

The Spatial Factor in African History

African Social Studies Series

Editorial Board

- MAHAMADOU DIALLO, University of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
MONGI BAHLOUL, University of SFAX, Tunisia
KIMANI GACAU, University of Zimbabwe
KEMPE RONALD HOPE, University of Botswana
MUYIWA FALAIYE, University of Lagos
FUNWI AYUNINJAM, Kentucky State University, USA
GEORGE AGBANGO, Bloomberg University, USA
DANIEL MENGARA, Montclair State University, USA
JANET McINTOSH, Harvard University, USA
HANNINGTON OCHWADA, University of Florida, USA
GERTI HESSELING, Africa Studies Centre Leiden, The Netherlands
LOUIS BRENNER, SOAS, London
A. B. BODOMO, University of Hong Kong, China

VOLUME 8

The Spatial Factor in African History

The Relationship of the Social,
Material, and Perceptual

Edited by

Allen M. Howard
Richard M. Shain



BRILL
LEIDEN • BOSTON

2005

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Library of Congress cataloging-in-publication data is available on the
Library of Congress website: catalog.loc.gov

LC control number: 2004058586

ISSN 1568-1203
ISBN 90 04 13913 3

© Copyright 2005 by Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands
Koninklijke Brill NV incorporates the imprints Brill Academic Publishers,
Martinus Nijhoff Publishers and VSP.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission from the publisher.

Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal
use is granted by Brill provided that
the appropriate fees are paid directly to The Copyright
Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Suite 910,
Danvers, MA 01923, USA.
Fees are subject to change.

PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS

CONTENTS

Preface	vii
Titles and Locations of Maps and other Figures	xi
Introduction: African History and Social Space in Africa ALLEN M. HOWARD AND RICHARD M. SHAIN	1
Nodes, Networks, Landscapes, and Regions: Reading the Social History of Tropical Africa 1700s–1920	21
ALLEN M. HOWARD	
“Region” as Historical Production: Narrative Maps from the Western Serengeti, Tanzania	141
JAN BENDER SHETLER	
Mobility, Genealogical Memory, and Constructions of Social Space in Northern Gabon	177
JOHN M. CINNAMON	
The Disappearing District? Territorial Transformation in Southern Gabon 1850–1950	221
CHRISTOPHER GRAY	
The Salt That Binds: The Historical Geography of a Central Nigerian Regional Identity	245
RICHARD M. SHAIN	
Habitation and Warfare Strategies in 19th Century Mande—a View from the <i>Kafu</i>	261
JAN JANSEN	
Re-Marking on the Past: Spatial Structures and Dynamics in the Sierra Leone-Guinea Plain, 1860–1920s	291
ALLEN M. HOWARD	

Abstracts	349
Contributors	353
Index	355

PREFACE

The Spatial Factor in African History. The Relationship of the Social, Material, and Perceptual is the product of a planned, long-term effort to bring together scholars who have been applying spatial analysis in their work. From the beginning, we have hoped to demonstrate the usefulness of spatial analysis for many problems in the writing of African history and for current issues as well. The project originated informally when most of the present contributors, and others, began talking after a panel at the 1996 Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, where Allen Howard presented a paper on spatial analysis. At that time, we discovered that we had many common interests and were seeking new ways of applying spatial analysis in our work. All of us agreed with the proposition that social space is not simply something "out there," a passive backdrop for events, but rather that space and social practices are dynamically linked. We decided that we would form an on-going group to pursue our joint interests. In order to get to know one another's work, recruit others, and receive criticism about the spatial models we were employing or considering using, five of us participated in a panel we organized at the 1998 Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association. Two of us also joined a panel on spatial analysis at the 1997 Social Science History Association Meeting. All of the chapters here, except one, were originally given as papers at one or more of those conferences. We also met regularly at the Annual Meetings of the African Studies Association to discuss our individual research and writing and the progress of the overall project. Charles Ambler, of the University of Texas at El Paso, and Eli Bentor, of Appalachian State University, were part of our original group and added to the evolution of our thinking, but did not prepare a chapter for this volume.

We also made other efforts to provide an intellectual integrity to this book, even though the particular case studies and theoretical approaches vary significantly. Most important, we selected and circulated a number of theoretical and conceptual writings by geographers and others that we felt were particularly salient for questions of spatiality in the African past. We did not, however, try to find

one way, or “the way” to apply theory. An important feature of this volume is how authors use different theories and illustrate the various directions in which the study of African social space is developing. Nonetheless, we all have sought to extend the spatial approach in four major ways: by demonstrating the active quality of space, applying spatial theory explicitly, focusing on regions, and combining social, material, and perceptual approaches.

We would especially like to thank Margaret Jean Hay, of the African Studies Center at Boston University, for her continuous support and encouragement in the development of this book. Many thanks also to Michael Siegel, Cartographer of the Geography Department at Rutgers University, who created most of the maps and diagrams, and redrafted others from the originals. The Center for Historical Analysis at Rutgers provided a research fund that assisted in the production of the graphics. We are very appreciative of the skilled editorial work and production oversight by our editors at Brill Academic Publications: Joed Elich, Mattie Kuiper, and especially Regine Reincke and Ivo Romein, who saw the manuscript through to completion. In the individual chapters, each of us acknowledges those who gave us critical commentary, as well as support for research and writing. As will be clear in the volume, most of us have been directly or indirectly influenced by the writing and thinking of Jan Vansina, Professor Emeritus at the University of Wisconsin—Madison.

This book is dedicated to the memory and scholarly inspiration of Chris Gray (1958–2000), who died a few months after sending Allen Howard the revised version of his chapter. We all greatly enjoyed Chris’ comradeship and miss his bright personality and insightful contributions. We have asked John Cinnamon, who knew Chris longest and best, to write a brief remembrance, and we also encourage readers to peruse the more extended biography and the bibliography of Chris Gray’s writings that are included in his excellent posthumous monograph.

Piscataway, NJ, June 2004

John Cinnamon writes: I first met Chris Gray in summer 1982 in Libreville, when he arrived in Gabon for Peace Corp training. He was a friendly, thoughtful person, motivated by deep intellectual

curiosity. He had already begun to assemble a library of available publications on Gabonese history and culture. While a Peace Corp volunteer in Mouila, he developed an abiding interest in southern Gabon, which would come to fruition in his 1995 dissertation in history, directed by Phyllis Martin at Indiana University, and his 2002 book, *Colonial Rule and Crisis in Equatorial Africa. Southern Gabon ca. 1850–1940*, with Rochester University Press.

In 1984 Chris transferred to Peace Corps Senegal for two years, then in 1986 enrolled in a Master's program in African Studies at the School for African and Oriental Studies, London. His master's thesis compared the works of Cheikh Anta Diop and his prominent Congolese disciple, Théophile Obenga. This study was later published as a book: *Conceptions of History in the Works of Cheikh Anta Diop and Théophile Obenga* (London: Karnak House, 1989).

As a historian, teacher, colleague, and friend, Chris Gray distinguished himself by his thoughtful, probing, original scholarship, his deep integrity and commitment to social justice, and his generosity. He was at the center of a small network of Gabon scholars and also maintained important ties with the African Studies community. Although his life was cut short by cancer at the age of forty-two, he had already made a significant contribution to African Studies and to the lives of all who came into contact with him. His loss is deeply felt by his many friends and colleagues. Chris Gray was a gentleman and a scholar, in the true senses of both terms.

Hamilton, OH, June 2004

TITLES AND LOCATIONS OF MAPS
AND OTHER FIGURES

FIG. 1	Regions Discussed, by Chapter Number and Author	2
FIG. 2	West Africa	22
FIG. 3	East Africa	23
FIG. 4	Regional Setting of the Western Serengeti	149
FIG. 5	Ecology of the Serengeti Region	152
FIG. 6	Nineteenth Century Settlement Sites in the Western Serengeti	162
FIG. 7	Age-set Cycles of People in the Western Serengeti	166
FIG. 8	Remains of Stone Walls, Western Serengeti	168
FIG. 9	Tribal Map of the Musoma District	172
FIG. 10	Northern Gabon Region	182
FIG. 11	Genealogy of the Founders of Isambun and Related Clans (<i>meyong</i>)	193
FIG. 12	Founders, Clans, Languages, and Locations of Isambun and Related Clans	196
FIG. 13	Rivers and Clans, Northern Gabon Region	197
FIG. 14	Isambun Sub-Clans	203
FIG. 15	Southern Gabon Region	223

FIG. 16	Language Districts and Clan Language, Southern Gabon	227
FIG. 17	Central Nigeria Region	247
FIG. 18	Indigenous models of regionality, Central Nigeria	257
FIG. 19	Mali/Guinea Region	262
FIG. 20	Sierra Leone/Guinea Region	293
FIG. 21	Corridors and Passageways, Sierra Leone-Guinea Region	297
FIG. 22	Late 19th Century Politics, Northwestern Sierra Leone	317
FIG. 23	Towns and Sierra Leone Railway, ca. 1920	339

INTRODUCTION: AFRICAN HISTORY AND SOCIAL SPACE IN AFRICA

ALLEN M. HOWARD AND RICHARD M. SHAIN

In recent years, many historians of Africa have incorporated a spatial dimension into their work. For the most part, however, they have done so implicitly and without problematizing their use of space. Presently, no discursive tradition of representing space in academic African history writing exists. As a result, the conversation about spatial processes in African history has been episodic and fragmented. The authors in this inter-disciplinary volume propose a sustained examination of the role of space during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in tropical Africa.¹ By refining terminology and clarifying concepts of spatial analysis and by applying them to specific case studies, the contributors seek to invigorate the discussion about the nexus between space and time in Africa. They do not, however, prescribe one approach to theory, and disagree over the utility of particular concepts. This introduction suggests some of the alternative approaches by contributors, and the opening essay by Allen Howard expands those comparisons while looking at many other scholars' applications of spatial theory to African history.

Researchers have used space as an explanatory factor and occasionally as a subject, but rarely have they considered spatial analysis as an organic perspective with considerable relevance for nearly every branch of Africanist historical inquiry. As a trans-cultural phenomenon, the slave trade entailed widespread dislocation and movement of people, and thus the study of its organization and social impacts are phenomena that benefit from a spatial perspective.² The

¹ This volume does not examine the Republic of South Africa or North Africa because of the nature of nineteenth century history in those areas and the immensity of the existing literature on spatiality.

² The approaches taken by Paul Lovejoy, Joseph Miller, and some other scholars are inherently spatial, as they look at the inter-relationships of change at the local, regional, and international levels. This and several of the other topics addressed here are discussed more fully in the introductory essay. See Lovejoy (2000) and Miller (1988).



Fig. 1. Regions Discussed, by Chapter Number and Author

continued importance of labor, including slavery, in African history writing and the emerging significance of the environment focus attention on spatial processes by documenting the impact of the global economy on patterns of migrant work, production and local ecologies (Manhuelle 1997; McCann 1999). Similarly, the rise of the “new” social history with its emphasis on urban settings and the transformation of social spheres has brought spatial questions more to the forefront (Akyeampong 1996; Parker 1999). All of these topics require that gender be fully integrated into the analysis of space, as some anthropologists and other scholars have begun to do, particularly at the family and community level (Moore 1996; Pittin 1996; Cooper 1997). Our colleague, the late Christopher Gray, made a major contribution in *Colonial Rule and Crisis in Equatorial Africa. Southern Gabon ca. 1850–1940* (2002), where he fruitfully applied a range of tools from geographers and spatial theorists: the notion of territoriality to help explain differences between coastal and inland regions in the late nineteenth century coast and to illuminate administrative changes in the early twentieth; literary perspectives for assessing the gaze and map mania of the first European “scientific” explorers and agents of extraction; and the concept of nodality to assess further the varying impacts of missions, concession companies, and colonial administrators.

The expanding influence of cultural studies also has alerted scholars to the relevance of spatial analysis for African history writing. Growing numbers of researchers have participated in debates on the cultural politics of spatial representation and been willing to reflect upon their own models.³ They have started to examine their use of the terms “local” and “global,” seeing them as dialectically determined and culturally constructed (Wright 2004). Many historians as well have become fascinated with the concept of hybridity, a “core” topic in cultural studies. Hybridity occurs when cultures incorporate elements from geographically distinct and politically unequal areas. Inevitably, hybridity impinges upon space and time as demonstrated by a recently published conference proceedings on the history of the island of Gorée (Samb 1997). Essays from that symposium straddle

³ The work of David William Cohen and E. S. Atieno Odhiambo are an exception to the neglect of “meta-history” (1992).

oceans and centuries, mapping the shifting contours of Gorée's cultural identities, drawn from Africa, Europe, and the Caribbean.

Thus, space is a consideration in the present-day writing about Africa done in such fields as social history, anthropology, and cultural studies, as well as geography. This volume seeks to extend the spatial approach in two major ways: by demonstrating the active quality of space and by applying spatial theory explicitly. Social space is not simply something that is "out there," nor is it a passive backdrop for events. Rather, the spatial component is, like time, constantly changing. Since it is the cumulative effect of past human action and thought, it impinges upon present-day action and thought. The main purpose of the opening essay is to demonstrate how theories and tools of spatial analysis are invaluable for scholars confronting the explanatory, methodological, and epistemological issues posed by recent developments in African historiography. Spatial analysis can yield new perspectives on old subjects such as state formation, and help go beyond stalemated dichotomies such as the polarized treatment of states and so-called stateless societies. It also provides a conceptual bridge between African social history and other fields in the humanities and social sciences by making micro-histories more intelligible to a wider audience and grounding abstract theories in concrete cases, as does each chapter in this volume. Spatial analysis also sheds light on the ways people have constructed mental maps, used discourse to organize territories, altered their location and physical surroundings in response to crises, and interpreted social landscapes. Most of the authors in this collection touch on several of these topics and others as well.

Sources and Representations of Space

Africans have long accorded great significance to spatial dimensions of their past, and oral histories make constant reference to how Africans have experienced and shape space. Most of the chapters in this volume reveal ways that residents encoded the landscape, which in turn structured experience and behavior. Oral histories often have related how unoccupied space became place, as found in hunters' tales, stories concerning totems, and reckonings about the formation of kin groups in situ. Oral accounts also depict how places mold individual, family, and group identities. These stories involve sites

with social meaning—such as shrines, markets, salt brines, battle fields, forests, and lakes—or portray conflict in and about places. People organize their oral histories around concealed spatial schema, esoteric symbols with territorial importance, participation in spiritual centers, or renowned actors who traveled through space and time. Places referred to in narratives often have multiple and contested meanings. Not uncommonly, oral performances only occur at specific sites, such as palaces, compounds of clan heads, and sacred groves or buildings (Jansen 1998). Furthermore, as several chapters demonstrate, oral sources must be understood within particular ecological contexts. During the nineteenth century, many areas of the continent witnessed massive ecological change, even disaster, that was inseparable from warfare and other social phenomena. Using field observation along with oral and written sources, Jan Jansen (in “Habitation and Warfare Strategies in Nineteenth Century Mande: A View from the *Kafu*”) reveals the ways shifts in settlement patterns reflected the interconnection of warfare, ecology, and social responses. (See the opening essay for a general, comparative discussion of warfare and spatial change.)

A tension between place and displacement often informs oral narratives. Many accounts present the movements of households, kin groups, specialists, professionals, and entire “peoples.” Through physical dislocation, these migration narratives literally unsettle the notion of “origins,” “roots,” or “beginnings,” and illustrate that groups often grow conscious of or generate their supposed cultural distinctiveness by leaving a particular place or interacting with others.⁴ Migrating peoples brought or invented their own spatial terminologies and methods of mental mapping. Narratives of traders and specialized craftspeople frequently not only describe their professional expansion but incorporate spatial model and prescribe regions. Furthermore, as Richard Shain shows in “The Salt that Binds: The Historical Geography of a Central Nigerian Regional Identity,” some incoming groups like the Jihadists of the Sokoto Caliphate were able to impose their spatial orientation on their neighbors. By revamping marketing systems and renaming towns and districts, they disrupted previously existing spatial orientations.

⁴ See the opening essay and chapters by Cinnamon, Gray, and Howard.

Historians of pre-colonial Africa have long struggled with the problems of connecting social, spatial, and temporal dimensions of oral traditions. They often have assumed the social dimension to be the lineage, clan, or “tribe”/ethnic group, space then being coterminous with the supposed boundaries of those social entities. In contrast, this volume focuses on places and especially on regions in their functional and subjective senses. The functional aspects of regions are discussed in detail in the following essay, as are the perceptual. In a stimulating essay on Mexico, Eric Van Young asks “Are Regions Good to Think?” and answers yes, though with qualifications. He states, however, that “regions do not really exist as historical or cultural subjects, but only as objects” (of investigators).⁵ The authors here argue that while they define regions by imposed criteria, it is also possible to discover both how people in various parts of Africa created regions through action and how they thought about regions. If people did not identify with regions in the sense that people identify with modern ethnicities or nations, they did perceive regions, ascribe meaning to them, and in certain ways identify with them. Regions, though, were in constant change, and thus their historical subjectivity was fluid. In some instances, places and regions were forgotten; in other instances, they were remembered and used in social discourse. Jan Bender Shetler’s chapter, “‘Region’ as Historical Production: Narrative Maps from the Western Serengeti, Tanzania,” studies how different groups responded to ecological crisis by reconfiguring age-organizations into territorially based entities. Her analysis of various oral traditions establishes the link between the ways in which space is imagined in each tradition and the different kinds of social relationships that took precedence in successive time periods. This is accomplished by looking at how oral traditions employ spatial imagery to represent those pasts. John Cinnamon’s chapter “Mobility, Genealogical Memory, and the Constructions of Social Space in Northern Gabon” examines how the oral accounts of Fang-

⁵ He goes on to say that “Localities and nations, ethnicities, families, tribes, and corporate groupings—these all exist as subjects, as markers of conscious self-identity among people, but not regions. . . . Who is loyal to a region but a geographer?” (Van Young 1993). We argue here that it is specifically in the scales larger than localities and in the absence of imagined “tribes” or ethnicities that regions were important.

speakers incorporated notions of time and space in genealogical idiom that changed over time, and thus shows how ethnic representations are misleading. Oral sources he gathered contain encoded social memories of individual and group mobility, shifting social identities, and the history of commercial and matrimonial alliances. In writing "The Disappearing District? Territorial Transformation in Southern Gabon 1850–1950," the late Christopher Gray combined his interviews and oral sources recorded by others with European official documents to give a rich interpretation of how ranking individuals shaped space both before and after French conquest. He shows that in the late 1800s district identity among Apindji-speaking clans was formed around powerful big men and also that when Mitsogo-speaking clans revolted against the French in the early 1900s, the leader, Mbombé, was selected by elders to receive the district's war charms. By distributing protective medicine he organized members of the district in resistance. Allen Howard's chapter "Re-Marking on the Past: Spatial Structures and Dynamics in the Sierra Leone-Guinea Plain, 1860–1920s," draws upon family histories gathered in the field along with other sources, including oral accounts captured in written documents, to illustrate how discourse had a spatial dimension that involved the location and space-shaping actions of title holders, big men, immigrant *jula*, women traders, and others. Testimonies by African travelers, genealogies, and official records reveal how individuals understood their social situation in relationship to others and how they mentally mapped the surrounding landscape in terms of prominent figures, households, and complex and changing networks, as well as sites charged with meaning. In all such cases, memory of place and region was altered over time. Jan Jansen demonstrates how people in the upper Niger between Bamako and Siguiri modified their founding myths and thus erased their knowledge of earlier spatialities. Given that, he reconstructs spatial change during the nineteenth century by employing his intimate field knowledge to contrast the 1795 account of Mungo Park with sources generated by French imperialists a century later.

