and that he should “hold a public audience daily so that
women and children [of the palace] may approach” (Gwarzo et al. 1974/77:23). Intriguingly, an audience chamber for palace women and children and a chamber for chain mail and weapons were constructed in the massive kingly quarters rebuilt by Emir Abdullahi in the nineteenth century; if al-Maghili’s words are taken into account, these rooms bespeak of precedents established by Rumfa.

To safeguard at least the visual seclusion of the royal women, the liman and other religious notables probably entered and left the inner palace grounds on a pathway located in the eastern fields of the secluded domain which emptied out near the royal stables. This is probably the path along which King Bawo fled (1670–1703) when the Kwarara attacked Kano. A similar route existed in the mid-nineteenth century (Figure 7). The location of the king’s chambers and the religious enclave along the eastern edge of the inside and their connection to other male sections to the north (the labyrinth and gateway) by a peripheral pathway suggests a number of important social relations. First, besides facilitating the security of the king, the pathway ensured that the “male” enclave was segregated from the women’s domain, and, more specifically, that Islamic prayer and study were considered “male” activities. Second, in all likelihood, the male enclave was considered part of the other male portions of the palace, not of the female inside. Such ideological separation, borne spatially, would have been in keeping with al-Maghili’s advice that the king separate state issues from domestic ones. He writes to the king, for example, not to “let the concerns of your wives and children distract you (from your work). All your attention should be for brave men and implements of war. Avoid near-
ness to cats or to mice, rather associate with lions of the desert” (Gwarzo et al. 1974/77:19). Moreover, he compares the king to an eagle who, by devoting too much attention to private household issues (the realm of “chickens”), is reduced to a rooster. That the king should likewise differentiate himself spatially from women is echoed in al-Maghili’s advice that the king not wear clothes similar to those of women. All of these separatist gestures show how gender was reworked and signified dichotomously through bodily and spatial oppositions promoted by Islam.

Significantly, such gendered partitioning of the royal household accords with ancient Islamic customs of preserving the eastern portions of households for men, a custom known as hijab. The pattern is, moreover, consistent with the fact that the western palace entrance led to Korama in the market, while the eastern entrance led to the “male” defensive ramparts of the city.

The “Female” “Stomach” or Inside. Designation of the royal “female” domains as the household “stomach” also says much about the role of “space” in mediating radically different, oppositional places for men and women in the political order of things. Recall that the male slave area was known as the “gateway.” Similarly, the “male” labyrinth is analogous to what is called the shigifa in vernacular households. The term shigifa is etymologically derived from verbs that mean “to pass by, go beyond” or “going in and out, back and forth, being restless” (Newman and Newman 1985). Both terms indicate that “male” domains were seen as spatially marginal to the real or inner house, the cikin gida. Taking this analysis further, it is surmised that women were associated with the stomach in other ways, specifically in terms of the stomach’s identification with emotion. Farin ciki (“white stomach”) means happy hearted and bakin ciki (“black stomach”) means heavy hearted, the expression of such emotions being the domain of women. The linguistic connotations around the word stomach are similar to those surrounding the word “heart” in English which is similarly linked to the mythic, warm, “womany” center of the western household, the hearth.

The female inside contained hundreds of women who, barred from the Kano Nine, worked in tandem through administrative hierarchies to achieve state-household reproduction; I use the term “state-household” to emphasize that royal women administered activities that helped ensure the daily reproduction of the state itself. The women were organized into three distinct socio-spatial groups or “classes”: 1) wives; 2) concubines; and 3) slave women. Each group of women held a different social rank, performed different duties in the inside, and conducted their lives in geographically distinct ways. Given that the KC and other primary sources are largely silent about women, my account of the socio-spatial organization of palace women’s activities is derived mainly from spatial data (from field mapping and interviews) and secondary sources.

1. Wives. Within the female class structure, royal wives (which Islam limited to four) enjoyed the highest status. This was so for a number of reasons. First, they were a leisure class and, as such, were dissociated from low status agricultural and household labor. Secondly, each wife lived in a prestigious waje (“place”) and was attended by concubines and slave women. Ironically, high wifely status was reflected in low spatial mobility—the fact that a wife could not leave her place, which made her particularly dependent on the king. In this way, her person and her material conditions mirrored the king’s competence in “providing for” them; as human mirrors, then, they reflected most clearly the patriarchal power and prestige of the king. The fortune of a wife was thereby mediated through her place and its linkages with patriarchal power.