Accounts of European travelers such as Mungo Park and Heinrich Barth in West Africa or James Speke in East Africa provide evidence for spatial analysis, but such sources do not yield data in a direct and uncomplicated manner. The commonplace view of these texts is that, allowing for nineteenth century biases, they are in many respects reliable observations. However, the spatial schema embedded

within them has intruded upon readers' perceptions of African space. In a typical account, a "foreign" visitor "penetrates" Africa by moving in from the coast, often presented as polyglot and degraded, to a rich and culturally authentic interior. Eventually, after several reversals of fortune (illness, robbery, hostility from local populations), the traveler "arrives" at his destination—usually a royal court, storied city, or river's source. These accounts, however, deal less with geography than with imperialist imagery. As Mary Louise Pratt has observed, "desire" is the engine behind the texts, not a quest for scientific information (Pratt 1992). A thirst for fame and knowledge becomes eroticized. Usually travelers develop highly charged friendships with culture-straddling guides or translators who aid the visitors in moving through the social hierarchies they meet in their journeys. Such sources can be re-read, however, to yield a different understanding. Jansen takes an internal perspective, that of the *kafu* or local community, not an external one. In doing this, he is able to map physical shifts in residential location and also social and political re-alignments, and then attribute those changes to the impact of warfare. Like Jan Bender Shetler, he walked the ground with informants in order to link their accounts with physical remains from the past and with contested meanings associated with places.⁶

Renderings of Space

Unconsciously, many scholars of Africa have derived their out/in and up/down spatial axes from travelers' accounts or else have taken a similar approach under the influence of modernization or development theory. The personal experiences of "outside" researchers have often replicated the explorers' trajectories. Historians travel to archives located in national capitals or other administrative headquarters, where they bore into mountains of files, then work their way into African communities through thickets of secrecy, and ultimately emerge with their data. In the field, researchers often climb up and down the social and cultural hierarchies in a search for

⁶ Several authors also discuss methodological and interpretive problems of working with oral accounts alone and in combination with archaeological, written, and other sources. Shetler, in particular, discusses how the relative chronologies of different accounts can be determined through putting them alongside other data.

acceptance and information, usually guided by local informants. While the horizontal/vertical axis has been a useful tool in structuring historical narratives, it has thwarted the effective representation of the non-linear and non-hierarchical ways that Africans have constructed and experienced space. It has often obscured the fluidity and multi-dimensionality of the spatial practice of Africans.

From the 1960s on, scholars employed many highly sophisticated techniques to map contemporary Africa and those changes of the past that were considered salient. While such methods presented subjects previously ignored, they also tended to be ideologically driven, most notably in connection with modernization theory that prevailed in academic circles during the 1960s and 1970s. Many scholars sought to map the spread of modernization over the landscape, an approach consistent with other contemporary writing that saw colonial rule as *the* major breaking point in African history. This approach also was dictated by the availability of quantitative sources. Statistics in annual reports and similar sources provided much of the data from which maps were constructed.⁷ Such books rarely presented information on pre-colonial economics or politics; mapping began with the founding of colonies and typically an outline map of the colony served as a template. Then transport infrastructure, schools, hospitals, and other indicators of “modernization” were located upon a chronological series of maps. This not only implied that the pre-colonial period was an historical blank but, by a convenient tautology, the increased number and spread of such amenities, decade after decade, was visible evidence of the “modernization” process. Many important aspects of society and economy typically were omitted; for instance, much of the informal sector was ignored, which led to an under-weighting of the economic contribution of women.

The lingering influence of core-periphery models also has hindered the writing of spatial history by emphasizing hierarchy. Such models have had a protracted career in the social sciences from Park’s urban land use zones in the first part of the twentieth century through Wallerstein’s world system model.⁸ Although scholars have warned

⁷ Edward Soja employed a principal components method to group variables and contended that “modernization is systemic, in that a large number of interrelated events occur together as an area moved from traditional to modern ways of life” (Soja 1968:77).

⁸ For two fine surveys of trends in geographic analysis which, when compared, illustrate a sea change in scholarship, see Hurst (1972) and Soja (1989).

of the determinism of many core-periphery models, they continually resurface in new contexts, not infrequently serving as metaphors for the diffusion of ideas or expansion of political influence. Some of the most compelling challenges to the core-periphery model have stressed the need for a regional perspective, such as employed in this volume (Stern 1993).

Perhaps the “ethnic” approach to African history has most determinedly blocked the application of spatial analysis. Colonial policies and early ethnographic investigations assumed that Africa was made up of homogeneous “societies,” “cultures,” “tribes,” and “peoples.” This along with the “tribalization” of historiography led to distorted mis-mappings in which ethnolinguistically diverse areas were represented as solid “tribal” blocks. Such mapping scarcely needs description since it remains in popular writing, scholarly textbooks, and public depictions, such as the plates accompanying museum displays of African “ethnic” art. In its most extreme, ethnic cartography took the form of circles or irregular shapes, sometimes carpeting maps.⁹ More commonly, tribal, ethnic, or ethnolinguistic labels (e.g., Temne, Loko, Limba) were bent across a map’s surface to suggest location without the boundaries and isolation that circles suggest. Or ethnicity was indicated by dots or lines, which allowed people of different “groups” to live in the same area but did not escape the trap of representation in “tribal” terms. In some instance, ethnicities were racialized (Buchanan and Pugh 1955:85, 87ff.). Furthermore, as African politics became more ethnically oriented from the 1950s onward, leaders of movements, scholars, teachers, journalists, and others located “their” people on actual maps or associated them in public discourse with particular geographic areas. By doing so, they helped to generate mental maps of “tribes.”

African geographers such as Akin Mabogunje and Kwamina B. Dickson were some of the first scholars to chart a different way by tracing spatial processes, such as urbanization, or by selecting a regional or national scale for historical examination (Mabogunje 1968; Dickson 1969). Perhaps because geography was an important acad-

⁹ Among the most notorious examples would be the foldout published with G. P. Murdock’s *Africa: Its People and their Culture History* (1959), but widely used texts are organized at least in part on an ethnic basis; for instance, Elizabeth A. Isichie (1997).

emic subject in the undergraduate and graduate curricula of many African universities and perhaps also because of their own grounding, Africans who were academically trained historians also were among the earliest researchers drawn to the spatial aspects of their material. Starting in the 1960s, the Nigerian historian E. A. Alagoa became fascinated with questions of scale. In *The Small Brave City State*, Alagoa (1964) experimented with concepts like “local” and “global” long before they became popular. East African historians like Bethwell Ogot and Atieno Odhiambo (in important publications with David William Cohen) have been intrigued by the complex relationship between environment and social and cultural change. Ogot has been particularly sensitive to the spatial and ecological aspects of the migration traditions he gathered.¹⁰ Several scholars have sought out pre-colonial regions or indigenous representations of space. For the nineteenth century, the Nigerian historian Mahdi Adamu has outlined the borders of Central Nigeria, or Kasashen Bauchi, while Sa ad Abubakar, another Nigerian scholar, attempted to do the same for the Upper Benue, which he calls Fombina. C. Magbaily Fyle incorporated into his scholarly analysis of Sierra Leone the concept *khori* or “country,” as found in the speech of the pre-colonial era (Ahmadu 1978; Abubakar 1977; Fyle 1972:46–49).

African writers of literature have gone even further in documenting the complex African perceptions of space and depicting how Africans have experienced spatial change. Wole Soyinka has provided perhaps the richest representation of African space in his *Aké: The Years of Childhood* (1981). In this autobiographical account, Soyinka ponders issues of scale, physical environment, boundaries of all kinds, and the spaces of cultural identity. Towards the book’s conclusion, Soyinka serves as a messenger for the Abeokuta market women in their struggle against the Alake (ruler) of the town in the late 1940s. His itinerary through the city charts the overlapping social, economic, and cultural spheres of a society in transition. Soyinka’s book is especially effective in its depiction of an Africanized nexus of space and time. In his textualized Abeokuta, the city simultaneously exists in the present and the past. As he calls on all of the senses, it is

¹⁰ Ogot (1967); Cohen and Odhiambo (1989), which includes references to Odhiambo’s earlier works.

possible to apprehend fully this urban landscape in its multiple intersecting spatial and temporal dimensions.

In the opening essay and case studies of this volume, we seek to go beyond such binaries as “inside/outside” or “above/below.” Though we recognize centrality and stratification as critical motifs in the social history of Africa and do examine their spatial dimensions, we focus especially on spatial processes that complicate centers and that involve non-hierarchical situations. Thus, in examining African towns and cities, we are concerned with those sites within centers where things issue forth rather than with “urban” entities as such. That is to say, we look at places where things happen that are influenced by the broader space around and, in turn, help to shape that space. This interactive approach to place highlights the bonds among people, the networks through which people made possibilities into realities. While we acknowledge that social conventions allocated status and that norms conditioned thinking, we reject a static, role-oriented social history. Instead, we emphasize the ways in which behavior was shaped and identities had meaning through interactive relationships, including the exercise of power. To integrate many forms of analysis, we focus on processes of convergence and intersection that gave rise to places and regions. We look at their contingency while also recognizing that in particular temporalities they had form.

Regions were forged through connections among people and through imagination. Gray, following R. D. Sack, argues that in some periods a certain kind of territorial region served as a “powerful geographic strategy to control people by controlling area.” Regions were not only organized hierarchically, however, but horizontally or heterarchically, to use the concept of Roderick McIntosh.¹¹ Howard demonstrates the hierarchical pattern of towns in the Sierra Leone-Guinea plain, but also dissolves the towns and reconsiders the nature of hierarchy through network analysis. Shetler also defines a region “as the geographical extent of various networks of interaction between local communities.” Moreover, such regions cannot be defined formally around traits or contained quantities of space. Regions might be discontinuous, as Shain portrays Apa. More than one region could exist in the same physical area, generated through different means

¹¹ For a discussion of McIntosh’s concepts, see the essay that follows.

or perceptions. As Shetler writes, “(d)ifferent bodies of oral tradition within the same community define different regions, or constructions of social space.” Such regions had different relationships to the past and present, thus different temporalities. All the cases illustrate that regional cohesion was always provisional, accommodation and negotiation always continuing, contestation always present. This perspective enables us to bring together studies of regions where there were towns and those where such centers did not exist or were only marginally significant, regions having states and those without, and regions organized hierarchically and non-hierarchically.

*

While the introductory essay discusses how comparisons might be made between regions with large states and those without, the case studies examine areas where there were no states, where mini-states existed, or where centralized states had only recently intruded. It may be that the scholars in this volume have been able to identify complex spatial patterns and dynamics because they were not studying those areas of Africa where the presence of a strong state had oriented space toward a capital or core (in both the perspectives of people at the time and of later scholars). It may also be that in the areas studied here the older paradigms, typically focusing on segmentary kinship systems or chiefdoms, had failed to account for historical changes. The spatial approach also has enabled us go beyond the political and economic to look at the social and cultural composition and dynamics of centers and regions—and at both practices and thought.

Finally, our social and spatial angle of vision has encouraged us to blur the temporal boundaries between the precolonial and colonial era. Allen Howard’s opening essay explicitly attempts to demarcate in spatial history a long transition period between the precolonial and colonial eras that lasted into the 1920s in most sections of tropical Africa. All the cases bridge the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and some come up to the present. They prompt a rethinking of the standard political time markers for colonialism, and in some instances demonstrate how precolonial patterns have had significance for recent disputes over and understanding of space. Jan Bender Shetler’s chapter examines important changes in social identity

that took place in the second half of the nineteenth century in the western Serengeti. There people responded creatively to a series of widespread disasters by reworking existing social relationships and patterns of settlement. In particular, the older institution of age organization was reconfigured into territorially based units that provided the means for both the unification and enlargement of the scale of affiliations required for survival. Peoples' strategies included spreading out risks by maintaining wide networks of reciprocity based on multiple and situational forms of social identity.

The history of northern Gabon has long been portrayed as the ethnic history of Fang migrations and the encounter of residents with Europeans. This approach distorts dynamic processes of identity construction and the shifting components of social space that do not easily fall into ethnic categories. John Cinnamon's chapter re-conceptualizes the history of that area during the turbulent nineteenth century by underlining peoples' mobility and the fluidity of social group boundaries. Following Bourdieu, Cinnamon points out that too much distrust of local accounts can result in missing the fact that "social lies" in northern Gabon were not "invented out of thin air," but reflected shifting social alliances in space. People's capacity to manipulate genealogical idiom, though within limits, has continued into the present. Cinnamon presents the life history of "Dynamique" to illustrate that during the post-colonial era, at least prior to the rise of multi-partyism, figures were able to act as "big men" and rise to chieftaincy through acquiring wealth, linking with the one-party state, and re-fashioning their social heritage. They were also, however, subject to challenge by others if they lacked sufficient genealogical knowledge or what could be labeled "proper" connections to spatially imagined clans and sub-clans.

For southern Gabon, Christopher Gray built upon Jan Vansina's exegesis of the dominant pre-colonial equatorial political tradition. Vansina argues that the "district was the largest institutional organization of space known" in the past and claims that districts were the "first victims of the colonial order" (Vansina 1990:81). Gray analyzes the contexts in which pre-colonial clan leaders exploited the space of the district to influence people's activities. They sought to control access to resources and trade as well as to facilitate organization for self-defense. The chapter demonstrates how, in contrast with the more hegemonic ambitions of the colonial territoriality, the territoriality of the pre-colonial district was intermittent and

circumstantial. However with a dramatic spurt in European commercial activity in the closing decades of the nineteenth century and disruption stemming from growing French colonial presence, clan leaders sought to intensify the territoriality of their districts. Gray's comparison of two districts demonstrates that transformations initiated by clan leaders and as well as the French officials' imposition of territoriality had dramatically divergent outcomes. The Ngosi district (Gisir-speaking clans) at the beginning of the twentieth century was fully integrated into the new trading networks of European factories and French concessions. Its leaders did not organize a sustained resistance to French rule, and administrators' territorial practices had considerable impact in the area. From the 1920's the district provided the basis for a colonial *canton* chieftaincy; people in the area developed a Gisir-Ngosi identity, with a sense of territoriality, facilitated in part by missionaries who put the dialect into writing. In contrast, the Kamba district (Tsogo-speaking clans) was on the periphery of the commercial boom and its leaders, in cooperation with other Mitsogo districts, violently resisted growing French presence in the first decade of the twentieth century. Following on an organized armed challenge to Bakele attacks in the 1890s, resistance against the French appears to have stimulated among Kamba a strong sense of district identity. For various reasons, this feeling dissipated, and the colonial administrations' military response to the resistance led to the break-up of the rebellious Mitsogo districts. No leaders emerged from the population through whom the French could rule, as they did in Gisiri-Ngosi. Nonetheless, it appears that continuing popular resistance and the symbolism of historic (though "disappearing") districts such as Kamba were significant as people constructed a modern Mitsogo identity.

Richard Shain's chapter demonstrates that Apa identity in central Nigeria was spatially discontinuous and that it shifted from having a hegemonic to an oppositional character. Apa identity had its origins in the expansion of the Kwararrafan state in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. That state was extraordinarily complex, linguistically and culturally, incorporating at least ten different language communities. When the Kwararrafan state radically contracted in the nineteenth century, an Apa identity persisted in scattered clusters. In the twentieth century, a central Nigerian regional identity emerged from these clusters. In its first phase, the Apa regional identity had an economic foundation. It united many of the major salt

producers of the Benue Valley through shared religious cults and marketing arrangements. The economic clout of this alliance translated into political and cultural dominance. When Benue salt production in the nineteenth century was disrupted by the rise of the Sokoto Caliphate to the north and the migration of Tiv speakers from the south, the Apa regional identity shifted ground. People reconstituted it as a tool for resisting domination.

Attacks by Muslim states also had a deep space-shaping influence in the Manden area of southwestern Mali by affecting the location and social composition of the villages that led two *kafuw*, or local political entities. Narena, in the open plain, became a site where several allied groups settled, building *tata* (fortresses) in close proximity in order to improve their defenses. Some were kin groups, but others were clients of major figures or war leaders and their lieutenants. Siby, in contrast, became located along the margin of the mountains, its component units strung out along the face of the uplands rather than being compact. As mentioned previously, people defended by retreating to the hills. The sociopolitical arrangement in Siby apparently was part of a broader spatial design by the Keita rulers and their allies. The 1880s were particularly violent as villages and towns came under attack from *Almami* Ahmadu, *Almami* Samori and the French, or were the scenes of battles between them. When the French took territory they sought to control first the more important towns situated to command territory and trade. Many centers were destroyed. This, postulates Jansen, terminated the last phase of the ancient Mali empire. In the colonial era people often rebuilt centers in somewhat different places, or erected new villages, adapting in either case to the location of motor roads, ecological hazards, or administrative pressures. Quarters that had come together for protection assumed more autonomy.

Allen Howard shows that during the nineteenth century northwestern Sierra Leone and southeastern Guinea became more fully integrated as a region and also more closely linked with the surrounding regions, including the Upper Niger. (Forces affecting the Manden also affected this region, although less directly.) Integration occurred through migration, the expansion of commerce, and the spread of Islam. In this era, people differentiated the region according to the location of exchange points, shrines, mosques, powerful individuals and families, and in other ways. The region and subregions within it were etched through the expenditure of social and

material resources, as well as in people's imagination. Households were especially important physical and perceptual markers in a contested social space. Ceremonies, including peace-making assemblies, were used to show shifts in the relative importance of leaders, alliances, mini-states, and cultural features. People defined themselves and others around places and via contested historical memories of events-in-places. Colonial rule altered the shape of regions by introducing new investments, controls on the movement of goods and people, and an administrative hierarchy that rigidified political space and subverted some economic patterns. Trans-regional movement was thwarted and for a period border zone interaction declined. In some places, the truncation of hinterlands destroyed much of the capacity of traders to gain resources, and many either moved or abandoned their businesses. Others, however, were able to adjust and prosper. Those traders who were favorably located maintained commercial networks. Even though border closures weakened links with the great inland Islamic centers, Muslims built denser networks within the region. By using local "platforms" for social and religious action, Muslims—traders, clerics, and others—were able to deepen and broaden their bonds and communities.

In some regions, precolonial and early colonial spatial patterns have retained importance up to the present day. According to Jansen, people in Siby and Narena have continued to revise foundation stories into the twenty-first century. This process has been affected by the politics of decentralization in Mali and the local involvement of central government officials and NGO workers. Such people have turned to village chiefs for the "authentic" version of the past, thus ignoring perspectives of component units. Cinnamon argues that in contemporary northern Gabon, "genealogical memory [still] is spatial memory," and that the dialectic between mobility and the production of locality continues to be important, as it was precolonially. Aspiring leaders and other social actors must be able to draw upon genealogical knowledge, but separation from local fonts of information and a changing social geography may render that task difficult. As Shain shows, in the twentieth century, Apa identity emerged as an oppositional identity when people organized politically around ethnicity. In post-colonial Nigeria, that identity has played a major role in the formation of a "Middle Belt" consciousness as people have contested Hausa-Fulani political influence in northern Nigeria. During the 1980s and 1990s, such identities have had a great impact

on the delineation of new state boundaries. These authors only briefly sketch the on-going relevance of earlier spatial patterns and ways of conceiving space, but by doing so point to future research possibilities.

REFERENCES

- Abubakar, Sa'ad. 1977. *The Lamibe of Fombina: A Political History of Adamawa 1809–1901*. Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press. Ahmadu, Mahdi. 1978. *The Hausa Factor in West African History*. Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press.
- Akyeampong, Emmanuel. 1996. *Drink, Power, and Cultural Change*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- Alagoa, Ebiegeri Joe. 1964. *The Small Brave City State; a history of Nembe Brass in the Niger Delta*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Buchanan, K. M. and J. C. Pugh. 1955. *Land and People in Nigeria. The Human Geography of Nigeria and its Environmental Background*. London: The University of London Press, Ltd.
- Cohen, David William and E. S. Atieno Odhiambo. 1989. *Siaya. The Historical Anthropology of an African Landscape*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- 1992. *Burying SM: The Politics of Knowledge and the Sociology of Power in Africa*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1992.
- Cooper, Barbara M. 1997. "Gender, Movement, and History: Social and Spatial Transformations in 20th Century Maradi, Niger," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 15:195–221.
- Cooper, Frederick, Florencia E. Malone, Steve J. Stern, Allen F. Isaacman, and William Roseberry. 1993. *Confronting Historical Paradigms: Peasants, Labor, and the Capitalist World System in Africa and Latin America*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Dickson, Kwamina B. 1969. *A Historical Geography of Ghana*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fyle, C. M. 1972. "A Note on Country in Political Anthropology," *Africana Research Bulletin*, 3:1, 46–49.
- Gray, Christopher. 2002. *Colonial Rule and Crisis in Equatorial Africa. Southern Gabon ca. 1850–1940*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press.
- Hurst, Michael E. Eliot. 1972. *A Geography of Economic Behavior. An Introduction*. North Scituate, Massachusetts: Duxbury Press.
- Isichie, Elizabeth A. 1997. *A History of African Societies to 1870*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Jansen, Jan. 1998. "Hot Issues—The 1997 Kamabolon Ceremony in Kangaba (Mali)," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 31:2, 253–278.
- Lovejoy, Paul E. 2000. *Transformations in Slavery. A History of Slavery in Africa, Second Edition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mabogunje, Akin L. 1968. *Urbanization in Nigeria*. New York: Africana Publishing Corporation.
- Manchuelle, François. 1997. *Willing Migrants. Soninke Labor Diasporas, 1848–1960*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- McCann, James C. 1999. *Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land. An Environmental History of Africa, 1800–1990*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- Miller, Joseph C. 1988. *Way of Death. Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade 1730–1830*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Moore, Henrietta L. 1996. *Space, Text, and Gender. An Anthropological Study of the Marakwet of Kenya*. New York: The Guilford Press.

- Murdock, George P. 1959. *Africa: Its People and their Culture History*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Ogot, Bethwell A. 1967. *History of the Southern Luo*. Nairobi: East African Publishing House.
- Parker, John. 1999. *Making the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra*, Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- Pellow, Deborah, ed. 1996. *Setting Boundaries: The Anthropology of Spatial and Social Organization*. Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Pittin, Renee. 1996. "Negotiating Boundaries: A Perspective from Nigeria," in Deborah Pellow, ed., *Setting Boundaries: The Anthropology of Spatial and Social Organization*. 179–194.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. 1992. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. New York: Routledge.
- Samb, Djibril, ed. 1997. *Gorée et L'esclavage*. Dakar: I.F.A.N.
- Soja, Edward. 1968. *The Geography of Modernization in Kenya: A Spatial Analysis of Social, Economic, and Political Change*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.
- 1989. *Postmodern Geographies: the reassertion of space into critical social theory*. New York: Verso.
- Soyinka, Wole. 1981. *Aké: The Years of Childhood*. New York: Random House.
- Stern, Steve J. 1993. "Feudalism, Capitalism, and the World-System in the Perspective of Latin America and the Caribbean," in Frederick Cooper, Florencia E. Malone, Steve J. Stern, Allen F. Isaacman, and William Roseberry, *Confronting Historical Paradigms: Peasants, Labor, and the Capitalist World System in Africa and Latin America* 23–83.
- Van Young, Eric. 1993. "Introduction Are Regions Good to Think?" in Eric Van Young ed., *Mexico's Regions. Comparative History and Development*, 1–36.
- Van Young, Eric, ed., 1993. *Mexico's Regions. Comparative History and Development*. San Diego: Center for U. S.-Mexican Studies.
- Vansina, Jan. 1990. *Paths in the Rainforests*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Wright, Donald. 2004. *The World and a Very Small Place in Africa*. Armonk: M. E. Sharpe.

NODES, NETWORKS, LANDSCAPES, AND REGIONS:
READING THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF TROPICAL AFRICA
1700s–1920

ALLEN M. HOWARD

This essay examines tropical Africa from about 1700 to 1920 by analyzing the changing relationships of the social, material, and perceptual in regions.¹ A regional approach draws attention to the places and zones of interaction where people carried out social practices and generated perceptions. We argue that an interdisciplinary spatial approach is consistent with and adds to the rethinking of social organization, dynamics, and idiom that has been underway for some time. Earlier, for instance, under the influence of canonical texts, it was held that kinship relations were governed by structural rules, that lineages and clans could be neatly diagrammed, and that the social distance and behavior among kin could be determined precisely. The emphasis on agnatic descent and segmentation has been widely criticized, especially by scholars who have married history and anthropology.² Authors in this collection continue that critique by demonstrating how people used kin terminology flexibly to express and manage alliances that organized trade and politics over wide regions. Similarly, studying people's interactions within regions counters the tendency to interpret the past in ethnic ("tribal") terms, an interpretation which still governs the structuring of some texts and scholarly monographs (Isiechi 1997). Instead, an interactive, regional approach calls attention to the multiplicity of identities people possessed in the past, situates processes of identity formation, and facilitates a rethinking of conventional inside-outside distinctions.

Spatial analysis may also help break out of other constraining typologies and paradigms. Students of pre-colonial Africa have tended

¹ The author gratefully acknowledges the insightful comments made upon earlier drafts by Sandra T. Barnes, Herman L. Bennett, Peggy Friedman, William A. Jones, Zachary R. Morgan, Richard M. Shain, AdbulMaliq Simone, and Thomas A. Spear.

² For critiques of the earlier anthropology of kinship and overviews of new trends, see Werbner 1990; Parkin 1990.



Fig. 2. West Africa

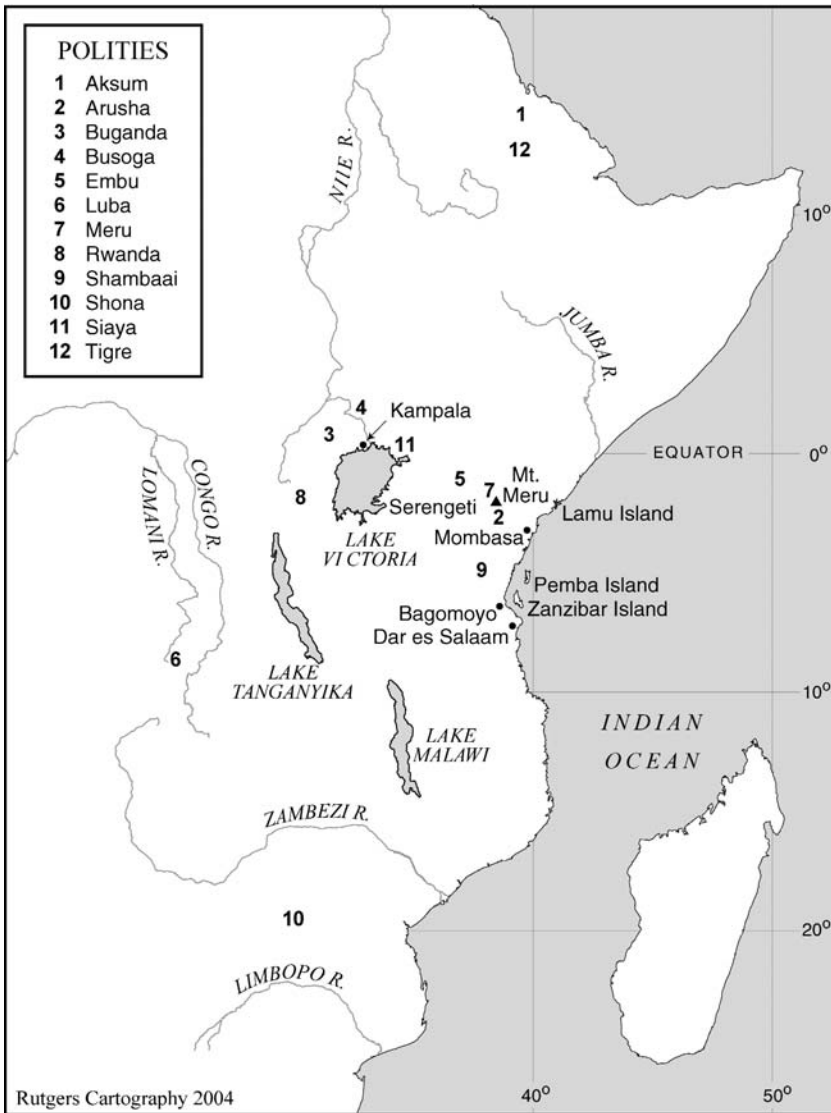


Fig. 3. East Africa

to dichotomize polities into states and stateless forms (Ajayi and Crowther 1985). Focusing on network-building and other space-spanning processes, however, reveals the ways in which social decision-making was based upon the control of resources. This approach facilitates comparisons across supposedly different types. Moreover, rather than compartmentalizing gender as a topic, the study of space-forming activities integrates gender at every territorial scale from the local to the macro-regional by examining power and representation, competition and collaboration.

A spatial perspective may also lead to a new periodization of African social history by finding time markers not determined by major political or economic shifts. Much of the language of periodization—such as “the imperialism of free trade” or “pre-colonial era”—implies a movement toward colonial rule and beyond to the present. A spatial framework can incorporate in a non-teleological way an analysis of the impact of colonial conquest along with other changes associated with slave trading and warfare, Islamic reform movements, drought, disease, and an expanding capitalist order. The regional survey presented below demonstrates that the event of conquest did not sharply delineate the precolonial era from the colonial, but rather was part of a long transition, often lasting from the 1860s to 1920s, during which spatial patterns were gradually transformed. Only by the 1920s and 1930s was colonial space fixed in most territories, although with significant regional and sub-regional variations and continuous contestation.

Finally, spatial analysis serves to integrate tropical African history with Atlantic and Indian Ocean history. Recent scholarship has directly traced the forced transfer of enslaved people from particular areas in Africa to particular parts of the Americas. From this it has been shown how Africans in the Americas and their descendants drew upon cultural practices, military organization, and beliefs derived from Africa, typically in blended or newly created ways, to survive, forge communities, and challenge racial hierarchies. Such arguments, however, often depend upon assumptions about the commonality of practices among various “peoples.” Where a regional approach has been employed, it often has not been theorized (Gomez 1998; Thornton 1998).³ This essay, while not addressing the Atlantic slave

³ Miller (1988) brilliantly fashions the connections between Angolan and Brazilian regions.

trade directly, presents concepts that are relevant to debates on the diaspora. Prior to their enslavement, Africans had identities formed around social practices and events in particular places and in more extensive territories. They were part of networks and they perceived the social landscape around them through experience and socially constructed patterns. Elsewhere around the Atlantic, they did the same. Tools of spatial analysis enable scholars to avoid simplistic models about the derivation and carryover of culture and instead to trace the movement and reworking of technologies, social practices, and ideas and to examine the processes by which people constituted groups and identities (Carney 2001).

Fundamental Concepts and the Reading Strategy

Those who have argued for the necessity of putting space back into history have stressed that geography cannot be seen simply as a “theater for the enactment of history, an unproblematic and unchanging set of surroundings within which practices and events occur, a fixed field for the play of social action . . .” (Pred 1990:7). Rather, the spatial is an actively changing dimension of all aspects of life, a dimension that affects how people act and think.⁴

As the title of this book indicates, the study of spatial change necessarily integrates the social, material, and perceptual.⁵ A spatial

⁴ Defining the terms space and spatial is fraught with problems. For Robert David Sack, space is what is “out there.” All scientists accept its existence and measure it. In contrast, anything that has been defined and shaped by culture is place. Thus a hotel is a place, but so is forest once it has been named. When such leading proponents of spatial analysis as Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey speak of the “construction of space,” says Sack, they really mean the “construction of place” (Sack 1997:31–35). We feel that this definition is too restrictive and instead use the term space in three senses. The first is the scientific way. Thus, people physically traveling across the terrain are moving through space. The second incorporates the forms of “social space” that people “on the ground” generate physically, mentally, or by interaction. Human understandings of “nature” would be included. The third refers to the abstract, analytic representations, such as a region, that geographers and others “construct” by selecting particular variables according to certain principles. It is in this sense of applying concepts, theories, and models that we speak of spatial analysis.

⁵ In addressing theoretical issues I am especially indebted to members of the spatial analysis group who have met regularly at the African Studies Association and also to conversations with and the works of AbdulMaliq Simone.

approach highlights human social creativity within the limits of structures and dynamic systems. It reveals ways in which cohesion and collaboration is obtained through interaction, but it also reveals lines of conflict and contestation. Thus, spatial analysis is about actualization, about how people find “platforms” for action in particular places and through linkages that offer them possibilities. The material dimensions include the resources that people use to shape space, but it includes the more permanent, though not immutable, features in space: for example, rivers, farm fields, buildings, cities, and railways. Such forms of material reality constitute part of the constraints under which people act. Material features often constitute the common sense notion of geography as a stage for action, but it is critical to stress that spatial structures which are man-made or man-modified are subject to change, often slowly and gradually but sometimes rapidly. People bring about changes in structures (and in social patterns) through economic and social accumulation and investment, such as the development and maintenance of a road. Once established, structures affect behavior and subsequent investment, for instance, when a trader regularly follows a road and then decides to establish commercial partners and eventually a household in a town along the road. Spatial analysis also incorporates the perceptual, in other words, how a person or a group of interacting people understands the road, the partnership, and the town. Spatial analysis therefore helps us to understand how meanings become externalized in the social, cultural, and natural environments through processes that provide a certain stability in time, but also how meanings are contested, particularly around places, people in places, and events in places.

In offering an interpretation of the spatial history of tropical Africa, this essay employs certain concepts, most importantly place, node or center, network, and landscape. It also explores issues of scale, specifically the notion of the region, and it draws upon certain tools that scholars apply to space, notably central place theory. We introduce many cases in order to look at how people made space into place, bridged places through networks and therefore transformed space, and perceived space as landscape. Places have been both literally and figuratively constructed and reconstructed. By examining the locus of action and meaning over time it is possible to understand how people shaped and thought about places as they were in turn being affected by them. It has become common for scholars to

link local societies with global processes, but the regional has often been ignored. This essay and the book as a whole seeks to demonstrate the importance of a multi-level analysis, one that moves from specific places to regions to macro-regional or transnational systems and back again. In simplest form, we use a tri-level approach: local, regional, and global. In actuality, the cases and our reading of existing literature indicate many levels and dimensions within each of those levels.

The historical analysis of agency in space depends upon understanding how people have mobilized, applied, and perceived the use of resources. Space-forming resources include the material—people, land, and goods—the social, the intellectual, and the spiritual or ideological. Control of people, negotiation over the nature of such control, and resistance to control are major elements in African history (Guyer and Belinga, 1995). Control of people has always been place specific because of the need to control the body physically, but control of people has also been critical to more extensive space forming processes, such as, building social alliances, waging war, and conducting trade. Non-material resources have also been critical. The success of the heads of precolonial trading firms depended as much on their ability to gain information on market conditions or exchange partners, as on their possession of capital or their marshaling of carriers and commercial agents. Rulers often exercised dominion through their exercise of national rituals as much as through their command of troops or administrative officers. Possession of supernatural knowledge has resulted in the capacity of people and groups to form space, as seen in the histories of religious movements, territorial “cults,” and men and women who were believed to have had extraordinary access to *nyama*, *ashe*, and other forms of spirit force, including Muslims and Christians.

This essay examines at the local level the histories of how people produced places of social and cultural significance through action, discourse, and belief or ideology: living in households, holding rituals in shrines, conducting exchanges in markets, and forming a wide variety of associations. Such processes involved contestation and a plurality of perceptions (Feierman 1990). We find especially useful the work of such theorists as John Agnew. Agnew argues that a place must simultaneously be understood in several ways—as the locus for action and practices, as the location of social reproduction (and we would add, social contestation), and as a site with meaning (and we

would add, as a site of contestation around different historical memories) (Agnew 1993; Howard 2000; this volume). This modified version of Agnew's schema enables us to incorporate stratification/class (including slavery), gender, and age—in their material, social, and discursive/symbolic aspects. For instance, we argue that a gendered analysis of social relations required a multi-level spatial approach to the control and use of resources, power, and ideology. Although little research has been done on the gendering of space in the African past, except at the domestic and local levels, a good deal of existing scholarship can be re-read to make the spatial aspects of gender more explicit. The scholarship on women and slavery, for instance, has had a notable spatial aspect, which presumably could be further theorized. One component would be the local sites where enslavement involved production, facilitated accumulation, and was fundamental to social reproduction, and where ideologies of domination and subservience were realized (Robertson and Klein 1983). The numerous local sites were, of course, connected within wider regions or macro-regions where war, raiding, and trading generated captives and enslaved people. Ideological currents justifying enslavement also existed at the broader scales, but were manifested locally (Lovejoy 2000).

Individuals and collectivities have forged networks of all imaginable types, ranging from webs of reciprocal assistance among family members, to bonds of trust linking traders in different towns, to ties between central officials and state representatives on a far frontier. Networks, however, did not necessarily involve direct exchange of goods, services, or loyalty. People who did not know one another and perhaps had never seen one another were bonded by common devotion to a deity or set of ritual practices. Networks varied in their density and extension, and in the kinds of social transactions and ideas they mediated. They also varied according to the status, gender, and age of participants. As Jan Bender Shetler demonstrates in her chapter on the Serengeti, people in different generations had different kinds of connections to the same places and established different identities around those places.

Certain interpretations of the past have impeded network analysis, in particular the concentration of scholars on the history of pre-colonial states and the tendency to dichotomize state and stateless societies. That dichotomous approach to politics has led to an under-theorizing of the many regions where there were no states or where

mini-states existed side-by-side with other ways of organizing social power, notably in many parts of the Upper Guinea Coast and Senegambia, the so-called Middle Belt of West Africa, wide sections of East Africa, and the northern zone of equatorial Central Africa. This book seeks to demonstrate ways in which network analysis offers new perspectives on the history of such areas, while also illustrating its application to kingdoms and empires. The scholarly emphasis on hierarchical structures in state formations may have camouflaged the existence of non-hierarchical linkages and of similarities between the social networks of regions with states and regions that did not have royal cores.

Several authors in this collection apply network analysis in different ways. Christopher Gray and John Cinnamon use it re-think the concepts of kinship and segmentary society; they demonstrate that people in what are now the northern and southern sections of Gabon used kinship idioms to help consolidate and express spatially expansive alliances (social, commercial, and political) among non-kin. Drawing on evidence from the Serengeti, Shetler shows that network analysis is valuable for diagnosing continuity and change from generation to generation in the perception and meaning of sites. Allen Howard modifies models that social anthropologists have used to study personal networks in order to describe and explain how people in northwestern Sierra Leone and Guinea built space-spanning connections. These authors also attempt to recreate people's social landscapes by exploring their mental maps and the meanings they attributed to networks in action.

Landscape as a concept incorporates people's views of living and spirit beings, of places located in space, of natural features and man-made objects, and much more. There were (and are) many different African ways of perceiving landscape, and the following examples will clarify how we use that concept while illustrating some of the variations. David William Cohen and E. S. Atieno Odhiambo have noted that:

For the person of Siaya [Western Kenya], 'landscape' is not a reference to the physiognomy of the terrain. Rather, it evokes the possibilities and limitations of space: encompassing the physical land, the people on it, and the culture through which people work out the possibilities of the land. 'Landscape' means 'existence'. 'Land' is simultaneously and ambiguously *piny* (territory), *thur* (homeground), and *lowo* (reproductive soil). People—Luo people—are referred to as *jowa* (our

people), *yawa* (our agnates), *langwa* (our valiant ones), *kothwa* (our seed). 'Culture' is referred to as *timbewa* (our way of doing things). A Siaya person thinks of home, *dala*, as a concept in which all these elements are inter-woven into a fine seamless text . . . (Cohen and Odhiambo 1989:9).

In their book *Misreading the African Landscape*, James Fairhead and Melissa Leach have reconstructed the relationship between society and ecology in Kuranko- and Kisii-speaking villages of the Republic of Guinea. In Sandaya village (Kuranko-speaking) people distinguish groups of houses that make up compounds of patrilineages. Behind those houses fenced gardens reach back to the developing young forest. The village's landscape is differentiated by paths that lead outward. One, for instance, heads south through savanna, across a river to Lokongo, "(t)he parental home of many women married in Sandaya, and the present home of many of its daughters. Each year, a three-day festival marks the clearing of this path which celebrates and maintains the busy social as well as physical traffic between the villages, allied—and matrilaterally related—since ancient times." (Fairhead and Leach 1996:115–116) Paths leading to other villages are also cleared in celebration of patrilineal ties. Smaller paths head to sites of former villages or farming hamlets, lands with a "distinctive woody vegetation" that people contrast with the savannas, swamplands, and other vegetative areas. "It is a landscape which Kuranko feel that peopling and everyday practice tends to improve, enrich and render productive, and which has been used in many different ways as particular social and ecological relations of resource use have articulated with wider demographic, economic and political change." (Fairhead and Leach 1996:115–116) People see this historically dynamic village area as part of a larger political territory, or *yamana*, the composition of which has been and continues to be contested politically; beyond lie other *yamana* and cities such as Kissidougou.