A similar paradox is evident in the fact that places immobilized and encapsulated wives’ bodies so as to control their reproductive lives and thereby ensure kingly paternity of wives’ children. Islamic custom ensured that such encapsulation was an honor and not a burden. Specifically, it gave wives (and not concubines) preferential access to their husbands: While the king could summon concubines to his quarters during the day, he was required by Islamic law to stay with one of his wives at night, in this case, in her place. Royal wives rotated their hosting of the king. The king’s visits presumably heightened the status of both wife and waje, each place providing a kind of wifely spatial pedestal to which the king was required to pay homage. The higher status of wives was thereby mediated through places
and wrought through competition with concubines who were much less spatially restricted.

Kano’s Islamicized and hierarchical relations as manifested in places established a new "paragon of gender relations. Embodying the bodies of the king and his wives and based primarily upon biological reproduction, ideal gender relations were mediated through (heterosexualized) constructions of space in which spatial restrictions were ideologically and practically linked to motherhood—and the reign of the father.

2. Slave Women. Diametrically opposite in status to royal wives were hundreds of palace slave women. Their low status was marked by the fact that their children were property of the king regardless of who fathered them. This was so because slave status was passed along matrilineally. Because paternity was not an issue, then, slave women were not secluded nor were their bodies and sexual relations as highly valued or controlled. Free to traverse the palace inside and the “outside” world, slave women were given the most labor-intensive tasks. It was in fact the labor and spatial mobility of slave women that enabled royal wives and concubines to be secluded and freed from heavy labor. Formation of this underclass of (to some extent) desexualized women demonstrates as well how reproductive ties to the king and issues of paternity were transferred or transformed into “class” relations and how this transference became of central importance to a state based in the palace and in the person of the king. The transference implies that slave women were viewed as less-than-womanly perhaps as a way of legitimating their services outside the palace.

The duties of slave women varied. Jakadu served as guards in the labyrinth and in the women’s domain, including areas next to the granaries; others were couriers or carried out errands in the city and beyond. Some may even have served as grain tax collectors. Still others, known as kuyangi, were menial laborers who threshed grain, washed clothes, hauled heavy loads, and swept the grounds of the royal inside. Significantly, all activities were carried out in the outside world or in open courtyards and marginal fields of the inside (Nast 1992). The marginality of these areas was intimately tied therefore to the marginal status of slave women, an example of how “space” was used to define and express female rank. Similarly, the spatiality of slave women’s living arrangements reflected their status; they occupied either “male” parts of the palace (such as the gateway or labyrinth) or they slept in small areas inside the residences of wives or concubines. They were also the only class allowed to work marginal farm plots in the western palace fields for their own discretionary purposes. That they were the only class of women to do so demonstrates the way in which low status and outside agricultural labor were mutually defined.

Intriguingly, the western fields were inhabited by pre-Islamic spirits, indicating that the area was used by women to accommodate pre-Islamic beliefs (recall slave women came from a number of surrounding “pagan” areas). Such accommodation was presumably not difficult, given their exclusion from royal religious activities in the “male” easterly enclave. As will be seen below, there is evidence that concubines additionally administered pre-Islamic religious practices in the inside.

3. Concubines. There was some class mobility among slave women. Most importantly, slave women could acquire some wifely powers by securing reproductive ties to the king. This occurred when the king took or received a slave woman as a concubine thereafter excluding her and relieving her from low-status manual and “outside” labor. Through seclusion, a slave woman became a new kind of woman (a concubine), one whose spatial redemption and heteropatriarchal feminization were mutually constituted.

The KC credits Rumfa for implementing large-scale concubinage. Concubine numbers probably reached several hundred in his reign (Palmer 1967; Nast 1992). These women were mostly captured in war, given as gifts, or taken from slave families of the king. Within Islam, concubines occupied an ambiguous legal and social position between wives, on one hand, and nonconcubine slave women, on the other. For example, while Islamic law restricted a man to no more than four wives, the law placed no limits on the number of concubines since these women were slaves and therefore, according to juridical precedents, property.

The status and value of a concubine as well as her redemption through seclusion depended on procreative abilities: Child-bearing
concubines acquired kingly patronage for the rest of their lives and they could not be sold. Children of royal concubines (unlike those of slave women) also assumed the free-born status of their father. This meant that they had the same rights as children born of royal wives, including the right to accede to the throne. This switch from matrilateral to patrilineal descent is highly significant in that it heightened patriarchal control over primogeniture and allowed for slaves and conquered groups from far-flung areas to establish bonds of kinship with the king—bonds that facilitated territorial consolidation. The patrilineal marking of concubine children and the political gains associated with it, were undoubtedly a primary reason that concubines enjoyed higher status than slave women. The procreative preconditions of concubinage also helped etrench new sets of evaluative guidelines for women based on biological or reproductive criteria. Most importantly, ideal womanhood was linked to (hetero)patriarchal motherhood—a motherhood gained through relations with the king-patriarch and supportive of his line of descent.