In this essay, we abstract from such examples in order to comprehend the different ways in which people in Africa perceived the space around them. Thus, landscape is taken to mean how people viewed, understood, and talked about the actual land itself, the trees and other things growing on the land, the people, the social formations and processes spread out across the land, and other elements around them at various and changing scales (Hirsch 1995). This notion of landscape avoids an interpretive division between "foreground" and "background," the former being daily life and the

latter a static context. It also escapes a timebound, painterly concept of the landscape as potentiality, an approach that arose particularly in early modern England and elsewhere in Europe. It also avoids an insider-outsider division, the outsiders being European travelers or administrators. True, in the period studied here many Europeans did see the African landscape as something “out there,” beyond themselves, either romanticizing it or attempting to impose a mapped, Cartesian regularity upon it (more about this later). On the other hand, Europeans were very much engaged in a social and cultural landscape, imagining it through their own lenses, “inscribing” it, and also being obliged to interact with the Africans in it (Shaw 1995). Africans too incorporated Europeans into their landscapes, as a number of contributors illustrate. As had been happening prior to the arrival of Europeans, the interactions of people and the exchange of ideas brought changes in landscapes.

For our main concerns in this volume, the definition given above works. It is a definition that stresses landscape as process, connecting the everyday social life of people with their understanding of how they have acted in the past, how they might act in the future, and how other people act and might act. It recognizes that within a particular place people look beyond themselves in various ways and that people located at different sites in social space would perceive the extension of space beyond them in different ways.

There is no easy or single definition of the local. In common sense the local might be defined in terms of proximity, the ease of social exchange, or a delimited social entity, say a village. But in spatial theory, many difficulties arise. Clearly, what constitutes the local changed during the era examined here as, for instance, means of communication sped up and as much larger urban agglomerations appeared. At some point the local gives way to the regional, as defined by a mix of factors: physical proximity, degree of communication, rate of travel, and perceptions of nearness or distance, belonging or exclusion. The notion of the regional is equally vexing, and we show that in any given area at any given time a number of regions existed simultaneously, defined in different ways and with different scales.

If the term landscape refers to the ways in which people perceived and understood space around them, at various extensions, region is a concept that denotes the ways in which researchers and analysts talk about spatial extension. In the broadest terms it is useful to

distinguish between formal and functional or interactive regions (Hurst 1972). A formal region has fixed boundaries, physical contiguity, and/or internally homogenous characteristics, e.g. a colonial state or an ecological zone. While several authors examine formal regions, this book is concerned primarily with functional, that is to say, relational or interactive regions. In contrast to formal regions, functional regions do not have fixed boundaries; they are defined by the intensity and quality of inter-connections among people and places and by the flow of ideas. As Richard Shain demonstrates in his chapter, a functional region may be discontinuous. Furthermore, a region is always dynamic. As Shetler puts it, a region is “an ongoing historical production rather than a finished product.” African regions had their histories; yet, if they were changing, change did not always happen quickly or easily because prior human activity created social, political, and material patterns and structures that affected human action.

Within the same geographic area there could be several regions of different dimensions, differently defined by religious practice and belief, commerce, statecraft, etc. That is not to say, however, that a “religious” region was distinct from a “political” region and so on, since many of the regions can only be described multi-dimensionally. When addressing particular problems, it often is useful to define certain aspects of regions. Robert David Sack has distinguished a territory as a type of region in which an authority or set of authorities exercise political power (Sack 1997:90ff.). This is a definition that Christopher Gray adopted for his contribution to this volume, but other authors in the volume do not; in fact, some authors disagree with that definition by emphasizing that in the areas they studied power always was contested and subject to negotiation, and that if territories existed at all they had fluid borders and often formed and decayed rather rapidly. Citing Arjun Appadurai, Richard Shain notes that in the political phase of Apa history, it had “sovereignty without territoriality”; it was “an archipelago state and region, composed of economic, religious and political nuclei along the river valleys of Central Nigeria.” In this volume we do not attempt to impose a conceptual conformity. Authors’ disagreements often reflect theoretical debates; in a field that is so new, it is not our desire (nor would it be wise) to try to create a canonical set of definitions. Especially since this is an interdisciplinary project, we hope to open analytic possibilities.

This leads to a fundamental interpretive problem. Who defines local and regional? We argue that, while there are analytic concepts of the local and the regional imposed upon data by those writing spatial history, people in the past had concepts of the local and the regional. Thus, if one major task of this book is to present information gathered about how people have both understood and acted in space and time, another task is to probe the how well scholars can represent and interpret those understandings and actions using theory and models, and still another is to make comparisons and generalize. This requires reflexivity and openness about the utility and limits of models. Our goal is to recognize the multiple ways in which people understood and acted in time and space while using spatial theory to reduce extreme complexity into something comprehensible.

In one sense regions are abstractions that researchers impose upon a messy reality. In another sense regions did exist historically because of the interaction of people in space. As Padup has written: since “regions are not merely analytic constructs . . . , but are the products of human history,” the focus of spatial history . . . should be upon “regional formation as a dynamic historical” process and particularly upon relationships among people and the flow of ideas and symbols (Padup 1988:380). We recognize the problem of confusing analytic categories and the experiences of people. Certainly, both for the period under study and for the present-day, people trained in cartography and related concepts of material reality have defined a region more “scientifically” than have people who have lacked such academic training, whether living in the United States, Africa, or anywhere else.⁶ On the other hand, people throughout Africa not only had mental maps that included social landscapes and natural features, but also, in many areas, created various kinds of physical maps that represented space (Bassett 1998). In confronting the problem of the relationship between theory applied by present day scholars and the experiences and abstract concepts of people in tropical Africa in the past, we argue: first, that cases show that people’s landscapes and mental maps paralleled certain analytic notions of region;

⁶ Even today, with substantial levels of schooling and media exposure, people in all parts of the world only perceive in limited ways how they are situated regionally unless they undertake study and formal analysis.

second, that it is possible to reconstruct the various ways people created, sustained, contested, and perceived spatial patterns; and, third, that analytic tools help us to understand those processes locally and in regions. Geographers, historians, and other scholars select and generalize in order to make sense out of vast amounts of data; they impose their definitions on space and theorize. Nonetheless, the regions they find through such means can reflect a social reality on the ground.

A major goal of this book is to demonstrate that certain analytic tools and spatial models are, if adapted, highly useful for defining, describing, and analyzing the history of places and regions within a multi-level framework. A variety of models derive ultimately from central place theory. Although such models can imply stasis or become deterministic, when employed diachronically they enable researchers to identify and describe both spatial structures and spatial change (Smith 1976; Howard, this volume). They help us to understand the constraints under which Africans made choices, for example, about where to trade. Models also clarify how African actions helped to challenge and modify structures. Furthermore, for studying the dynamics of regions we also draw from another earlier body of scholarship that was used especially effectively in Central Africa, namely network analysis (Mitchell 1969; Werbner 1990). If adapted, network analysis has great utility for social history, particularly in mapping trading partnerships, patron-client ties, age groups, women's associations, and other social arrangements that shaped local and regional space (Howard and Skinner 1984). As several chapters demonstrate, oral sources often provide the material for reconstructing networks.

Authors also draw upon theories for understanding identity formation and various kinds of affiliation in space. The production of cultural difference did not begin with colonial rule, nor was it simply the product of Africa's incorporation in a global system, even if new processes of ethnic formation have marked the twentieth century (Vail 1991; Pred and Watts 1992). Precolonial regions constituted an interactive field in which people generated differences among them, but also integrating bonds. Rather than assuming the existence of bounded or sealed off ethnic entities and then searching for ways in which Africans "crossed boundaries," our analysis focuses on interactions within regions of varying scales. The exceptions, perhaps, would be situations where states or religious movements defined in- and out-group membership. By emphasizing how age, gender, and

power differentiated local communities internally and afforded people different capacity to build networks, we shift the analysis away from holistic social entities that had borders to be crossed (Bravman 1998:9–17).

A spatial approach to identity, including ethnicity, demonstrates that commonalities, differences, and in some instances boundaries were generated through interaction within pre-colonial and early colonial regional situations. Howard has looked at ways in which “ethnic” and other identities were generated in northern Sierra Leone out of historical events-in-places that divided people and had meaning for them; such identities had particular spatial referents and were not necessarily precursors to later forms of ethnicity (Howard 2000). Following Stuart Hall, Richard Shain discusses in this volume how African identities were created spatially at often temporary “points of suture” and shows how Apa identity in particular was “the product of an enduring alliance of three groups . . .” who interacted in a region.

Scholars of Latin America have gained understanding of colonies and independent nations by treating them as macro-regions and looking at how they have been constructed through interaction among smaller regions, such as districts or states. Concepts that we borrow are derived particularly from the work of Claudio Lomnitz-Adler (1991) and Eric Van Young (1993), who show how a macro-regional discourse in Mexico and elsewhere has been conducted through the sharing and redefining of symbols generated both centrally and locally, resulting in greater overall unity while preserving differences from place to place.

As later sections of this essay and certain chapters demonstrate, capitalism and colonialism altered spatial structures directly, for instance, when Europeans invested heavily in railroads, and also indirectly by bringing changes in production, law, education, and other elements of life. Discourse and perceptions about space were recast within new European-dominated places and European-imposed boundaries. On the other hand, Africans remained able to shape space within constraints, and there were significant continuities out of the past. An important example would be the way that Islam provided the basis for a macro-regional realm in which people exchanged ideas across boundaries in all eras up to the present (Kaba 1974, 2000; Robinson 2004:203–209). Moreover, colonial spaces, including zones along international borders, became spheres where Africans

pursued advantage and also generated culture, rules of behavior, and new communities (Nugent 1996).

In sum, the analytic approach in this essay and volume assumes (1) that space and society have been unified rather than separated dualistically and that all elements of social life have spatial aspects; (2) that place and region have been produced in a physical sense, but also in terms of meaning and consciousness, including ideology; (3) that the production of social spaces did not occur mechanically but through contestation and negotiation; and (4) that the production of social space occurred on various scales ranging from the local to the global.

Nodality and Social Power

Nodality took many forms in pre-colonial Africa. We argue that the household typically was the most fundamental and important nodal unit. In some areas there were few other nodes, but elsewhere nodality existed at many levels from households to large capital cities. The multiplicity of centers reflected the plural and contested nature of social power and perception. People exercised social power in nodes by controlling labor, social reproduction, and meaning. Nowhere, however, did the use of social power go uncontested. Thus, while it is useful to describe nodes as nodes, their inner dynamics must also be analyzed and they must not be treated as bounded entities. Furthermore, in keeping with our multi-level approach, we seek both to describe the concrete reality of nodes and central places in pre-colonial Africa and to show how they dissolve or have different significance as one examines lesser nodes within them, networks among them, and regional systems of which they were a part (Howard, this volume). The difficulties in analysis of nodes—and the rewards that derive from this approach—come in seeing them as points in space that are borderless foci of social activity.

The term center—which appears abundantly throughout this volume—often equates in readers' minds with town or city. While this essay and some chapters do discuss particular towns and cities, this is not a book about towns and cities as such. A center—whether a town, city, or another kind of site—is distinguished by its relationship to its surroundings or by its relationship to other sites. Thus we talk about a system of centers. Often the word node is used inter-

changeably with center, and nodality refers to the quality of centrality. This volume offers a way of looking at a town, city, or other aggregate by dis-aggregating it into component places, studying the interconnections and contestations among the component places, and studying the relationships of those places with other places outside the aggregate. Thus, a center as a whole may have a relationship to other centers in a region, but the component places, for example, households or religious centers, may have different relationships to component places elsewhere (as revealed by network analysis). A similar kind of analysis could apply when studying meanings (including contested meanings) attached to places, aggregated or dis-aggregated, or when studying perceptions that people associated with places.

Households have had a great historical significance because of their simultaneous physical, societal, and perceptual or symbolic nodality for people.⁷ Most fundamentally, households generated space locally because they were a context for productive labor of all types and often the primary location of accumulation and social reproduction. They were nearly universally a principal, although by no means only, way of generating and controlling the use of wealth in people. Among the “types” of households would be the homestead common in parts of East Africa, the compound found in many sections of West Africa, and the “House” described for the Equatorial rainforest. The household, as a concept, has a good deal of intellectual baggage that we seek to avoid, in particular, the equation of household with kin group and lineage. It goes without saying that there were countless variations in the actual composition, activities, and meanings of households, and that households were dynamic, not static, social groupings. Whatever form they took, households were critical to the local processes that transformed space into place, but they were also deeply affected by their positions in local and regional political networks and global economic systems.

⁷ Demographics should be included in a comprehensive spatial analysis, particularly that dealing with households. As Cordell, Gregory, and Piche state, the historical processes of demographic change (births, death, immigration, and emigration) are part of a demographic regime “which also includes the strategies that allow families and households, women and men, successive generations, and competing social classes to ensure their survival” (1987:16). Ideally, the spatial changes of the late nineteenth century and early colonial era would be assessed against the background of historical demographics, but it has been impossible to take on that complex and contentious issue here (see Iliffe 1989).

A spatial perspective takes the analysis past concern with the typologies of kinship structure, and focuses on the internal and external dynamics of people in household units that are located in the context of the environment and larger political economy. Within households, ranking men and women typically had the greatest command of resources and the greatest decision-making capacity, which in turn meant they had the greatest space-shaping capacity. A sizeable body of literature has focused on the capacity of elder men to command the human and other resources of households and thereby shape the nature of the unit and its relations with other units (Meillassoux 1964:1981). But other scholars have pointed to the negotiated nature of social relations and to the fact that women and juniors typically had other ties that countered their dyadic relations with elder males as husbands, fathers, and patrons (Sudarkasa 1986).⁸ The latter is more consistent with a spatial approach that dissects nodes and recognizes multi-lateral networks. Age and the ability to gain resources, titles, and status greatly influenced women's bargaining and network building, as did the existence of women's associations (Okonjo 1976; Van Allen 1976). Where women were able to obtain political rank or commercial wealth, lead women's societies, or command labor they might break with their husbands' units, take over from their deceased husbands, or form households on their own (Hoffer 1977; Byfield 1996). Women's strategies for building resource bases, accumulating, and thus shaping nodes could vary greatly depending on the setting, but not infrequently their strategies involved acquiring enslaved people and controlling young women, as well as contracting external alliances (Robertson and Klein 1983). Junior males could challenge seniors by building connections through their mothers' kin, age associations, or service as an apprentice, soldier, or trader, all of which were means of gaining social and material resources. The spatial aspect of household dynamics might be further illustrated by the fact that those who were young or were slaves typically had the least capacity to bargain internally or gain external resources and connections, and were most subject to being moved to another unit against their will. Their options included

⁸ In the past decade or so, scholars have carried out many important studies of the negotiated nature of marriage and other relations between men and women. See for instance Barbara Cooper (1997) who challenges the notion of discrete public and private spheres, a significant spatial issue that this volume does not address.

flight, refusal to work, or acquisition of resources through work or other means (Lovejoy 2000:252–275; Klein 1998:159ff.). (This generalization about slaves is supported by the exceptions, such as *ceddo* warrior slaves who were mobile and could acquire resources.) In addition, other non-kin often were affiliated with households, particularly specialists such as craftspeople, traders, and war leaders; they bargained out their relationships with seniors members and might physically remove themselves after a period of time. Like junior kin, they might or might not keep social ties and identity with the household (Watson 2003:27–28ff.). In all the relationships described above, there was a complex relationship between an individual's ability to bargain with others in a household and his or her external ties; this was equally true for groups of affiliated people. Thus, households can only be understood dynamically and in the context of the historical processes surrounding them. We will explore this more fully in subsequent sections.

Social relations within units were subject to change because of the life cycles of members, death and departure of members, and general fortunes of the unit, as well as internal contestation and external network building. Moore has presented a spatial schematic of the development of a single family compound among the Marakwet (Kenya). A compound would typically be formed when a young man was ready to marry, then be expanded and redesigned in stages as his wives' houses were built and children were born. Later, as children matured and left, and the founder aged, the compound would begin to fall into disrepair; it would crumble after he died and his spouses went to live with children or passed away. While certain social norms applied, the actual structure of the household depended upon a series of choices by the head and others (Moore 1996:98–109).⁹ Among the Mijikenda of the Tanzanian coast, as in many other areas, households were both productive and reproductive units headed by elder men. According to Willis, heads generally sought to maintain and if possible expand the number of men in the homesteads because they and their wives added to the unit's resources and output in agriculture, herding, and trading. But heads also competed with younger men for younger wives, and arrangements within households were negotiated. There was great variation in the strength of

⁹ For a cycle alternating over time between patri- and matri-focused households, see Broch-Due (2000:169–170).

the elder males' control over juniors, wives, and other members, who could leave and join different units. Control especially varied regarding when younger men would form their own households: some did so only after the senior man died, but others at the time of their first marriage or the birth of their first child (Willis 1993:40–42).

Households could be modified significantly over time as people responded to changes in the region brought by migration, trade, and other forces, which might enable some individuals and households to gain substantially more wealth and power than others (Howard, this volume). In *Womunafu's Bunafu*, Cohen traced over a period of more than 60 years the strategic erection, physical relocation, geographical orientation, and internal structure of *Mukama Womunafu's* enclosure, analyzing how those and other changes were connected with the leader's religious, social, and political position within the small, nineteenth-century kingdom of Luuka (Uganda) and with developments in the larger region (D. Cohen 1977). Sandra Greene has demonstrated that in Anlo (Ghana/Togo) during the late seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, an influx of refugees, domination by the neighboring state of Akwamu, and new internal and overseas trading opportunities led people to develop a clan system, a preference for clan endogamy, a grouping of clans, and a nomenclature that distinguished between ethnic insiders and outsiders. These broader regional changes stimulated contestation and change within and among households.

After 1679, earlier resident families began to prefer marrying their children to fellow clan members. Most of the pressure to marry a particular individual, however, fell on the young women. This new system deprived women of the limited option that had been available to them through the lineage system to define the kin-group with whom they and their children would prefer to affiliate (Greene 1996:23).¹⁰

Changes also led families to move toward a preference for matrilineal cross-cousin marriages, which further restricted the options of young women within households. This pressure came not only from senior males; in pursuit of both their clan and their own personal

¹⁰ Certain households gained nodality as they were able to acquire and display more wealth by adding the productive power of migrants and enslaved people. That in turn led those with less means also to engage in public ceremonies that displayed wealth, especially ceremonies associated with household life cycles of birth, marriage, and death, whose meanings were thereby changed (Greene 1996, 20–47).

interests, older women too promoted such changes. Thus, shifts in the household strategies of elders affected the capacity of young women to use spatially distributed social resources.

In many though not all areas, households (and collections of closely related households, e.g. compounds) tended to cluster into settlements of larger scale—villages and towns. Such settlements differed greatly in their degree of permanence. In some regions, households and settlements came and went in rapid succession. Elsewhere settlements lasted for generations, even centuries, and comprised not only households but sites such as markets, shrines, and mosques that had their own nodality.¹¹ For spatial history, it is important to examine ways in which a settlements was both an aggregate of lesser nodes and also more than an aggregation, that is to say, the ways in which a settlement had an identity or certain qualities as a whole, as something more than the sum of its parts.

When considering identity, it might be asked what rituals, laws, or social practices bound households and other nodal institutions together. Conversely, one might ask how households or other groupings maintained their own character. In many settlements there was a tension between the nodality of individual units and that of the totality, as well as tensions among town sections that had different histories or social identities. To consider such issues, it might be useful to begin with the Equatorial forest where settlement identity was achieved despite impermanence. According to Vansina:

The village was led by the big man who founded it, assisted by the big men of the other Houses who made up its council. Terms such as 'palaver' . . . and 'to pay a fine' . . . belong here. The headman of the village was due respect. . . . The search for security led Houses to join in a village, and every House needed a village to feel secure. The village was therefore the very foundation of society. Yet a move destroyed the village at least once every decade. . . . and a new village was born out of a new aggregate of Houses. Thus this 'very foundation of society' seems ephemeral. But just when one has been convinced of its fragility and wants to dismiss it as an ancillary institution to the House, one rediscovers that living in villages was essential. Equatorial Africans were obviously well aware of the impermanence of villages, but their

¹¹ Households clustered together for various reasons, including protection or to raise productive capacity. However, the fact that households located in close proximity could increase agricultural output through labor cooperation did not in itself give a settlement centrality.

ideology stoutly denies this. It focused on the founding House of the village. . . . In cognitive terms the village was as perennial as the House. Hence the sense of permanence, predictability, and security, false in physical reality, but essential for social life. . . . Given these characteristics of the village, collective institutions, activities, and ideas which created an esprit de corps were important (Vansina 1990:78–79).

Permanent settlements of all scales were defined not only by households but also by their public places, notably those involving political, religious, and exchange activities. A market, a mosque, and other important places had their own unique qualities, and also contributed to the nodality and qualities of a settlement as a whole. M. G. Smith has written: “Hausa communities are easy to identify. Each rural community has its own chief, priest (*imam*), mosque, Beiram prayer-ground, titles, boundary, and market places where markets are held at set times. Subdivisions of these communities lack separate chiefs, prayer grounds, and markets. . . . Traditionally, the center of a rural community was a walled town, at which the chief, imam, and market were found” (Smith 1962:305). In contrast, in Port Loko, Kambia, and other towns of northwestern Sierra Leone, sections or quarters had distinct origins and character, and often their own titled authorities. Where Muslims were present, there could be a central mosque, or a mosque only for the Muslim section of town, but there could also be different prayer grounds or mosques located in different town sections. Most trading went on in households rather than in distinct town markets (Howard 1999; Howard, this volume). Such heterogenous trading centers as Port Loko and Kambia were places where important families from the surrounding region ensconced members in order to have representation and where emigrant families converged. This also was common in many coastal towns in West Africa where settlement from overseas and well as the interior resulted in the growth of distinct quarters and a diverse population. Ouidah (or Whydah or Glehue) town was the “port” for the kingdom of Hueda up until 1727 when it was conquered and came to dominated by Dahomey.¹² In Ouidah, in addition to the indigenous settlement which was rebuilt after the Dahomey attack, there were quarters that grew up around each of the three European

¹² Law points out that Ouidah was not an Atlantic port in the strict sense of the word because it was located on the north bank of the lagoon running parallel to the coast; however, it was the primary point of interaction and exchange.

trading forts (British, French, and Portuguese), two quarters established by resident Dahomean administrators and military figures, and six quarters planted by leading commercial officials and merchants. A very important quarter was established in the nineteenth century by the Brazilian trader Francisco Felix de Sousa; its inhabitants were primarily Brazilian slaves and their descendants. Reportedly, de Sousa also sponsored the formation of a town section comprising primarily freed people of Hausa and Yoruba background from Brazil, most of them Muslims (Law 2000). Politics in such towns involved alignment and realignment of contesting households, factions, and sections, often displayed through symbolic actions-in-place. For people in the surrounding countryside and travelers from abroad, the identity of the town was primarily in terms of its compounds and quarters. Thus local, regional, and global politics, commerce, and religion converged and influenced the form, character, and dynamics of such towns.

In many African kingdoms, residential quarters and sections within towns and cities were differentiated socially and politically, while particular sites had symbolic and historical meanings that gave those centers their unique qualities. Only a slight hint of the intricate variations in urban tapestries can be given here. Capital cities often reflected patterns of social stratification and of contestation and cooperation among rulers, royal factions, powerful families, and commoners. Often urban spaces had a gendered dimension. Politics were written upon their physical layout and played out in rituals that defined space and used the past through specific activities at specific places. In some instances, changes in the layout reflected changes in economic and political alignments, including the influence of outsiders. For example, capitals of Buganda had been moved periodically before the early 1800s, but stabilization may have begun before the first Arab trader visited the *Kabaka*, or king, in 1844. Thereafter, the palace, or *Kibuga*, while still moved from site to site, remained in the Kampala area, and the town's size and diversity were greatly enhanced by commerce. The *Kibuga* was the symbolic center, and when people approached from the outside they went past the strangers' quarters, buildings of the junior chiefs, dwellings of the *Kabaka's* favored wives, and then to the outer reception area of the palace, which itself sat on a high hill and dominated the town. Shrines of royal ancestors were located around the town at the sites of former *Kibuga*. Across from the palace entrance were shrines that were meant to safeguard the king and also temporary buildings that housed

visiting priests representing major deities, whose main centers were located on the borders of the kingdom as part of a protective shield (Reid and Medard 2000). Prior to the Dahomean conquest, Savi, the capital of the Hueda kingdom, lay inland north of Ouidah. In Savi, as in Notsie, Abomey, Benin City, and some other capitals in the coastal region of present-day Togo, Benin, and Nigeria, the palace sector was demarcated by a great ditch. In this case the massive ditch took a serpentine form, and it separated symbolically and spiritually, as well as physically, the elite from the common residents. The sacred national python Dangbe was housed in a shrine just outside the walls of the palace, which was organized spatially in complex ways that reflected the kingdom's social ideology. In an annual veneration ceremony, the ruler and his retinue followed the ditch to the shrine center. When the Dahomean ruler Agaja invaded and conquered Savi, officials arranged for the Dangbe shrine to be taken to Ouidah where Dahomean agents could observe rituals. Kings of Dahomey also appropriated and represented the serpent motif in various ways at Abomey, their capital, thereby absorbing a primary source of the rivals' power and transporting supernatural space. (Norman and Kelly 2004).

In Oyo and some other Yoruba cities, shrines were (and are) dispersed among quarters controlled by the *Oba* (king) and by the notables who comprised the *Oyo Mesi* or other governing council. The *Oba's* section and some parts of the city were governed from the royal palace, the *afin*, while households of the *Oyo Mesi* were at the core of each quarter they led (Morton-Williams 1964). According to Krapf-Askari, in those towns with an *oba* the

... *oba's* palace is the converging focus of all interests; each road passes through a quarter under a quarter-chief, and all the quarters, as well as the compounds of their chiefs, look towards the palace. Similarly, within each quarter, the various compounds are as far as possible grouped around that of the quarter chief (Krapf-Askari 1969:39).

The capital of Benin came to be divided between the half containing the royal palace and hereditary palace chiefs and the half where self-made town chiefs, ritual specialists, guilds of craft people, and commoners were located (Ryder 1984:351–354). Such layouts reflected constitutional arrangements, but the contested nature of politics meant that spatial realities were much more dynamic than such patterns suggest.

A gendered division of space appears to have existed in many towns and cities, but usually not in a simple areal bifurcation. Rather, space often was complexly gendered, as were the meanings attributed to places and to actions-in-places. In their comprehensive study of Yoruba sacred kingship in the town of Ila Orangun, Pemberton and Afolayan have described how the *Oba's* wives carried out rituals within the palace for earlier *Orangun (oba)* and at the *Oba's* market, where the *Oba* led the homage to the town's archetypal "father" at a shrine located there (Pemberton and Afolayan 1996:67–68, 191–193). In Dahomey, the "queen mother" or "mother of the king" had a separate court within the central palace and reportedly served as an intercessor with the ruler and protector of ordinary people. In those regards, this figure was similar to the "queen mother" in Ouidah, Asante, and elsewhere (Bay 1998:71–80).¹³ In Asante, the *asantehema* had special authority to limit male power and was deeply involved in contestations over royal succession. She also had a separate court with special functions and an important role in the rituals of the king's enstoolment and funeral (Aidoo 1985:65–77). In Benin, the queen mother was located in a separate palace outside the capital, so as to not see the king face-to-face and thereby subvert the myth of the king's divinity (Bay 1998:79–80).

In the nineteenth century—marked in many areas by expanding commerce and often by upheaval and a need for security—many new towns were formed, while others grew and acquired greater centrality. This occurred through the expansion of existing households, the fission of households, and the arrival of migrants who formed new households. Ibadan, founded in the early 1830's and reaching 60,000–100,000 by about 1850, likely added numbers more rapidly than any other center in sub-Saharan Africa during the period. As the city grew, residential and farm land was parceled out to existing town dwellers and to newcomers. "Many compounds were divided in the 1830s and 1840's as those who saw themselves capable of standing on their own broke away from their former compounds to

¹³ Bay makes the important point that, while the office of "queen mother" was found across a wide region from the Akan-speaking area to Benin and ideas were shared back and forth, people in each kingdom modified the office in ways appropriate to the different milieus; the office also changed over time in particular places (Bay 1998:79–80).

establish their own compounds” (Falola 1984:26). Even when they farmed, many individuals and compounds depended upon manufacturing. They included the smiths, who congregated in certain sections of the town, the carvers, and above all the

hundreds of people, men and women, engaged in the cloth industry as [spinners], dyers, weavers and tailors. . . . The fact that [dyeing] was a woman’s occupation affected its growth and fortune in many compounds. There were some compounds where the industry died with the women associated with it. In some others, women who joined the compound as wives introduced the craft. . . . Weavers were reported in Ojaba of the 1830’s and the area remained a home of weavers throughout the century. Perhaps the most renowned of the earliest weavers was Oluokun, a migrant from Iseyin. He established in the 1830’s, the Oke Oluokun quarter where he and his followers practiced this craft. . . . From here, it spread to adjacent areas of Kudeti and Odinjo (Falola 1984:100).

The ceramics industry, which began in the city, moved outside to be near sources of clay and gave rise to satellite centers. Women controlled such places, where they produced trays, pots, jars, dishes, pipes, and many other commodities (Falola 1984:97). Thus, the city and its environs were organized along lines of power, ritual, production, and exchange, with a gendered aspect to many places. As in many areas of Africa during the nineteenth century, the structure of the town reflected its military leadership, but also its other dimensions. As elsewhere, history was written on local terrain. It also was written across wider spaces that were integrated by the movement of people and by networks of all kinds.

Social Networks and the Shaping of Space

Though households were perhaps the most important nodal institution in most social formations, they could not be reproduced on their own and by necessity had to forge linkages with other households. Thus a web of marriage, kinship, clientage, friendship, and other ties bound together people who lived in distinct households. Networks also bound people who participated in many other kinds of nodal institutions. And since the network building actions of people in one place were affected by the actions of people in other places, space was continuously being shaped and reshaped. People modified networks in a dynamic environment of networks. Nodality and external

networks should be seen in terms of synergistic processes. This is most obvious for households. While networks brought resources into households, conversely, the productive capacity of households enabled members to reach outward. Among semi-nomadic and nomadic people, “women centered hearthholds” usually have been the “dominant units of production, consumption, and distribution . . .” (Hodgson 2000a:12). As Hodgson has put it:

A predominant pattern among pastoralists throughout the continent is for each adult woman to have her own tent, hut or home in which she exercises complete control over who enters, sleeps, and eats in her home; controls all the property and possessions kept within; and nurtures and nourishes her children (Hodgson 2000a:12).

Thus, the ability of men who tend animals to range over a wide territory and to generate resources has depended upon the security of the hearthholds. In farming units, the food raised and services provided by the majority of members enabled those with highest rank to enter into external agreements that could in turn enhance the unit and affect internal relations. The leaders of trading houses were especially strategic in their approach to the labor and skills of those subordinate to them, and made their decisions within the regional commercial framework. Such relations, however, often were contested.

In most historical contexts, exchanges between households were designed to transfer human resources, sustain individual units, and also build loyalties and obligations. As Vansina has generalized about the Congo rainforest:

Marriages were the key to the reproduction of the House, and women were crucial to production as well. The very existence of a House depended on them, and no leader could remain indifferent to marriage and still be a leader. He handled the matrimonial transactions of his House and did so not only to increase the number of resident women, but also to attract the largest number of young men (Vansina, 1990:77).

When many neighboring households entered marriages, a social web resulted. Since such ties required further exchanges if they were to be maintained and since new actors continuously emerged, the networks were never static, but remained in flux. When patterns of settlement, household formation, and alliance are mapped diachronically, it is possible to demonstrate the social and political reorganization

of a region over time. In northwestern Sierra Leone and neighboring parts of Guinea, Howard and Skinner showed how the alliance patterns among immigrants and long-settled families shifted from 1800 to 1860, a period of immigration, expanding commerce, and political change. They mapped the kin, marriage, and other connections between the households in Port Loko and Kambia and also the ties with surrounding communities. The comparison revealed the growing density of networks and in particular the ways in which immigrant settlers, using extensive inter-regional networks as well, came to exercise local and regional influence. In the process they forged kinship ties and a vague sense of ethnicity (Howard and Skinner 1984). Elsewhere, during roughly the same period different spatial alliance strategies resulted in different patterns of territorial organization. In the 1830s, Arusha who were displaced by advancing Kisongo ensconced themselves at a point—Arusha Juu—on the southwestern slopes of Mount Meru. Below them lay a plain where Maa-speakers and others struggled over grazing land, water, and cattle. At that center, the Arusha “established close ties” with a Kisongo diviner and “operated a flourishing market” with Maasai, then made the settlement into a major trading center for caravans. They also raided Meru for cattle and captives, particularly women, and joined Kisongo age-sets, where they also placed male captives. Through such means they expanded their numbers and settlements on the mountain side (Spear 1997:28ff.). Thus, from one core settlement base these Arusha drew in resources, partly by reaching into existing networks, then radiated outward over the landscape. By contrast in the Sierra Leone-Guinea plain, immigrants coming from different directions settled in small numbers in different places and wove a web among themselves while also responding to the invitation of those already resident. This approach focuses on strategies of network formation across occupational, linguistic, and other lines, but avoids depicting change in “tribal” terms. It provides a basis for comparing the social histories of regions. With such comparisons, a new framework may emerge for assessing, to take an example, how various people in the nineteenth century responded to changing resource flows connected with ecological disaster and overseas intervention.

As cases in the prior section illustrate, the physical arrangement of palaces, other sites, and rituals at royal capitals were only part of the spatial organization of social and political life in kingdoms. Rulers,

queen mothers where they existed, and other royals and notables, including military leaders, were nuclei of networks of kin, powerful supporters, clients, and dependents. It was through such networks, some formally organized around titled figures, others informal, that information flowed and many actions were effected. While some networks had bureaucratic characteristics in the larger states and empires, such as Oyo, others might function similarly to those in regions with mini-states and more diffused centers of power and authority.

Informal networks in large kingdoms were extremely complex. Bay writes

The palace [in Abomey] was in one sense simply a polygynous household writ large. . . . Marriages [royal and non-royal] were alliances between lineages, not individuals, and the individuals who carried out the terms of those alliances, who represented their lineages in physical unions, did not in theory have the right to name their terms or their partners (Bay 1998:143).

A great many of the king's wives were slaves, but the fact that free wives of a king had been obligated to marry, had no right of divorce, were confined to the palace, and were constrained in other ways as agents of the ruler, meant that people spoke of them, like all palace dwellers, as *ahosi* (dependent of or subordinate of the king). Yet some wives in the palace took advantage of their situation to gain substantial wealth and control dependents. Non-slave and high ranking slave women preserved useful connections with their natal centers, "moved kinsmen to Abomey, and established estates that they bequeathed to relatives in the lineages of their birth" (Bay 1998:145). In addition to performing many cultural, administrative, and political duties, women integrated the palace socially with Dahomey as a whole (Bay 1998:8–13, 142–145ff.).

Networks that were not based on kinship, marriage, or family alliance also knit people together in ways that had "feedback" effects upon households and gender relations. Religious networks, for instance, enhanced the centrality of particular places by drawing devotees and wealth to them. Conversely, they could function to reduce the authority of those heading households and other nodal units, or to alter the bargaining capacity of members within them. For instance, after the mid-1700s, Anlo women, having lost decision-making rights within their natal and marital households, turned in considerable numbers to the Nyigbla order. They gained "prestige from their affiliation with one of the most powerful gods in Anlo; membership may have

provided them with an expanded set of contacts that could be of potential social and economic benefit . . ." (Greene 1996:91). In the long run, Nyigbla offered women only limited improvement in their bargaining capacity and after the middle of the nineteenth century the deity declined. Women then shifted their affinity to Yews—a new religious movement with many shrines and a capacity to fine misbehavior—that helped to strengthen their positions within their natal and husbands' households. In a wider context, support from women was critical in boosting the centrality of both Nyigbla and Yews shrines and the social and political position of their leaders and also in altering the relationships among kin groups (Greene 1996:79–102).

Thus, when new spatial frameworks—structures in motion, so to speak—were created, they conditioned but did not determine people's subsequent thought and action. Spatial patterns changed in particular ways because people's access to resources, sense of landscape, institutions, and spatial strategies changed. Newcomers might forge nodes and networks through a series of strategic choices, and others who were already resident would respond, within changing ecological, economic, social, and political parameters. And as the Anlo case illustrates, because of changing gender relations, women forged new networks and strengthened certain centers, thereby altering the framework for future action by men and women. A dynamic approach to networks and nodes illustrates Pred's call for incorporating space as a vital component. As he has written with regard to the agency-structure problem: "Social and spatial structures are to be conceptualized not simply as barriers to individual or collective human action but also as fundamentally involved in the production of such action as the ever present contextual conditioners of human agency and the continually reproduced or transformed outcomes of human agency" (Pred 1990:9).¹⁴ In this essay and throughout the volume, we integrate the analysis of nodes and networks by looking at the historical dynamics of regions.

¹⁴ Pred acknowledges his debt to Anthony Giddens, but states that Giddens ". . . unnecessarily confuses matters by partially equating structure with resources, or things, rather than with resource access and control, or power relations" (Pred 1990:34, note 13). In this section of the Introduction, we are primarily concerned with power and resource flows. However, in subsequent sections, particularly when dealing with the impact of colonial rule, we also discuss the spatial importance of "frozen" resources in the form of capital investment in fixed infrastructure.

"The Internal African Frontier" or Regional Dynamics

In the introduction to an influential edited volume that also takes a spatial perspective, Igor Kopytoff argues for the concept of "The Internal African Frontier" (Kopytoff 1987). He advances understanding by stressing that African frontiers were not sharply demarcated lines, but rather "zones of interaction." We agree with the notion of zones of interaction: interaction of people is perhaps the central motif of our volume. Furthermore, several of the social mechanisms Kopytoff describes and that various writers in that volume employ also appear in the case studies of this book. For instance, through wide areas of Africa some people claim to be "firstcomers" and use that status in their efforts to control or bargain advantageously with "latecomers." However, we feel that Kopytoff introduces other concepts and assumptions that are problematic, and instead we offer the more neutral notion of region. In part, our differences stem from the fact that Kopytoff is especially concerned with the histories of areas around states while the cases here look at decentralized polities and mini-states—although the present essay attempts to apply spatial analysis to states and empires. The differences go much deeper. From our perspective, the problems with Kopytoff's approach lie in the basic concepts of "the reproduction of African societies," "metropole," and "internal frontier," particularly when given general application.

Whatever the deeper history of tropical Africa might reveal, the period of the 1700s and 1800s does not for the most part validate the concept of "the reproduction of African societies" as a comprehensive explanation of historical change. Whereas Kopytoff repeatedly talks of "society" and "societies" without defining those terms, but suggesting a bounded social entity, the authors in this collection do not employ "society" as a unit of analysis, even if the term is used occasionally for convenience. Some polities such as Asante did have boundaries, as will be discussed below, and of course there were linguistic and cultural differences that might be considered boundaries that people crossed, but we argue against the presence of bounded societies. "Metropolises" existed, but it is misleading to label such places or areas as "mature" as Kopytoff does and then to contrast them with "not-quite-formed societies" on their fringe, or to assume that some of the latter might develop into "full-fledged societies" (Kopytoff 1987:5). Though acknowledging and illustrating

that, in some circumstances, ideas or practices did diffuse from sites of origination, we focus on creation as a multi-sided, contested interactive process.