The intermediate status of concubines was revealed as well in palace divisions of labor and associated spatial prerogatives. Concubines, though secluded, were not awarded or confined to individual places as were royal wives. Most concubines resided communally in large walled ungwoyoy or “wards” (Figures 7 and 8). Lesser numbers lived in the compound of a wife or in rooms inside the king’s residence. While concubines were not a leisure class (as were wives), nor were they menial laborers (like slave women). Concubines instead served as household administrators who had (and required) access to all of the royal women’s domain. In this way, their spatial prerogatives dovetailed with domestic divisions of labor in ways that bespoke their intermediate status (Figure 8).

The most important concubine ward was located in the exact center of the royal household inside—a striking feature of a design that seemingly stresses the centrality of concubinage to state-household reproduction (Figure 7). It was here that the most powerful entitled concubines and their concubine assistants resided and where the majority of palace foodstuffs were prepared. A study by Auwal (1980; cited in Rufai 1987:60) suggests that the ward was named Yelwa ("Abundance") by King Zaki (1582–1618) in honor of a concubine of the same name, while a palace myth cited by Sa’ad (1985:13), claims that Yelwa was the first name given to the palace (he does not cite the source). These data suggest that the name may hark back to Rumfa’s time, despite the fact that it has had a number of secondary nicknames since at least the early nineteenth century. This contrasts with most other palace places and place names.

In the daily life of the palace, the spatial prerogatives and labors of concubines and slave women were complexly intertwined. In some cases, concubine powers extended far beyond the confines of the palace. The duties of the concubines varied. One senior concubine probably known as Mai-Soron Baki (“Master of the Audience Hall”) trained and boarded incoming concubines inside the king’s royal chambers, which she administered. Her most important duty involved escorting palace women and children to Soron Baki (“The Audience Hall”) inside the king’s chambers. She may also have requested audi-
ences with the king on behalf of women both in and outside the palace community. These duties would be consistent with al-Maghili’s directive that Rumfa “hold a public audience daily so that women and children may approach” and with nineteenth-century data.

The most important concubine-slave interactions were those associated with palace food production which was overseen by Mai-Kudandan (“Master of the Granary”) in Yelwa. Nineteenth-century data indicate that her title derived from Kudandan, a threshold-grain storage hut located near the palace kitchen. Such a storage facility would have been necessary given the enormity of the palace’s daily food needs. Food seems to have been produced for a number of different persons including important Islamic scholars, guests, and travellers, nobility, the royal family, extended family, and a large number of slave laborers and functionaries. Assuming that Rumfa had four wives, several hundred concubines, over a hundred children, hundreds of slave women and men (including eunuchs) and dozens of courtiers and councillors, food would have been required for well over 1,000 persons daily. Given the magnitude of this task as well as the high status of those for whom the food was destined, food production was undoubtedly seen as a high-level state task that required large and constant sources of grains. As noted above, these food grains probably were served through increasing the intensity or the extent of taxation.

Field evidence suggests that grain taxes were stored in a cluster of granaries in the northern part of the secluded domain—some of the granaries being the exclusive domain of religious scholars (Figure 7). The granaries were levelled in the early twentieth century as a result of an earlier British colonial decree that taxes be paid in sterling currency. The location of the granaries is significant for two reasons, both of which suggest that grain tax collection was part of the domestic duties of Master of the Granary. First, the inside location of the silos indicates that access to grain taxes was restricted to women and/or eunuchs. This would make sense given that it was women who used grains for “domestic” (state-household) food production. Second, the granaries were adjacent to the western palace pathway leading to the central city market where Korama presided over city grain volumes and prices. This linkage between Korama and Mas-

ter of the Granary assuredly facilitated palace grain tax exchanges and collection. In this scenario, Korama would have collected and forwarded to the palace grain collected from market vendors. Palace grains might also have been sent to Korama in exchange for different kinds of grains or nongrain market goods such as spices, salt, and cloth. The pathway similarly would have streamlined the acquisition and storage of grains purchased during the dry season when palace reserves were low or depleted. Given that Korama’s market role made her privy to information on the volume of regional grain production, the pathway would have quickened the relay of information essential to Master of the Granary’s control over and monitoring of grain tax flows into the palace.

The notion of women’s participation in taxation is not without historical and regional precedent. In Maradi, a nearby Hausa state to the north, a titleholding woman known as lya was “consulted in all bori initiations and public ceremonies, such as market renewal rites. Through her slaves, lya levied grain from market vendors [presumably a form of tithe], and annual taxes from prostitutes and cult specialists” (Smith 1967:108). lya’s domains—bori, markets, and grains—closely resemble those which I suggest were controlled by Kano palace women. Similarly another Maradi female titleholder, Magajiya, a junior kinswoman, levied taxes in village lands awarded to her (Smith 1967). The case of Maradi is important in that, as a successor state of Katsina which escaped nineteenth-century Fulani reforms, it reflects more clearly pre-Fulani precedents.28 Further evidence for women’s grain roles comes from the fact that in the nineteenth century the Fulani instated a male slave hierarchy to carry out palace grain duties at the same time that they rescinded many honorific female titles and offices, including that of Korama. Moreover, the Fulani’s male slaves who collected grain taxes were known as jakadu—the same name that had been given to the slave women who, I suggest, formerly played a large role in tax collection.

Master of the Granary probably supervised distribution of grain taxes to the palace community through a hierarchy of concubines, slave women, and eunuchs, using a number of carefully gradated calabashes (bowls made out of dried halves of gourds). Slave women threshed and ground the grain in the western
fields and, along with concubines prepared the foods, possibly under the eye of Master of the Granary. Nineteenth-century data indicate an elaborate hierarchy of food types and prescriptions of the class of woman who cooked them and for whom. Most communal foodstuffs were prepared in the monumental palace kitchen in Yelwa (Figure 7).

Our spatial archaeology thus indicates that Master of the Granary was instrumental in the collection, storage, and distribution of grain taxes that are now duties were related to palace food production. Moreover, concubines performed inside managerial labor, while slave women performed tasks that took them into the outside world or that involved menial tasks (Figure 8). One might surmise that the powers of royal women were downplayed ideologically through associating them with “inside” (private) “domestic” tasks spatially distinct from “male” tasks of state in the labyrinth and gateway which were considered more important.

Moreover, other nineteenth-century evidence suggests that grain responsibilities may have been linked to pre-Islamic religious practices. There are suggested by the aforementioned association of pre-Islamic spirits and slave women’s farm plots, but also by the presence of Kudandan, an empty, decorated structure for palace spirits located near the threshed-grain granary of the same name. This becomes especially significant in light of the fact that concubines in Yelwa were probably the palace leaders of bori.29 At any rate, these pre-Islamic practices were undoubtedly a syncretic blend of pagan customs given that concubines came from many “pagan” areas of the country. Thus, just as “male” Islamic activities were ensconced in an eastern enclave of the palace’s inside, so pre-Islamic “female” religious practices may have flourished in the inside’s western sectors.

Heteropatriarchy, Motherhood, and the State

Utilizing a variety of methods and data, this paper spatially elaborates upon Foucault’s notions of archaeology and discourse, in the process showing how important spatial data can be (and how typically under-utilized it is) in historical analysis. Using the Kano palace of northern Nigeria as a case study, the paper explores how slavery, gender, paternity and motherhood were constructed during a time of great regional change. My concern with mundane and materially fluid relations and practices (seclusion, cooking, child-rearing, sweeping, wall-building, stable-upkeep) as mediated bodily and socio-spatially lies in striking contrast with Foucault’s emphasis on hegemonic, typically male-centered discourses of structurally permanent institutions of power (hospitals, clinics, prisons, etc.).

Like Foucault’s historical tracing out of the changing meaning of “discursive statements,” my analysis historically traces out the changing meaning and disruption of certain socio-spatial relations. Just as a Foucauldian analysis might show how specific words and statements can mean different things during successive centuries, so my analysis has shown how the same site (the eunuch colony built in the 1500s and rebuilt in the 1800s) within a landscape can mean different things over time. Obversely, just as a Foucauldian analysis might show how contemporary discourse simultaneously emanates and draws upon different historical threads of meaning, this analysis underscores how a single contemporary landscape contains within it centuries of change.

Instead of concentrating on the changing meaning of written “discursive statements” over time, then, my analysis focuses on tracing the historical creation and disruption of particular spatial relations and places. In doing so, I drew upon information in aerial photographs and settlement patterns, archival photographs, architectural data, state maps, detailed spatial information on present and past places, place names, and palace titles, and spatial data culled from written sources—both primary and secondary. Accordingly, I metaphorically peeled back successively older landscape layers, a process here deemed “spatial archaeology.” This methodology was invaluable given the dearth of other kinds of archaeological data and the lack of written records by or about women in the region.