Kopytoff's blanket concept of a "metropole" includes everything from a highly centralized state to "an acephalous system of autonomous kin groups." It is fraught with difficulties when it is transformed from a description of a process that occurred in certain particular settings to a general model of historical explanation. Kopytoff writes about how "groups" that migrated from metropolises carried with them a "model of civic organization" and a "moral" code that they sought to "reinstitutionalize" in places they perceived as a "moral vacuum" (Kopytoff 1987:26). Of course, there were historical cases that conform to that pattern, particularly when scions of royal families led migrating parties who started new states or took over existing ones, as authors in Kopytoff's collection and in the current volume describe. Kopytoff seems to recognize the problem of applying the concept overly broadly and attempts to focus it on areas around states or large polities where there are recorded examples of physical or ideological power being introduced.¹⁵ Kopytoff also theoretically describes situations where an "intrusive" group settled down among other groups and became "yet another small independent unit on the local political arena, thus fulfilling its frontier aspirations" (Kopytoff 1987:32). This type of migratory situation also corresponds to several described by authors in the current volume. Problems arise, however, when descriptions of specific cases become general principles or when such principles lead to a teleological approach to "societies." While seeking to avoid social evolutionism, Kopytoff reintroduces it. He describes an historical process which was quite common: "Sometimes the new settlement solidifies, joins with other settlements or establishes a hegemony over them, and finally crystalizes into a new polity. . . ." But then introduces analytic difficulties when he goes on to say that such a polity might eventually become "*a society*" (italic added) (Kopytoff 1987:6).¹⁶

¹⁵ This leads him to define frontier in a very particular way: "Whether an area could become a frontier, then, depended on the potential balance of forces and skills between intruders and hosts. In this respect, the relative political vacuum of the 'no-man's lands,' at the peripheries of large polities or wedged between them, probably offered some of the least problematic frontier prospects" (Kopytoff 1987:28). By definition, where migrants were absorbed, there was no frontier process.

¹⁶ Furthermore, while denouncing the notion of "tribe," Kopytoff substitutes ethno-

The differences between Kopytoff's approach and that adopted here are several. First, we reject framing questions of historical change in such narrow terms as the reproduction of the values of the "metropole," and we seek to avoid according the dynamic qualities primarily to "intruders." Although authors in this volume recognize the importance of migration, including that from long settled areas, they do not adopt the "metropolitan" perspective or search after "institutional vacuums." Second, we do not postulate interaction between whole societies or between "mature" societies and those in the making. As an alternative to the notion of reproduction of societies, this volume focuses on human intersections and processes of interaction at all scales. Third, and most important, rather than seeking after a frontier and defining it to exclude many situations, we emphasize regions as dynamic zones of interaction and seek a framework for comparing regions. This essay and the case studies suggest the following generalizations about regions. First, in any given area, different (functional) regions were formed by multiple space-organizing forces. Second, over time social, economic, and political investment generated structures at all scales that influenced peoples' subsequent choices and actions in space. Third, regions were shaped through negotiation and struggle; thus, violence and the use of power must be built into spatial history along with many other modes of interaction and institutions. Fourth, regions were organized by a mix of horizontal and vertical forces and around multiple nodes. Fifth, even where there was a strong centralizing state and a hierarchical ordering of space, patterns were shaped through struggles between the center and outlying areas, or among multiple centers of unequal power and authority. In some instances, central authorities exercised substantial space-shaping capacity within a state or on its perimeter, but that varied over time as others challenged it. Furthermore, even in such situations space also was organized horizontally through elements that did not involve centers. Sixth, contestation involved the interpretation and re-interpretation of space-shaping events as well as symbols and their meanings. Thus the perspectives of all parties involved and the mechanisms of discourse have spatial significance.

genesis, and makes such statements as the following: "The focus of this analysis is on the early stages of the process by which new polities emerged, polities out of which eventually *grew new societies and new ethnicities*" (italics added) (Kopytoff 1987:8).

Seventh, regional histories must be part of a multi-level analysis that includes the local and the macro-regional or global—with many scales in between.

Regions had their histories. Functional regions lacked fixed borders and were constantly changing, but they were not formless, nor in most cases quickly changed. Many chapters demonstrate that regions came into existence and continued over time through a dialectic between structures and people's actions, informed by consciousness. Structural elements could include the environmental; the economic, as determined by labor inputs and other investments; the political, say in the reach of a ruler's fiat; and the social-cultural, such as the fixed location of a famous shrine. Structure, therefore, was the product of prior human agency and set some parameters for future action. Allan Pred has stated this concisely in *Making Histories and Constructing Human Geographies*:

...institutions and socially produced spaces are always in a state of becoming; people do make history and produce places, do transform as well as reproduce, even if it is not necessarily their intention, even if there are unacknowledged conditions, even if they do so under structural circumstances, under power relations and social logics, that are not of their own choosing" (Pred 1990:30).

The Value and Limitations of Central Place Theory

Various analytic tools help to examine the relationships between structure and agency in space, among them central place theory. Such tools, however, also have their limitations, most notably in their inability to incorporate the perceptual realm or to incorporate contingent historical events. Furthermore, in most instances the models generated from such theories are static. If they are to be useful for historical study it is necessary to give them a dynamic quality, or at least to use them diachronically.

African towns and other nodal centers were not scattered randomly over space. Many were located at ecological border zones, along rivers, or in defensible sites, as will be discussed below. Here we are not concerned with questions of location in relationship to natural features and resources, but with the patterned relationships of centers to other centers and to villages and smaller settlements in the countryside. Those patterns reflected interactions and structures,

thus regions. In abstract terms, it can be said that centers differed greatly in their ability to mediate relationships in a region, or in their capacity to organize space around them. Many theories of spatial arrangement have been derived from assumptions about competitive advantage and best apply in market or other retailing situations. Pre-colonial marketing arrangements were highly diverse, and scholars have introduced various social and other factors to explain their locational patterns and, with periodic markets, their timing. Markets often were located in towns, but in the Kuba kingdom and in many other parts of Africa, markets were situated among villages and polities, in neutral places where buyers and sellers could carry out transactions with a sense of security, or where they were not violating anyone's claimed space (Vansina 1962:194; Bohannan and Dalton 1962). Formal economic analysis revealed that African producers and marketers were responsive to price in selecting where to carry out exchange, while more social approaches stressed that markets facilitated the flow of information and provided opportunities for fellowship, while cultural studies showed that the cyclical use of markets matched conceptions of time, particularly weeks.¹⁷ Some market cycles involved only a rotation among equal places, whereas others reflected an hierarchical relationship.

Central place theory was developed for describing and explaining hierarchical relationships among markets and other exchange or service centers. Theoretically, under conditions of perfect competition (a factor of population and income distribution) and equal accessibility (a factor of transport and terrain), centers would differentiate and pattern out spatially in terms of the goods and services they provided. Of course, actual historical conditions never corresponded with the ideal, but some regions demonstrated the fundamental principle: basic functions were found in all centers, middle level functions were located in middle order centers and not in those below them, and higher level functions were present only in the most important

¹⁷ Various hypotheses were advanced to explain why some areas lacked markets, while others had them, or why different kinds of goods were exchanged in different circuits, which often had different cultural meanings and extensions in social space. Many of those issues turned on the debate between formalists and substantivists that eventually subsided after scholars generally agreed that socio-cultural and economic forces were at work in all economic systems (Bohannan and Dalton 1962; Hopkins 1973; Austen 1987:1-8).

centers.¹⁸ Spatial arrangements roughly conforming to theory appeared in some areas of precolonial Africa and more widely during the colonial era, as rural economies were increasingly monetized and other space-shaping changes occurred.

In his classic study *Urbanization in Nigeria*, A. L. Mabogunje (1968) found a systematic spatial patterning of nineteenth-century northern (“Hausa-Fulani”) and Yoruba towns and cities, but did not attempt to apply central place theory systematically because, he said, of insufficient data. In both regions he noted a fairly regular distribution of centers over space attributable to trade and, in some areas, administration. Among Yoruba-speakers there were “three types of periodic markets corresponding to three tiers of regional organization”: provincial, inter-kingdom, and inter-regional (long-distance trade) (Mabogunje 1968, 80–82). The first two differed in temporal cycles. In the “Hausa-Fulani” area, the traveler Clapperton had distinguished towns and cities, which Mabogunje thought appropriately differentiated “between a low and a higher order of urban settlements” (Mabogunje 1968, 71). The cities were major sites of government, craft manufacturing, and inter-regional trade termini. The closeness of “relatively small towns” was similar to that of pre-modern Europe. All in all, he felt that the spacing was appropriate to conditions of pre-industrial (relatively low) levels of production, consumption, and transport (Mabogunje 1968:44–103). Philip D. Curtin, on the other hand, employed the logic of central place theory to show how Senegambian trading diasporas maintained organizational flexibility and spatial mobility by not structuring themselves hierarchically. While a system comporting to central place principles might have been more efficient, for example through specialization of trading firms and top-down control, numerous dispersed Soninke and Jakhaanke trading firms carried out duplicate functions and thereby gained adaptability and avoided political and economic dependency. Traders were able to shift among routes and commercial sectors, to their long-term advantage (Curtin 1975:63–91, 135–136ff.). Systematic studies of structural hierarchies have been less common in the interior of East and Central Africa than for West Africa where mar-

¹⁸ Research in China, Europe, and the midwestern United States demonstrated that marketing and service functions were ordered hierarchically, but such regional hierarchies were often linked to larger economic systems, and thus a study of such hierarchies in isolation begged other questions.

keting and urbanization has had a fuller history, but scholars have found, for example, that towns were spread out with a certain regularity along East African caravan routes that developed in the nineteenth century (Obudho and Waller 1976:8–10; Gray and Birmingham 1970). In many regions multi-tiered market hierarchies were absent, but instead other systems existed such as a “solar” system which had one major central place with many small marketing centers arrayed around it, typically poorly integrated, or a “network” system of roughly equal unspecialized centers and some more specialized centers, perhaps integrated through a cyclical system (Smith 1976, 36–44).

The current volume is not concerned with marketing systems, and we do not seek to reopen debates that long ago played out. Some of the general findings of the earlier central place arguments are relevant here, however. Many scholars concluded that hierarchies (as well as non-hierarchical orders) involved social and political as well as economic forces, that central places tended to develop before (often very long before) internal marketing systems and were the causes of market development, and that local systems were strongly shaped by regional, interregional, and global commerce. Rather than being bound by a rigid or artificial application of classical central place theory, investigators sought to apply more general notions of hierarchy, where appropriate, and elsewhere look for non-hierarchical patterns.

Ray A. Kea undertook the most ambitious historical application of central place theory in his examination of the southern Gold Coast in the seventeenth century. He demonstrated that centers were differentiated functionally, that commercial and political hierarchies existed, and that those hierarchies served to maintain a regional order.¹⁹ Such complexity was indicative of a substantial trade in foodstuffs, manufactures, gold, and enslaved people and also of state intervention in spatial organization. Following the work of Rozman in China and Russia, Kea found five levels of commercial and administrative functions with regional trade centers and imperial capitals

¹⁹ Walter Christaller, who first set forth central place theory, distinguished between hierarchies based on the market principle, transport principle, and administrative principle, each with different relationships among centers and with different patterns of routes.

at the top of each hierarchy. At some levels more than one type of center existed, reflecting overseas commerce; thus level two in the commercial hierarchy was either a sub-regional trade center or a major port and level three a caravanserai or minor port (Kea 1982). Whereas in such areas, the existence of periodic or daily markets and royal courts and officials served to differentiate among levels, elsewhere market places were not present or were of only local significance, and elaborate state structures were absent. Commercial competition, struggles over authority and power, and processes of accumulation could, nonetheless, result in a hierarchy of centers such as Howard found in northern coastal Sierra Leone. There settlements were small in size compared with the Nigerian and Ghanaian regions. When, however, the functions and populations of settlements clusters (that is, towns and villages located in close proximity to one another) were aggregated and treated as centers, the differentiation of places and of levels in the regional hierarchy became more pronounced. Simply measuring the population and exchange activities of individual centers was misleading. The history of migration and settlement, network building, and politics had to be built into the analysis in order explain why central functions were dispersed over a number of towns in each cluster and to reveal the broader spatial patterns (Howard 1981; Howard in preparation). A variety of studies have not applied such models but nonetheless have demonstrated the complex inter-relationships of political authority, social and demographic change, and production and marketing. For instance, Paul Lovejoy showed that after the Sokoto caliphate was established it

came to dominate the [central Sudanic] salt trade because of the size of its market and the activities of its merchants. . . . this political consolidation enabled the concentration of population on a larger scale than ever before. . . . Despite the general level of poverty, however variable and unpredictable, the number of relatively prosperous commoners (*talakawa*), including craftsmen, merchants, clerics, and pastoralists increased, and the size of the bureaucracy, including slaves and aristocrats, also expanded. These sections of the populations could afford to buy salt and natron on a regular basis (Lovejoy 1986:247).

The poor also purchased on an occasional basis. The salt trade was closely linked with very large-scale production of dyed cloth, which also increasingly was concentrated in the caliphate, and merchants handling salt also dealt in other products, notably kola. Through those intersections, commercial capital became highly concentrated

in Kano, Zaria, and Katsina, and the merchants in those centers took a leading role in organizing a system that reached as far west as the present day Ghana. Along the routes and in the countryside around the main towns, centers that performed functions such as preparing camels, housing traveling traders, and facilitating exchange were organized in a variety of hierarchical patterns. The government of Sokoto promoted and took a hand in ordering the trade (as did other states and centers) because of the great value of substantial tax revenue derived from it. "Political officials at every major town along the trade routes from Borno and the desert benefitted from such taxes; indeed the protection of trade and markets was a major concern of the state because of this revenue." (Lovejoy 1986: 179–220; see 179–220) In all of the above cases, the impact of inter-regional and/or Atlantic commercial systems upon hierarchies was apparent.

Hierarchical models are slices of time that reveal spatial structures that had been built up through concentrated investment of all types, structures that influenced people's actions in space. Towns, cities, and other centers were aggregates of skill and investments of human labor and capital in various forms. Labor investments could be massive, for instance, where walls stretched 10, 15 or more miles around cities or around the sections comprising cities. Once constructed, towns, like "magnets," oriented the alignment of trade routes. The location of such towns affected the direction and even the timing of professional traders' and craftspeople's travel and their decisions about residency; the movements of *talibe* and others who sought quranic teachers or shaikhs; the location of rural production of foods and other commodities such as cotton; the regional concentration of enslaved people; and other patterned behaviors. In themselves, such structural-functional models do not answer historical questions, but they reveal the results of past actions, suggest where to look for answers, and may help to formulate new questions.²⁰ A diachronic approach, however, can be taken by comparing spatial models in two or more time periods, or by seeking the explanations behind a particular hierarchical formation. Mabogunje recognized that Nigerian

²⁰ Peil and Sada stated in their 1984 survey *African Urban Society* that little was known about the dynamics of such systems, specifically about how "central places change over time in position in the hierarchy and in what they provide?" (Peil and Sada 1984:72).

spatial patterns had been subject to change: the revolutionary movement of Shehu Uthman dan Fodio and the Yoruba civil wars had brought the destruction of some cities and the elevation of others, most notably Sokoto and Ibadan. European rule again brought major shifts (Mabogunje 1968). Kea argued that in the class society of southern Gold Coast, the “size of the nonagricultural urban population was directly related to the size of the agricultural surplus drawn from the countryside.” “[U]pper-class families with their large retinues of dependents very likely accounted for 60 percent of a major political center’s population.” The remainder were “free commoners such as craftsmen organized in guilds, day laborers, market hawkers, and the like” (Kea 1982:42–43). Given the dynamics of accumulation and state development “[t]he commercial hierarchy was already ‘complete’ in the pre-sixteenth century . . .” (meaning that all levels were present). “The administrative hierarchy, however, was not ‘completed’ until the late seventeenth century” (Kea 1982:52). Comparing rankings over time shows that the regional hierarchies changed in northern Sierra Leone during in the nineteenth century with the expansion of internal and overseas trade and then again with colonial conquest (Howard 1981; Howard this volume).

Far from developing in static, homogeneous spatial planes, as classical models assume, centers arose in widely varied, dynamic ecological conditions. Violent disruptions of spatial arrangements were common in the late pre-colonial and early colonial era, and those and other contingencies must be brought into any historical analysis of centers, networks, and regions. Furthermore, a functional ranking misses the impact of ideas and symbolic transactions that flowed among centers and between them and the areas surrounding them. Meanings were deposited in places over time, but were subject to contestation and change, and thus there was a dialectic by which action shaped places but action was conditioned by how people perceived centers. In the subsequent sections, we, first, look at material realities connected with violent upheavals, and, second, go beyond a material approach by examining the cultural practices and meanings focused on centers and associated with networks.

Economic Networks and Environmental Crisis

Questions about the relationship of agency, structure, and contingency can be approached by examining how people created regions

in ecological border zones, responded spatially to environmental changes, and shaped large-scale commercial systems. In ecological border zones, people with different occupations generated regions through production, exchange, social arrangements, and political action.²¹ The desert-side economies of West Africa, for example, were characterized by an interdependence between nomadic and settled communities. In the Central Sudanic system the Twareg of the Air Massif, Adar, and Azawak depended heavily upon importation of millet, other food, clothing, and various manufactures from the settled areas of Hausa- and Kanuri-speakers, and in return supplied animals, salts, and other commodities (Lovejoy and Baier, 1975). While different in particulars, a comparable exchange typified the Western Sudanic zone where desert and desert margin dwellers also obtained substantial numbers of slaves from the south (Webb 1995: 52–67).²² As Michael Watts has shown for Northern Nigeria and Niger, in times of environmental change and particularly during ecological crisis, traders, farmers, herders and others developed social exchange strategies for buffering the effects, which in turn altered gender, class, age, and ethnic relations (Watts 1983).²³

Drought also affected patterns of regional organization over large sections of East, Central, and Southern Africa in the eighteenth and

²¹ Using a variety of sources, scholars have charted shifts in West African rainfall patterns over the long, medium, and short term in order to understand the effects of drought and abundant water upon migration, commerce, and other aspects of life. James L. A. Webb, Jr. has mapped in striking fashion the southward shift of the Western Sahel and Savanna belts between c. 1600 and c. 1850 (Webb 1995, 6–10ff.). This particularly altered the nature of the so-called desert-side economies, as will be seen below. Michael Watts and others have compared the chronologies of drought in different parts of the Sudan, explaining the common patterns and differences from area to area, while George Brooks has demonstrated that drought effects were not confined to the desert margin but were felt far to the south in patterns of colonization and other changes (Brooks 1993; Watts 1983:89–104).

²² The more western areas were especially involved in the overseas trade in gum arabic that arose before 1600 and became the most important export from the late 1600s to the 1870s. (Webb 1995:97–109)

²³ Although dealing with with a time period long before ours, archaeological work carried out at Jenne-Jeno in the Middle Niger and other sites by Roderick J. McIntosh, Susan K. McIntosh, and colleagues has led to hypotheses that are particularly relevant. They argue that ancient settlements were made up of corporate communities of specialists who exploited micro-environments in complementary ways. “Cultural institutions of conflict resolution and peaceful regional integration” were stimulated by the unpredictability of the macro-environment which was subject to climatic oscillation and north-south pulses in the location of the optimal belt for human occupation (R. McIntosh 1993).

nineteenth centuries. A severe lack of rainfall in the 1830's caused famine in Ethiopia, eastern Kenya, north central Tanzania, and probably elsewhere. It has been argued that this may have been the time when the population was destabilized over wide areas of East Africa, setting in motion a downward trend that was worsened by slaving in some places. While not all agree on the direction of demographic change, it seems clear that famines later in the century made people more vulnerable to disease. Epidemic diseases spread in a pattern that both demonstrated the existence of commercially based regions and further helped to define them.²⁴

At smaller scales, people found social strategies for interacting with a dynamic environment, and in the process altered social relations and identities.²⁵ In East Africa during the late precolonial period, people reshaped their social practices in response to both "natural" environmental changes and shifts in the larger political field. Such social changes in turn generated new regional patterns. In north-eastern Tanzania, livestock-holding cultivators protected against theiriosis and trypanisomiasis by burning and clearing bush and grazing in sufficiently watered areas, thus defining a useable region in distinction from the infested area. For Zigua-speaking communities, maintenance of a grazing region and avoidance of famine depended upon an hierarchical social order: patrons with large herds gave out animals to dependent and servile farmers who could not produce sufficient food and who in return provided labor (Giblin 1992:29–41ff.).