The analysis suggests that the building of the Kano palace was tied to Islamization and the associated rise of long-distance, including trans-Saharan, trade. These two factors resulted in Kano’s (formerly Dalla) emergence as a major economic and cultural center which led, in turn, to the rise of Kano as a dominant
political force amidst a series of pagan hill settlement systems, and the building of the first phase of a circular wall around Kano City. Construction of the palace by King Rumfa (1463–1499) rooted the state in one place and allowed for the development of a rich Islamic political culture—a culture that derived from North Africa either directly or indirectly through trade and Islamization. Slaves (including eunuchs and concubines) filled the state ranks in record numbers. Male slaves were appointed to the Kano Nine and the state treasury (both completely new institutions), while others carried out military, state, and household tasks. Female slaves served royal women in the palace inside, the highest ranking of these being concubines. Concubinage, by forging royal marriage and kinship links with conquered and conquered peoples, also facilitated territorial consolidation.

Royal seclusion and concubinage were the most important and far-reaching of palace innovations in that they allowed kingly paternity to be guarded and circumscribed in much more stringently spatial terms. Accordingly, motherhood vis-à-vis the king-patriarch not only assumed much greater importance; it became the most important marker of ideal womanhood. In other words, embedded in the palace’s socio-spatial separation of “female” and “male” was the more important and guarded distinctions of royal “mother” and royal “father.” Motherhood was extolled in the name of the state (in the person of the King) and, through concubinage, allowed for a heightened heteropatriarchal consolidation of the state.

More generally, seclusion partitioned the palace into “male” and “female” spheres, each sphere being named in such a way as to circumscribe in spatial and corporeal terms the duties expected of each gender. Women, in the inside, were expected to carry out statehousehold reproduction, while men, in the gateway or labyrinth (associated with the shigita), were expected to conduct public affairs of state; gender and spatial oppositions were thereby fixed linguistically. These mimetic reproductions of gendered differences may additionally have been fixed through the production of certain corporeal aesthetics, not only through mandating gender-specific garments, but through the institution of clitoridectomy. The corporeal marking and partitioning of men and women also held religious significance. While the king and his retinue carried out Islamic practices in the eastern portion of the palace, women carried out bori in the west, a gendered asymmetry perhaps also reflected in the different palace entrances.

Importantly, seclusion required a slave underclass to support it and, as such, was tied to creation of a female class system. As mentioned, seclusion and class were intimately tied to concerns over child paternity and patrilineal descent. Thus, the bodies and spaces of those women who bore the king’s children were the most venerated. They did the least strenuous kinds of work, and they were the most enclosed, enclosure constituting a privilege. Similarly, given that only castrated men and Islamic scholars were allowed to serve the king in the palace interior, seclusion “required” eunuchism. Eunuchs may be seen as the gendered counterparts of concubines—both surrendered their reproductive freedom on behalf of the king, the one to procreate, the other to abstain from it. Hence, even the bodily identities of these two slave groups revolved around heterosexualized gender distinctions. Differential spatial praxes were therefore not only key in the construction of gendered identities (that is, male and female), but in the development of the (hetero)sexualized social relations out of which such oppositional identities emerged.

The association of title-holding women with grains and bori in the palace and in other Hausa states indicates that the triad women-grains-bori may be an ancient one that was disrupted only in the 1800s with the onset of Fulani rule. In other words, Islamic political culture as embodied in the socio-spatial structure of the palace reworked gender relations according to local conditions reminiscent of other West African kingdoms. The association might also explain why women were allowed, perhaps with eunuchs, to organize grain tax collection, that is, this task was an extension of women’s traditional (pre-Islamic) grain duties. Concubinage and eunuchism presumably were essential for systematizing grain tax collection in order to accommodate the increase in the size of the palace household and in the levels of state consumption.

Although seclusion was probably adopted initially only by nobility, mallams, and others
who desired to emulate the king, it must have indirectly affected commoners through the central role which it played in stabilizing the state (through concubine-forged territorial alliances) and consolidating tax collection. Moreover, the palace seems to have functioned as a kind of spatial template for accommodating seclusion at the vernacular household level during the nineteenth-century Fulani-led reform movement. Even then, however, seclusion was somewhat restricted to urban dwellers or those of greater means (withdrawing women from agricultural activities was not affordable for everyone).

Certain practical and theoretical questions about patriarchy and gender emerge from the study. Only decades after building the Kano palace, Kano ranked among the three most important commercial centers of Africa—the other two being Fez and Cairo (Gwarzo et al. 1974/77; Last 1983). Was Rumfa’s policy of seclusion and massive state-level slavery (inspired by Islam and embodied in the palace) instrumental in stabilizing and expanding the polity? Why did Islam and seclusion take on such social force and legitimacy at the state level at this time? Could it be that the rise of commercially successful polities such as Kano and other nascent states in Hausaland was tied to Islamization (itself propelled by trading activities) and that this led to specifically gendered struggles over surpluses generated through exchange? That Islam was inextricably tied to the rise of commercial networks and surpluses and that control over these surpluses was (through seclusion) gendered may help explain why women in Kano and surrounding Hausa states who had formerly held high state offices and titles began to fall from power in the 1500s (Callaway 1987:xvi–12). Twentieth-century evidence reveals that seclusion has greatly constrained Hausa women’s trading opportunities, such that a greater proportion of surpluses is placed into male hands (Hill 1969). Lastly, there are questions about seclusion’s failure at the outset to take hold on a more vernacular scale. Were the gendered oppositions which I suggest lay at the core of seclusion mediated by broader “class” relations; that is, did only successful merchants have sufficient means for secluding their wives? Could it be that as the number of merchants grew with more extensive trading systems, their economic means for secluding wives also increased? Evidence for this in the twentieth century would seem to indicate that this has been the case (Abba 1980).