In her chapter in this volume, Jan Bender Shetler shows that during the second half of the nineteenth century, western Serengeti farm-

²⁴ In East Africa, small pox may have been first taken inland from the coast by elephant hunters seeking ivory. Both small pox and cholera spread along the macro-regional trade routes during the second half of the 1800s. The impacts varied from place to place in ways that cannot be explained fully, but were at least partly related to location in commercial systems; death rates reached 50% or more in some areas. (Hartwig 1978:25–45; Iliffe 1979) For Central and Southern Africa Diaz (1981) and Miller (1982).

²⁵ It is always necessary to guard against treating any ecological region as homogeneous and static. Jan Vansina in *Paths in the Rainforests* (note the plural) has depicted in striking maps the simple view of the rainforest as isometric and uniform (a "formal" region) in contrast with the complex, highly diversified reality that botanists and forest dwellers recognize. Rainforests like all other ecosystems "have their history": they have been modified by people who themselves have been responding to changes in climate and other "natural" factors (Vansina 1990:39–46).

ing people reorganized themselves socially in the face of drought, disease, and attacks of Maasai raiders. They borrowed the notion of age sets from the Maasai but employed it uniquely. To ensure survival of kin groups, elders sent their sons to different age sets that controlled and farmed different territories and held power cyclically in succession. This spatial strategy protected a kin group from losing all of its sons at one time during fighting, while giving them access to resources that were spread out and thus less subject to total loss through drought or other means. It also created spatial order by giving people of different kin groups common age identity bonds. By developing age sets and imposing them on top of an older generation-set system, western Serengeti people carried out “an enormous change and a thorough reorganization of the social structure” (Shetler 2003:399). That process also involved generating a new oral narrative of origin that served as a metaphor for a new regional identity (Shetler 2003:395ff).

In central Kenya during the 1880s, the Mbeere were not traders as such but obtained food, honey, iron, and livestock from neighbors. They were, according to Ambler, “more fundamentally oriented toward exchange than many of those in areas that were centers of long-distance trade” (Ambler 1988:65). Mbeere who lacked resources to exchange sold their labor to Embu, with whom they sought blood partnerships in the hope of obtaining a dependable source of food. Embu whose food surpluses could be stored for only short periods, wanted the labor to produce more food and in turn obtain more livestock or laborers. By using the labor of others they also gained the opportunity to devote time to non-agricultural pursuits. Their strategy within the regional framework was to build a warrior class that raided far abroad. This in turn altered gender dynamics among Embu (Ambler 1988:67).

Over wide areas of tropical Africa during the 1700s and 1800s, caravan masters, business firms, brokers, and other traders, as well as political authorities, formed and modified commercial regions by organizing the exchange of commodities. They, along with farmers and craftspeople, were accumulators who altered local spatial patterns by investing in production along trade routes and near towns, and also in facilities at nodal exchange points and in transport (all of which typically involved control of labor). Furthermore, traders and their customers alike converted commodities into social and political power that affected nodality and networks in countless ways.

In many places, new opportunities for raising commodities for sale and for participating in trade led to changes within households, specifically in gender, generational, and status relations, and between households. Since people's involvement with trade varied greatly according to their location within evolving regional systems, the chronology of commercial engagement and the effects were spatially uneven. In Kikuyu-speaking country, Kiambu District saw changes earlier than Murang'a District because of the former's location on the route from the coast to Buganda. In the former, land was becoming individualized by the 1880s, accompanied by stress between generations and among those with kinship rights to land and tenants. MacKenzie has argued that in Murang'a, which was peripheral to the main route, the situation was different. For one thing, because women were able to trade food they raised in both local and regional markets, they gained some autonomy from their husbands.²⁶ Tensions derived from social differentiation were muted until a crisis in the 1890s brought on by drought, small pox, rinderpest, locusts, and other calamities, compounded by colonial conquest (MacKenzie 1999). Ambler observes that the famine at the end of the century stimulated a redistribution of wealth and authority over a large region of what became Kenya, and widened the gap between the rich and poor. The former often were from lineages that had retained some wealth during the crisis and been able to multiply it through regional and long-distance trade or network building (Ambler 1988:148).

During this era, households in certain regions incorporated enslaved people through purchase and ownership: for example, on the East African coast Islamic law provided a mechanism and a justification for integrating slaves. Elsewhere they were incorporated as junior kin. Among the Giriama, the "power of the father over children . . . was the model of organization of labour. . . ." and slaves brought in were "children of the house" (Willis and Miers 1997:486). Such incorporation resulted in a massive increase of people identified as Giriama during the course of the century, and enabled the "new men" who founded household to challenge the authority of elders and eventu-

²⁶ MacKenzie shows the intra-household, dyadic husband-wife relationship must be balanced with an analysis of the extra-household trading networks that women formed. Those who faced land shortage could migrate to Kiambu, which again demonstrates the importance of a regional perspective (1999, 71–72ff.).

ally become “traditional” headmen (Willis and Miers 1997:486–492).

In West Africa and elsewhere, gender, generational, and other status relations among members of household-based commercial firms were deeply affected by their participation in inter-regional and regional trade. The commercial decisions that household leaders made and the networks they constructed were integral to the production, social status, and political aspects of those units. For instance, the Maraka of the Middle Niger, among the most renowned of West Africa’s traders, “were sophisticated managers of complex production-commercial firms who constantly balanced commercial profit against investment in production” (Roberts 1987:61). Through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they gradually altered their household production and social relations by adding increasing numbers of enslaved people who raised grain and cotton and produced cloth. By 1860, “it is possible to discern an economic model of a cosmopolitan urban master class dependent on an expanding plantation sector” (Roberts 1987:50). Similarly, in the Niger Delta, on the East African coast, in certain interior sections of East and Central Africa, and in other areas as well, firms gave order to space through their investments and directed employment of personnel with diverse skills. The Niger Delta House system is perhaps best known in that regard. Dynamic traders expanded their Houses by using commercial wealth to marry daughters of other Houses, serve as patrons and protectors, and, most important, purchase captives and enslaved people. With a larger contingent of canoemen, warriors, and commercial agents, they further developed their trade in the interior, which in turn enabled more growth of their Houses. Houses were especially effective social mechanisms for integrating people of diverse backgrounds, while submerging their languages and other social practices (Alagoa 1985:384–386ff.). Although different in many particulars, firms in East Africa also were able to expand their operations based on households which hierarchically integrated people with diverse skills. In Zanzibar, in particular, the great merchant households contracted with independent traders, agents, porters, and day laborers who handled and processed commodities. Many of the workers were enslaved, but were paid with wages and kept a share (Sheriff 1987:146–150ff.). The stone houses of the wealthy were beautifully designed and outfitted, displaying their status through carving and goods—material and symbolic nodes within towns that carried out central functions.

Households, Networks, Meaning, Social Perception

As Agnew points out, realms of action, reproduction, and meaning were closely interconnected around places. Places had historically defined meanings that were subject to change as people, goods, and ideas moved, and as new forces entered the larger political economy. When, for instance, traders sped up the flow of resources and introduced new commodities into local settings—responding perhaps to demand for goods that conveyed status and generated follower-ships—that process affected the composition of households and local networks, and hence the perceptual landscape. The dynamics of social perception were also shaped by political events, religious innovations, and other forces. Tensions between generations, men and women, and people of different rank generated discussion and public dramas that affected how people perceived one another and the places where actions occurred. Since people's daily existence, rights, obligations, and beliefs were associated with places, so too were their identities and the ways others perceived them.

Perceptions of self and others' perceptions of individuals changed over time as people moved through a life cycle or over space. Thus, for example, a youth might be defined in terms of his family and the household of his birth, the teacher who taught him Quran, the mosque where he prayed, the section of the town where he dwelled, his youth work group or occupation, and in other ways. Some of his identity was formed by accretion of experience in places, or by ties with people that had a place-specific identity. Similarly, collections of people possessed identities that had a spatial component, as Shetler's work reveals.

Mental landscapes were not simply made up of distinct points that in sum constituted a picture. People perceived of places as interconnected, rather than as isolated, nodes because social reality and discourse involved linkages among people located in different places. People saw and gave meaning to the world around them in terms of intricate networks: they took note of who were kin, which families were linked by marriage, what authorities had ties to a center of power, and so on. A bare bones diagrammatic map of historical networks, however, would not convey the social meaning adequately. Historical content was associated with such networks, just as with places.

As Howard describes in his chapter here, someone looking out over the social landscape saw places in terms of people and events

associated with those places, and also in more abstract ways. Neighbors as well as those living at a distance comprehended a household in terms of the age, gender, wealth, social rank, reputations, and other qualities of its members, and also in terms of the history that had accumulated around the physical and social unit. They also were aware of changes in the composition of households and of the linkages between a household's members and others spread over the landscape. Social groups and institutions likewise were understood in terms of the people comprising them and the actions they had carried out as a body. Furthermore, meanings accreted in places and also in the spaces between them; because of social flux and contestations over meanings, perceptions of places were fluid. By re-marking (on) the past and present, people altered the meanings attributed to places.

Much of our understanding of the gendered meaning of households and the spaces around them comes from twentieth century, even recent, anthropological studies. While there are problems with extrapolating in time, such studies are highly suggestive for the past. Among pastoral people, the social patterning of gender described above by Hodgson is often symbolized in maternal idiom, among Turkana, for instance, by terms that refer to a women-centered compound as a belly and to an individual wife's house as an umbilicus (Broch-Due 2000:171). Agriculturalists also express the division between men and women symbolically and in daily practice. For the Marakwet, this means that the house is strongly identified with women, particularly the hearth; cooking is associated with the reproduction of labor and of husbands' clans. Men are linked with goats and thus with a different type of fertility and different spaces.

... [M]en speak of the power women have in the home. It is always necessary to ask a woman's permission to enter her home and to remove anything from it. In yet other contexts women may be seen to exploit this "house power" by refusing to cook, dictating the time of meals, or going off to chat to friends and leaving the husband to prepare the food. It is therefore the case that the ideology of complete male control over the productive and reproductive potential of the households has to be understood in the context of an actual reality of male and female interdependence (Moore 1996:121).

In many areas, the countryside surrounding a settlement was integrally part of the gendered social landscape. Fields, rivers, and forests acquired meaning in terms of various forms of collaboration and

competition involving men and women, and people of different ages and rank.

Landscape, as we have defined it, included many kinds of places, such as shrines, schools, markets, war camps, and town sections, as well as households. There were complex, dynamic interrelationships among such nodes, and the meanings they had both reflected and influenced social action. Markets often had spiritual qualities that sanctioned their centrality and governed the thought and action of those who entered. In some instances, these spaces belonged to women, for example, in the Igbo-speaking areas where associations of wives controlled market rules and behavior and their guardian deities (Okonjo 1976). In the Yoruba-speaking area, several goddesses protected markets, including Yemoja, goddess of the river and, in the minds of some, the mother of other *orisha* and a “fountain of life and productivity” (Falola 1995:29). Hausa markets (*kasuwa*) were officially recognized, and thus differed from places where traders informally gathered (*yara*); not only were newly created markets sanctioned by the prayers of mallams, but followers of *bori* carried out possession rituals to “settle one or more benevolent spirits on or near the market site” (Smith 1962:306).

In terms of meaning and social perceptions, towns and other agglomerations must be studied both in the whole and in disaggregated ways. Authority over sacred sites could rest with particular families, kinship groups, or associations, and this led to differential access to and protection accorded by those sites—and hence varying perceptions of the landscape. Thus, during the eighteenth century in the Esulalu area of Casamance, the priest-king’s shrines safeguarded the entire township and were the basis for an institutional and a symbolic unity. Yet townships were divided into quarters that were often antagonistic and had their own shrines, which in some instances were said to have been started by people who had the capacity to see and make contact with spirits. Participation in such shrines and thus their meaning for individuals and kin groups “was limited to the inhabitants of the area protected by the shrine, perhaps a quarter, a series of quarters, or only a single neighborhood within a quarter” (Baum 1999:93–94).

Those who lived within towns had multiple loyalties and many-faceted identities. They might identify themselves with the town via its ruler, certain public rituals, or some sense of civic community, but also with the section where they lived and the constitutive units

of which they were a part. Many also identified with more distant places to which they had social or imagined ties. They saw themselves as part of networks that linked with certain parts of the town and reached to places beyond. Some might be in a town, but not of it in that they did not have an allegiance to the place and its institutions. Thus, politics and people's interests defined the meaning of a town for its residents and for others outside (Watson 2003).

Perception, Symbol and Culture in Places and Regions

Regions of nodes and networks formed around many kinds of social and cultural relations. We select religion because of its pervasive historical importance and because scholars have developed dynamic spatial models that have more general application.²⁷ Those who shared beliefs and ritual practices often focused on particular places—shrines, mosques, tombs, or other sacred sites—that had meaning for them, influenced their identities, and were part of their mental landscapes. Sacred sites worked their way into myths, belief systems, and historical memory—but they were subject to alternative discourses and to recomposition. In some historical settings, a particular center exerted a singularly powerful influence upon the thought of people in the region oriented toward that center, and a diffusionist model may be applicable. But oftentimes, centers were in competition, or non-hierarchical networks operated.

²⁷ Vansina has argued for the need to develop historical hypotheses for the analysis of African art that challenge the equation of forms and styles with territorial “ethnic” units. He writes: “Areas are best thought of in relationship to one type of object at a time. Failure to do this erases the spatial imprint left by the dynamic evolution of art. To present a Kuba area, including the Kuba kingdom, or—as is now usual—add to it some neighbouring territories and then to describe Kuba ‘visual art’ is an unwarranted generalization” (Vansina 1984:176). He goes on to dispute the “tree model” for Western Nigeria art styles and offers an approach with much relevance for the approach taken in this volume: “. . . multiple centres for the production of ceramic and metal sculpture are old in western Nigeria. An urban or semi-urban way of life had developed there since the onset of this millennium and every city became a centre for the production of sculptures in various media. Multiple relationships and overlapping influences should be taken into account, hybrid inspiration being very common in art. . . . Any valid model for the evolution of form must take into account multiple origin, borrowing and continued mutual influences between neighbouring styles, while allowing also for renewed influence of art works crafted generations ago in the same area and perhaps in the same tradition, as in the case of Benin. . . .” (Vansina 1984:184–187) In this later point he follows Paula Girshick Ben-Amos.

Scholars have offered a variety of explanations for the spread of religious ideas and practices, most of which have parallels in spatial theory. The differences may well reflect the historical situations and time periods studied. Sandra Barnes and Paula Girshick Ben-Amos have described the invention, repeated reinvention, and spread of beliefs and practices involving the *orisha* Ogun in the kingdoms of Benin, Oyo, and Dahomey and in neighboring areas. "The amount of interaction between peoples of various political and cultural backgrounds during the period [1400–1900] . . . was extensive. . . . Despite intermittent hostilities, boundaries were relatively porous . . .," and, furthermore, the major kingdoms also influenced neighbors through diplomacy, colonization, and tribute exchange. In addition, trade, intermarriage, and migration ("particularly from outlying areas to prospering towns and kingdoms") helped to build an interactive region and promote the exchange of Ogun's symbolic complex (Barnes and Ben-Amos 1997:49–51). Barnes provides a way of understanding historical dynamics that has great relevance for other areas:

Rather than assign any one set of ideas to the genesis of Ogun, it is instructive to view his origins in a *bricoleur* idiom: many available notions were pieced together into patterns that began as a concept and eventually emerged in a cult group with Ogun as its symbolic figurehead. Taken together, the ideas associated with Ogun represent an ongoing process that, in human history, has consisted of the working and reworking of available themes. . . . There is neither a beginning nor an end to these reworkings. . . . (S. Barnes 1997:7)

In his studies of Central Africa, Van Binsbergen finds similar, though not identical, spatial processes to those described by Sandra Barnes. Through dynamic interaction among many dispersed centers, a common way of thinking and conducting ritual emerges.

Each of the regional cults has a specific idiom of its own. This idiom is pursued by a number of local congregations spread over an area of thousands of square kilometres. . . . most importantly, an interlocal formal organization binds these dispersed congregations through the interactions of the cult's officials. In this way the geographical area over which the cult spreads is transformed into a region. What structures a cult's region is thus the processes of interlocal communication, interaction and distribution which the cult gives rise to. (Van Binsbergen 1977:142)

The two cases suggest that one important variable in the shaping of regions would be the degree of formal connections among religious

specialists. Van Binsbergen also goes on to distinguish a regional cult from a non-regional cult based on whether or not there is interaction among adherents. A non-regional cult "... has a specific cult idiom which is pursued by a number of congregations. However, although it may have spread over a vast area, it has not yet transformed the area into a region of its own, or it has ceased to do so and a former region has become merely a non-regional area" (Van Binsbergen 1977:142). In part this quote points to a key question about historical dynamics and the problems of defining of a region: does a region go out of existence when interaction declines past a certain level of intensity? But Van Binsbergen's approach also helps to clarify our main interests. First, we are not concerned with mapping traits or "culture areas," but rather with forms of integration and communication that produced or sustained regions (see Vansina's discussion of art in the footnote above). Second, whereas religious practices in some areas were organized hierarchically, elsewhere the integration was more horizontal. An older center might gradually lose influence, while another rose. Multiple centers competed with one another and there also was competition for leadership within particular centers. Such competition, including differences in how prophets or priests interpreted events and religious ideas, sustained regional practices through flexibility (Ranger 1973). Third, we have to recognize that in some areas information is lacking about how and why particular religious beliefs and practices have spread over space; the reasons may go far back in time, certainly long before the period studied here. Cases studies therefore are framed against a "deep" cultural background in which a range of religious ideas, expressions, and behaviors are possible. Given that, it is of value to ask which particular practices and beliefs become manifest, why people accept them, and how a region is reshaped through such contestations. These processes can be seen in the relationship of religion, commerce, political power, and gender within dynamic regions.

Iris Berger has shown that in many areas of East Africa spirit possession cults were "central" to society. Here she does not have an explicitly spatial frame, but seeks to draw a contrast with the interpretation of I. M. Lewis who saw such cults as marginal or "peripheral" in a socio-political sense. Nonetheless, spatiality is significant. Women spirit mediums, often dressed as men and transgressing gender boundaries in other ways, could "share in the status and prerogatives of men," and sometimes "were able to attain positions of

national prominence,” their shrines being treated with great respect by kings (Berger 1976:174). Some had wider following in times of environmental or political crisis. Priests and priestesses leading the Nyabingi cult in Rwanda and southwestern Uganda could on occasion offer an alternative to state structures; they “adopted the style of kings, surrounding themselves with a large personal entourage, often armed; collecting tribute; and using or threatening to use physical violence to consolidate their positions” (Berger 1976:179).²⁸ Such figures not infrequently were suppressed by political authorities. Mediums in some instances created regions, at least temporarily, that transcended those defined by rulers’ authority and in other instances challenged the nature of authority within the royal spheres. It is instructive that such reformations were most possible during crises when the peasant population was seeking answers to problems of daily life and long-term existence. We will return to this theme later when examining Islamic reform movements.

The competition among religious centers within regions was affected by political and economic forces, including those generated by the Atlantic slave trade (and, as we will later see, European incursion). According to Sandra Greene, the inland town of Notsie (present-day Togo) was well established as the center of the regional deity Mawu by the middle of the 15th century. People as far to the east as Ouidah and Dahomey understood Mawu as the supreme deity and creator of the world’s order. It was the place from which one of the ruling dynasties of the Anlo state obtained a sacred rain stone and to which members of that family went on annual pilgrimages. In the late 1600s, however, Notsie’s significance declined as Akwamu invaded Anlo, an immigrant group gained a share in Anlo’s royal leadership, and economic activities gravitated toward the coast in connection with the overseas slave trade. Deities associated with war and with new centers of wealth and power rose. “This in turn resulted in a redefinition of Mawu and the significance of its home in Notsie. Both came to be defined as physically and spiritually distant from the day-to-day concerns of the Anlo . . .” (Greene 2002:15–17).