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Notes

1. The palace today consists of a massive adobe-walled compound measuring over 500 m in length and 200 m in width and houses over 11200 persons. These include 3 wives, 25 current and former concubines, 114 royal children, 24 elderly royal women, 51 slaves, and 7 elderly nonroyal women (in the royal secluded domain), and over 1000 persons of mostly slave descent in two zones bordering the harem to the north and south (Rufai 1987:234). Most persons represent remnants of a precocious (pre-1903) royal household.

2. As I discuss elsewhere, notions of the paternal and maternal are de-eroticized such that “sexuality” is subordinated to a “higher” purpose, procreation. Consequently, heterosexuality can seem non-sexual and functionally necessary in contrast to other sexualities whose erotic practice is foregrounded (Blum and Nast 1995).

3. See Clarke (1982) for references to many of the classic texts on North and West Africa written exclusively by male Islamic scholars, traders, and military leaders about various reform movements, travels, and commercial and military activities. Other problems of women’s historical “invisibility” stem from masculinist bias in histori-
cultural analysis and methodological and theoretical perspectives (see, for example, Gero and Conkey 1993; McDowell 1992:404-405; Scott 1984).

4. As Tilley (1991:323-324) summarizes: "In the sixteenth century ... [madness] was not a mental pathology or sickness and indeed the fool could be a source of wisdom. The insane were in some sense a liminal category, between God and humanity: in the world and yet not of it. It was not the mad who were locked up on a consistent basis but lepers. At the end of the sixteenth century a profound shift occurred in conceptions of the mad. They now became a dangerous category and the emptying of the vast leper houses of medieval Europe was accompanied by the filling of this social space—a space of confinement and exclusion—with the mad, who effectively became objects rather than subjects. But the mad were confined not as an isolated class but with all those other social categories deemed dangerous: the poor, the sick, vagabonds, and criminals. Madness was not designated a sickness but merely the converse of reason: unreason. It was alternatively conceptualized as a regression to a childlike state or as a form of bestiality. The mad were not properly human and thus could be treated as animals. Another shift in conception occurs at the end of the eighteenth century. ... Insanity becomes regarded as an illness to be treated through medicine. The insane become segregated from other antisocial groups but Foucault argues that this was a product of political interventions rather than a result of an advancement in understanding the insane. ... It was economically inefficient to confine the poor: large populations of workers were not required to fill the factories of the Industrial Revolution. The criminal class, now considered even more a menace to private property, should not be mixed with the insane for the hope of reforming them."

5. McNay (1992:11) also notes that while, on the one hand, "Foucault's theory of power and the body indicates to feminists a way of placing a notion of the body at the centre of explanations of women's oppression that does not fall back into essentialism or biologism," on the other hand, his work reinscribes patriarchy by not giving sufficient heed to material constructions of gender. In her words, he "neglects to examine the gendered character of many disciplinary techniques. This is a problem that has been widely noted by feminists; for example Rosi Braidotti claims that 'Foucault never locates women's body as the site of one of the most operational internal divisions in our society, and consequently also one of the most persistent forms of exclusion. Sexual difference simply does not play a role in the Foucauldian universe, where technology of subjectivity refers to a desexualized and general "human" subject'" (McNay 1992:11).

6. In "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" (Rabinow 1984:83), for example, Foucault writes that, "[t]he body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration ... [T]he task of genealogy is to pose a body totally imprinted by history and the processes of history's destruction of the body."

7. The "Song of Bagauda" is divided into three sections: An opening eulogy to the prophet Mohammed; a kinglist; and a homiletic epilogue on the vanity of the world and proper procedures for carrying out Islamic customs related to food, sickness, death, burial, and worship. See Hiskett (1964; 1965a; 1965b) for various renditions of the "Song."

8. According to Hunwick (1994a:5), "that the KC was only compiled in the form in which we know it in the 1880s—is based on two things: first, the uniformity of language throughout the chronicle which points to there being but a single hand which produced the chronicle which we now call the Kano Chronicle; second, the existence of a written king-list tradition that goes back at least to the early 19th century (and probably before), in the context of which the so-called "Kano Chronicle" should be placed. This emerging 19th-century chronicler tradition is related, at least in part, to Kano's need to reassert its identity and proclaim its greatness and its long Islamic tradition in response to the humiliation of conquest by the Fulani (1807) and their rewriting of Kano history which consigned all of the Hausa rulers to pagan oblivion."

9. See Last (1979) for a critique of other, less spatial analyses of early Kano history.

10. The KC suggests that wall-building commenced during the reign of King Gijumaso (1095-1134) or King Yusa (1136-1194), in either case being completed during the latter's reign (Palmer 1967:101; also, see H. L. B. Moody 1967).

11. Bagauda is the son of Bayajida, a legendary prince of Baghdad whose offspring went on to found the "original" seven Hausa states. Fika (1978) summarizes the legend thus; "the founders of the seven Hausa states were all descended from the hero Bayajida. Birama, a son of Bayajida by a princess of Borno, is said to have founded the ruling dynasty of Garun-Gabas, while Bawe, the son from the union of Bayajida and the Queen of Daura, fathered the founders of the remaining dynasties—Bagauda in Kano, Duma in Gobir, Gazuara in Daura, Gunguma in Zazzau, Kumanyu in Katsina, and Zamna-Kogi in Kano."


13. As Hunwick (1993) shows, the KC apparently conflates the visits of both men, placing them squarely in the reign of King Rumfa. Given that the regnal lengths listed in the KC are not exact, there is presently no way of determining whether or not al-Rahman arrived during or after Rumfa's reign. Moreover, other scholars have claimed that neither al-Rahman or al-Maghili ever visited Kano, much like the Spanish North African Leo Africanus who Fisher (1978) claims
wrote about Kano in the sixteenth century while perhaps never having visited it. Despite these ambiguities, it is generally acknowledged that Rumfa’s reign saw the widespread acceptance and promotion of Islam, especially in parts of Kano City.

14. Although Lavers (1981) writes that the walls were aligned towards Mecca, no study has actually been done to ascertain this. I am therefore extremely grateful to Michael Bonine of the University of Arizona, Tucson for verifying this for me. In a recent letter (1994) he writes, “I calculate the direction to Mecca (the great circle route from Kano to Mecca) as 68°, 30’. Now as to the Palace... What is quite apparent is that the entire palace complex is oriented in this same qibla direction (as well as the outer city wall)....” We have an azimuth reading of 70° on the southern wall closest to the entrance, 75° on that next outer palace wall, and note that the long walls are basically at right angles to these ...” He goes on to express surprise at the exactitude of the orientation, something typically not encountered in North Africa until the sixteenth century (Bonine 1990).

15. Lavers (1981) also suggests that Rumfa’s subsequent city wall addition, which looped around the palace to the south, re-placing the palace in a southeasterly location, was built after al-Maghilli’s departure shortly before Rumfa’s death (Palmer 1967; Lavers 1980; below). Later building phases took place in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries at which time the walls apparently were constructed out of wood and mud. By the nineteenth century and up until the colonial conquest of Kano in 1903, the walls were made of adobe bricks and plaster and were massive in size, measuring over 10 meters in height and 10 meters in thickness. The walls were punctuated by a series of monumental entrance halls or gates, each of which was guarded by a “king of the gate” (Last 1983:6; Barkindo 1983; H. L. B. Moody 1967).

16. The contemporary palace plans of Ahmed (1988) were particularly useful. These were used as base maps that were field checked, corrected, and added to. Ahmed originally compiled data from aerial photographs and state governmental survey maps, spot-checked the data in the field, and then made his maps. These latter, however, contain a number of errors and omissions, in part, because as a male he was not allowed entry to many parts of the secluded palace interior.

17. Throughout the text, I refer to the Gateway of the North as simply, the gateway. I italicize the English equivalent to emphasize that it derives directly from Hausa. I similarly italicize other English translations of important Hausa terms, given that singular and plural forms in Hausa can be quite different and that English and Hausa usages of the same terms can vary. Thus, “gate,” for example, is kofa and can refer to an entire area rather than a door, while “gates” is rendered kofoi.

18. According to the KC, King Shashere (1573–1582) was the first to award this title to a eunuch (Palmer 1967:115). The title was probably replaced by another, Shamaki (Stable), during the Kutumbi Dynasty (1623–1648), the title Sarkin Dawaki presumably being redefined and awarded to other slave or free-born persons. The title and duties of Shamaki (Stables) still exist, whereas the title Sarkin Dawaki is today held by free-born Fulani nobility (see Fika 1978:11).

19. The Eunuchs’ lack of “family” and the political debilitation this incurred should not be exaggerated. Some eunuchs presumably had slave parents residing in the palace while other eunuchs adopted children whose children in turn would be considered part of a eunuch household or “family” (Lavers 1990). Eunuchs had large followings and could pose a threat to a ruler. A leading palace eunuch, for example, led an unsuccessful rebellion at the end of the nineteenth century (Palmer 1967:131).

20. Another eunuch was appointed to the Kano Nine with the title Wambai during the reign of King Shashere (1573–1582; Palmer 1967:115).

21. Additional sources of state revenues would have included tribute from persons within and outside the region, war booty, and state seizure of property and goods. Thus, there would have been the need for other, non-grain kinds of treasuries.

22. The KC (Palmer 1967:113) also notes that King Kosiko (1509–1565) invaded the town of N’guru in the Kingdom of Bornu whereupon he approached the ruling house: “...Sarkin Kano (the King of Kano) took his place beneath the “kuka” tree at the Kofan Fada, and assembling the inhabitants of the town at the Kofan Bai, reduced them to terrified submission.” This passage is particularly interesting in that it suggests that the ruling house in Bornu similarly located their court and slave areas.

23. Eunuchs also guarded palace gates in the palace of Dahomey perhaps as early as the 1600s. Whether these gates were facing the public, however, or leading into the palace interior is not clear. Moreover, the palace was established 150 or more years after the Kano palace (see Lombard 1967:83).

24. Cikin gida is more commonly translated as “inside the house.” For clarity and brevity, I refer to the cikin gida as the inside.

25. Hunwick (1994b) suggests that this phrase could alternatively be taken to mean that the king should not isolate himself.

26. “You may adorn your body and sweeten your odour, and embellish your clothes as far as (Muslim Law) permits the adornment of men, without the imitation of women...” (translation of Gwarzo et al. 1974:77).

27. In the palace of Mossi, a kingdom south of Songhay in the 1500s, precisely the opposite symmetry was observed (Zahan 1967:167). The eastern part of the palace was “female” and associated with darkness, the past, and death, while the western portion of the palace was “male” and associated with life and the well-being of the kingdom. An outer courtyard for the king’s slaves extended out from the western “male” side towards the public domain, each of the gendered...
sections having their own entrance. Interestingly, the eastern "female" entrance was used not only by women, but by commoners, and strangers, suggesting that the latter groups held a common low status. Perhaps a similar arrangement obtained in the Kano palace.

28. Smith (1967:100) writes that following the Fulani take-over of the Hausa state of Katsina circa 1807, "Katsina Hausa [leaders] settled at Maradi as liberators resuming their rightful inheritance, with support from the local chiefs... From farther afield the family and supporters of Alwali, the defeated Hausa king of Kano, came for protection and help. From these immigrants the Katsina of Maradi selected persons for the traditional Katsina titles and replicated the official structure of their former state as best they could under the new conditions,"

29. Ruta'i (1987) mentions this, but does not discuss it. My own research indicates that the last bori ceremonies took place during the reign of emir Sanusi (1953–1963).

References


1994b. Personal communication.


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Using field data from the Kano palace, this paper highlights the utility of a reworked Foucauldian mode of spatial analysis (spatial archaeology) in understanding the dynamics of state formation in Islamized West Africa. It is argued that the palace was built circa 1500 as an *Islamic* palace within which North African political cultural innovations were introduced and given material force. The most important of these were seclusion, massive concubinage, a state council and treasury, and the use of male slaves (including eunuchs) as important state functionaries. These innovations established a new and gendered spatial dynamic of state formation that registered clearly in palace design. Most notably, gender constructions were mediated through spatial oppositions which emphasized the importance of patriarchy and royal motherhood in increasing the authority of the king. Accordingly “male” “state” affairs were sited in or near public domains while female “state-household” activities were located in the secluded palace interior or “stomach.” Only religious scholars or eunuchs could enter the interior, men who offered little reproductive threat to the king, while concubinage allowed for the king to expand and centralize territorial alliances with conquered peoples along agnostic descent lines. Seclusion required the “outside” services of nonconcubine slave women through whom royal women’s powers extended beyond the palace. I suggest that such powers included administering grain tax collection as part of their massive food-production duties. Seclusion also seems to have provided concubines with a space in which to continue pre-Islamic religious practices.
It is hypothesized that development of heteropatriarchal spatial divisions of state and state-household labor were tied to gendered struggles over commercial surpluses resulting partly from the Islamization of West Africa and the attendant rise of long-distance trade. This conclusion suggests that Islamic forms of seclusion developed partly and co-evaly with the rise of mercantilism in the region. **Key Words:** (hetero)patriarchy, spatial archaeology, West Africa.

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