In both African Christianity and Islam, local places often possessed sacred power because people associated those places, and the objects

²⁸ Berger has traced changes in the relative power and authority of men and women within Nyabingi from the 18th century into the 20th (Berger 1995:78–79).

and ceremonies located there, with distant sacred places, real and imagined. For faithful Muslims, this is dramatized each time they turn toward Mecca to pray. The local site of prayer, a resplendent mosque or a rectangle marked by inverted bottles buried in the ground, is given meaning through its connection to the holiest of places. The arks found in Ethiopian Coptic churches are associated with the founding of the nation. When Menelik I—the first emperor and believed to be the son of King Solomon and Queen Sheba—returned from visiting his father across the Red Sea, those with him stole and brought the sacred ark, which then was repositied in Aksum. From that original ark the many local arks found in churches throughout Ethiopia have received their blessing, and thus those lesser arks refer not only to Aksum but to the Holy Land and Menelik's travel.

Sacred rank and gender have been spatially constructed in Ethiopian Christianity, as in other religions. In each church, only deacons and priests who are ritually pure and in "good standing" can enter the room where the ark is kept and carry out certain ceremonies. A "series of concentric zones of diminishing holiness" surround that room; farther out from the church yard is a grove of trees inhabited by spirits that are "aggressive and unruly and represent a heightened version of chaos and nature" (Bauer 1989:230–232). Priests in various churches are linked through their training, membership in the institutional church, and assemblies, but also through their ritual status associated with place joined to sacred space.

In Tigre, diviners (*deftera*) tended to be men trained or even ordained as priests who were unqualified to perform the rituals associated with the power of the ark but still participated in its power; their mediating capacity came from the fact that they participated in the everyday world in a manner that priests did not. As with mosques, women have been excluded from the central and most holy places. On the other hand, spirit mediums, possessed by non-Christian spirits and occupying different spiritual and cultural spaces, were exclusively women. Bauer uses these spatial images: diviners stood with "one foot" inside the inner ark room and the "other foot" in the spirit-free zone of the church, while mediums had one foot in the churchyard and the other in the grove, the "pagan" zone. While women responded to the mediums' charismatic power, men rarely did (Bauer 1989:232–236). Thus the gendering of local space was linked with a gendering of national space, which in turn was defined by references across time and space. The remembering of myths of national

genesis defined who could carry out particular spiritual exercises in the present-day holy sites. In sum, these cases illustrate how people shared religious experiences and beliefs through interaction mediated by multiple centers and multilateral networks—even when there was a preeminent center. They also illustrate, however, that shared experience did not mean common experience; gender in particular conditioned the flow of religious ideas and practices.

The Space-Time Nexus: Myth, Memory and Mental Mapping

In all African social formations, the space-time continuum has been inseparable from processes of remembering and forgetting places, inventing history around places, and contesting memory that refers to places. There are many cultural realms of memory and space that we are unable to explore, such as those involving heroes, mythic and real. Many scholars, for instance, have compared different versions of the Sunjata epic and analyzed the range of meaning associated with his memory throughout the “Mande world.” The text in its many versions is an historical artifact that reflects and informs how Mande-speakers think about themselves in relationship to the Manden core area and to other people in their landscape, up to the present and into the future.²⁹ In many respects, the landscape itself has been a text.

Myths of origin and orally transmitted migration accounts have an equally important role in defining people within spatial landscapes. As in the case of epics and heroic texts, the historicity, in a positivist sense, of such stories is open to doubt, but many African reciters and audiences do regard them as “history.” John Cinnamon, in this volume, argues that migration stories contain historical data, but not about migration; rather they reveal how people organized themselves regionally. People with diverse backgrounds have found a commonality by attributing their origins to a real or mythical site. Cinnamon believes that the “primordial migration narratives” that are widespread in Central Africa are in the main stories of societal transformation. He interprets the well-known Udzambugha myth in which primordial ancestors tunnel through a massive adzo tree—a

²⁹ See the collection *In Search of Sunjata* edited by Ralph Austen, in particular, chapters by Stephen Belcher, Seydou Camara, and David Conrad (Austen 1999).

central point of departure for the migration myths of various people—as “an equatorial Tower of Babel that enables social groups to claim a common past.” While ostensibly often telling about the separation of people, such narratives have served and continue to serve “as a powerful metaphor of common identity that enables peoples scattered across the rain forest to posit common origins” that serve to facilitate their commercial and other linkages. In other situations, older memories were weakened, altered, or obliterated as new identities were generated around particular places and territories. “Deep” Biriwa Limba (northern Sierra Leone) identity was forged around certain leaders, political institutions, values, and behaviors. It involved submerging—though not forgetting—previous identities, such as the Mande backgrounds of rulers, but also creating identities around individuals, towns, shrines, and other places (Fanthorpe 1998).

The social construction of memory also enabled people to associate different meanings with a single site or to organize different, overlapping regions around proximate sites. In her chapter in this volume, Jan Bender Shetler discusses how residents of the Serengeti possess overlaid mental or narrative maps that are spatially and socially located and refer to different time periods in the past. In earlier social and political contestations, people employed those maps and their historical referents, drawing upon different layers of memory as appropriate. Sandra Greene has demonstrated how the Nyikowe or Gbakute area in Anloga towns was marked in succession by different religious beliefs and practices, yet residents retained and drew upon the earliest meaning. Nyikowe first served as the site where those guilty of the most serious crimes were executed, and it became associated with “unhappy and potentially vengeful spirits.” After a major military victory in 1769, which Anlo attributed to a war god Nyigbla brought from Ouidah, the place became the location of the deity’s shrine and the order of priests who controlled it. The site’s spiritual qualities were enhanced, but the memory of the grove as the place of execution endured. Nearly two hundred years later, during a deadly tax-related riot while under British rule, resisters seized those accused of supporting the levy and took them to the grove. The colonial administrators suppressed the uprising, burned the grove, and built a police station on the site to demonstrate their mastery over its spiritual forces. Still, they failed to eradicate people’s memory of the grove’s significance (Greene 1997).

European colonialists were not the first authorities who attempted to impose meanings upon places. Leaders of many African states had strategies for employing rituals with spatial reference and thereby altering memory, typically in an effort to establish a more hierarchical power structure. Most common were site-specific rituals, or reenactments that evoked changes in territorial arrangements over time. We have discussed this above for Busoga and elsewhere, but here wish to examine additional ways that space and historical perception of the past were interconnected.

First, in some states sacred sites were arranged to enhance their impact upon believers by compacting memory or by compressing or in other ways altering time. In discussing the royal shrines of Buganda, which are physically separated from the secular political capital, Benjamin C. Ray has written the following:

As I walked from one shrine to another, an additional feature of the royal shrines struck me: the temporal sequence of dynastic chronology was transposed into a spatial sequence, and thus temporality was obliterated. . . . Here, standing along a path a few hundred yards from one another, there were shrines of kings who lived centuries apart, their temporal distance overcome by the spatial contiguity. Time was suspended. I could “walk” across the centuries and behold the reigns of kings permanently frozen in fixed memorials, the chronology of the past made simultaneously present (Ray 1991:157–158).

Yet, LuGanda-speakers assuredly knew other measures of time as well. Feierman shows that in Shambaai (Tanzania) the “central organizing principle in the culturally ordered experience of the king as bringer of fertility . . . was the experience of time’s passage as rhythmized, regular, and life-bringing, or as random, irregular, and deadly” (Feierman 1990:70). Rituals for the burial of a king and the installation of his successor were overlapped “. . . to make structure out of contingency, to strip history of unique and unpredictable events, to make every royal reign equivalent. . . .” Yet people also had another form of time and discourse: “Conflict, deal-making, anger, betrayal, adultery, deception, and intimidation were excluded from the rhythmized recurrence of rites, but not from the discursive consciousness of the people . . .” (Feierman 1990:74). A principal element of fertility was rain making, and there lesser chiefs challenged kings.

The struggle of chiefs to “cover the land,” to establish themselves as dominant rainmakers, took place at many different levels within the kingdom. Each local chief worked to dominate competitors within his

own territory—to prevent the emergence of competing local rainmakers who might challenge him. If the chief succeeded in suppressing competition, then he was the only local recipient of tribute from peasants. At a wider level, it was the king's task to “cover over” the territories of all the chiefs, to prove that he alone of all Kilindi was dominant. When the king “covered over” the whole land, then tribute flowed to the royal capital, commoners could appeal the judgments of their chiefs at the court of the king, and only the king imposed the death penalty. When king and chiefs fought, at a time of power against power, tribute did not come to the capital, commoners could not appeal the judgments of their chiefs, and many chiefs could impose the death penalty. The kingdom as a whole, therefore, oscillated between two states, parallel to healing the land and harming the land (Feierman 1990:85).

Second, concepts of space often were based on a complex interrelationship of the physical, social, and spiritual worlds as they pertained to time. Ivor Wilks has argued that the Asante understanding of the outer boundaries of Greater Asante was based upon a standardized notion of how far a person could walk in a day, which was in turn affected by socially required periods of preparation for departure, siesta, and day's end. Out of this, Asante constructed a month and then bounded the nation in terms of the possibilities of travel within a month's duration along the great roads paced by the *dn*, “the pendulum-like rhythm of a person walking at a normal pace” (Wilks 1992). The great-roads were conduits of central authority and ended at the frontier; when the pathway continued, it was into foreign territory (Wilks 1992). Wilks has been criticized, however, for imposing a formal (rational, Weberian) bureaucratic notion of time and not giving due consideration to informal time frames. In response, Wilks reasserted that his approach was indeed material and of the “real world”; he argued that he did not impose an understanding because the *dn* rhythm was “the fundamental concept on which the reckoning of speed was predicated” (Wilks 1993:209). Official couriers were obliged to measure time in that mode and traders also used that calculus. Wilks acknowledged that it was not the only way that Asante apprehended time; farmers, for instance, had a different measure of time and travel (Wilks 1993:208–209).³⁰

³⁰ This suggests that people in different social positions narrated space differently, both in terms of time and of measures of physical and social proximity and distance.

If people rarely mapped on paper in the precolonial era, they did map in a multitude of other ways: on the earth, on various physical objects, and in direct and symbolic discourse. Such representations were based on mental mappings, which themselves were derived from gathering and exchanging “on-the-ground” evidence and also from sharing more abstract representations of space and comparing landscapes. Europeans sometimes claimed that Africans were incapable of linear mapping, or at least believed that Africans lacked the cultural toolbox for measuring and representing space in a “realistic” manner. In a fascinating overview, Thomas J. Bassett has demonstrated not only that Africans mapped geographic features accurately, but that European travelers, “scientific explorers,” and, then later, administrators often relied on African mapping to gain specific information and to construct maps they drafted and published. Many such maps were created at the behest of Europeans and were drawn on the ground. They included details on the location of rivers and other natural formations; settlements, states and other political entities; and social and cultural life. Bassett cites maps generated by Europeans from African sources for many regions of the continent: Dupuis’ 1824 map of “Wangara” which included the Gold Coast and a wide interior beyond, Cooley’s 1853 map of the Lake Malawi region, Deveyrier’s 1860s series “Carte du Plateau Central du Sahara . . .,” and others. While such maps were solicited by Europeans, they reflected the mapping that Africans did for one another in connection with commerce, statecraft, migration, and other regular processes in space (Bassett 1998:33–41; Bassett and Porter 1991).

Mental and physical maps that Africans fashioned for their own use were based upon not only natural features but many kinds of information that facilitated travel, business operations, administration, acquisition of resources, pilgrimage, and other endeavors. Such maps often were linear in form. If distances among places were not calibrated with the accuracy of those who possessed scientific instruments, such “use maps” did measure travel time and depict places relative to each other. Inter-regional traders, particularly professional *jula*, with accumulated experience and access to information, had a detailed cognitive cartography of the roads they traveled, centers along the way, sources of commodities, and so on. They knew the distance between places in terms of hours and days at typical travel speed with necessary stops factored in, and appreciated the location of one place (town, landmark, source of commodities) in relation-

ship to another. Their mental mappings also involved calculations of hazards and amenities that enabled them to choose among alternative routes and centers where they might sell and purchase commodities, or obtain services (Howard in preparation).

Mental mapping and the various expressions of such maps were at the heart of social and political order and contestation. Memory was embedded in rituals that had spatial referents; conversely, alterations in the way people perceived time affected both space and memory. As Islam was established in East and West Africa, its adherents subscribed to a particular patterning of time around daily and weekly prayer, annual holy days and religious celebrations, and the prospect of a future that extended to eternity. The marking of time was associated with mosques, prayer fields, the tombs of holy men, and other places. The Prophet's life and teachings provided a model for individuals to follow through time, the *hajj* being one of the five pillars. Muslims thus experienced a space-time nexus that was different in certain particulars from that of non-Muslims, and some Muslim reformers sought to replace non-Islamic time markers and places.

In many areas, however, different notions of time co-existed, and many Africans maintained both indigenous and Muslim calendars and sacred spaces. Joseph Adjaye writes that *Asantehene* Osei Bonsu (1800–1823) “had taken measures to synchronize the Islamic, Christian, and indigenous calendars to facilitate the scheduling of government business” (Adjaye 1994:76). He also notes that while Akan-speakers were not as obsessed with the clock as Europeans became under the impact of industrialization, they knew that time moved on its own accord, and used stool histories, oaths, funeral dirges and other mechanisms to establish chronologies. He goes on to say that “Akan time perceptions are at one and the same time linear and cyclical.” There is an “awareness of the contributions of the ancestors in times past toward the growth and well-being of the present group but also a realization of the duty to preserve the present for future times” (Adjaye 1994:73). If the Asante example again illustrates how those with power sought to control the meaning of time and space for the large polity, the Shambaai evidence reveals an on-going struggle over time among authority holders at different levels with competing spiritual claims, and Adjaye reminds us that people living in their households and smaller communities maintained different chronologies with different meanings.

*Hierarchical and Non-Hierarchical Organization of Power,
Authority, and Meaning*

There has been a strong tendency in the writing of precolonial history to focus on states, hierarchical structures, and large centers. To a considerable degree this was a product of a scholarly search during the nationalist era for a past that equaled that of other continents, but it also has reflected an ongoing concern with the exercise of power and authority. Power must, of course, be a critical element in the spatial analysis of any social formation but certain problems have resulted from this approach besides a privileging of states, namely, an evolutionary assumption that structures inevitably become hierarchical or move toward centralization, and a neglect of women and of alternative patterns of authority.³¹ Several chapters in this volume demonstrate the value of spatial analysis for studying non-hierarchical social formations and those without well defined, long lasting centers of political authority. We do not, however, wish to perpetuate the centralized-decentralized (acephalous) dichotomy. Many regions actually had a complex mix of competing centers of authority, with different levels or forms of authority. This was particularly the situation in the many regions where so-called “mini-states” existed as Howard’s chapter demonstrates. Furthermore, spatial analysis helps to reveal both the ways in which urban centers helped to create regions around them and the struggles that were common between the main capitals of federated states and empires and subsidiary capitals or spheres of authority. For a comparative history of regions, it is particularly important to examine the many cross-cutting networks that operated within states, unmediated by the capital, and the ways in which networks did not coincide with reputed or imagined boundaries of states.

These issues pertain to the concept of landscapes. In any given place or region there was not one single landscape; rather, landscapes varied to some degree according to the social position and experience of the viewer. Holders of social power and authority attempted to stamp upon people’s minds a common view of the landscape, for instance, by arranging events in places or trying to

³¹ Recent studies of women at precolonial power centers have served as a corrective (Bay 1998).

influence how people thought and talked about the meaning of places. Rulers and other leaders of large, centrally powerful states in particular sought to establish a commonly held landscape that supported their domination. Even then, however, places and their meaning often were heatedly contested.

A spatial approach reveals how social, economic/ecological, and perceived spiritual forces have been intertwined in regions lacking hierarchical authority. While dealing with earlier time periods, archaeologists have addressed some of these issues in ways that are fruitful for the analysis here (S. McIntosh 1999). In an effort to explain findings in Jenne-Jeno and other sites on the middle Niger, Susan K. McIntosh, Roderick J. McIntosh, and colleagues postulated that early Sudanese urban complexes comprised people of different and complementary occupations and different kin formations who interacted in a way that gave order to the settlements and to the surrounding territory. Specialists—smiths, fishers, hunters, farmers, leather workers, potters, and others—tapped different elements of the environment through their technical knowledge and their capacity to use spirit force (*nyama*) to extract and modify resources. Thus, centers were conglomerations of “power points,” and surrounding regions were organized by those who had responsibility for particular components. Social and material exchanges of all types were mediated through horizontal negotiation rather than vertical control (R. McIntosh 1993; 2000). This analysis, however, does not imply an egalitarian society, for it need not be assumed that each specialization, kin formation, or other social entity had the same amount of resources or capacity to influence decisions.

Where more centralized governments existed, authorities structured regions by their capacity to mobilize and use material resources, institutions, and rituals or ideologies, as well as their ability to shape historical memory. Regional histories, however, are best not read teleologically, as an inevitable shift from heterarchy to hierarchy or from decentralized to centralized government. Rather, it is better to assume that in every region there was continual tension among multiple and competing centers of power and authority and among people who constructed opposing alliance networks. Kingdoms and empires differed greatly not only in the degree of centralization they reached, but also in the ways that centralization occurred and in the organization of space. Leaders of subject states, heads of kin groups, and others challenged rulers’ centralizing efforts in various

ways.³² Wilks, McCaskie, and other scholars have exhaustively examined the complex socio-political history of Asante in spatial terms, for example, by examining the shifting relative centrality of Kumase and the tension between the state and kinship institutions (Wilks 1975; Wilks 1993a; McCaskie 1995). From the early 1700s until in the 1840s, “. . . the principal feature of the history of Asante society is the victory of centripetal control (central government) over the centrifugal tendencies . . .” which involved reducing the power of metropolitan and provincial chiefs (McCaskie 1984:170). All the while, power struggles ensued at the capital among an elite for whom acquisition of subjects, wealth, and land demonstrated achievement and status. Successive *Asantehene* were able to confiscate land and subjects and to mediate their redistribution; the king’s court of law was a principal instrument. McCaskie believes that the system of state power began to be undermined internally in the 1840s when *Asantehene* Kwaku Dua Panin started making illicit seizures that “breached the compact that governed wealth and its disposition” and raised his favored clients to high rank where they could accumulate (McCaskie 1995:65–68). In the 1870s and 1880s because of Britain’s burning of Kumase and subsequent involvement in the politics of Asante’s greater empire, and because of royal failures and abuses, then civil war, provincial chiefs reasserted their power and re-assumed control over resource flow. Kumase’s regional centrality declined greatly. Most important for the argument here, the opposition leaders had their bases in households, kin and alliance networks, and local sources of ritual authority (Wilks 1975:374–476; McCaskie 1995).

The spatial structures of kingdoms changed greatly both as they became more centralized and as centralization declined. In the Kongo, networks once were oriented toward the sacred capital city of São Salvador, but civil war and other forces led to its abandonment and the rise of many other centers (and temporary encampments) around territorial rulers and rival claimants to kingship. Even after the capital’s reoccupation it never regained the population and political influence of its apogee, partly because rival kings kept their forces and followerships stationed outside it. In the early nineteenth cen-

³² One need only consider the methods, brutal and subtle, that the rulers of a highly centralized kingdom like Dahomey employed to suppress conquered states and other rival nodes of power.

ture, as “a regional capital that claimed the most nominal loyalty from the rest of the country, São Salvador was not the great city of the past, though it preserved its ruined buildings as a place of semi-religious awe” (Thornton 2000:75). Then from the mid-nineteenth century as the slave trade declined and the rubber trade expanded, “. . . chains of villages tied by relations of kinship, slavery, and clientage formed *kandas* (clans) of linked villages or sections of villages . . .” along the routes of travel, in a process similar to what Cinnamon describes in this volume for northern Gabon. “Territorial rulers with links to the older political system . . . participated in the trade and founded trading villages and quarters of their own as a way of augmenting their strength beyond the traditional means” (Thornton 2000:76). This new spatial arrangement was ideologically validated through a revised history of the kingdom that made São Salvador the ancient point of dispersal for the recently invented *kandas*.

In the Ibadan empire from the 1850s on, military leaders became chiefs known as *babakerere* and ruled territories they conquered. Typically they selected *ajele* as their local residents who supervised toll collection, hosted traders from Ibadan, and, in the east, could become virtual rulers. Such people thus bridged places and helped to shape extensive areas into regions, even territories in Robert David Sack’s sense (see above). But this should not be seen simply in structural terms: many (perhaps most) used their power and intermediary position to accumulate wealth and exploit and abuse local populations—or at least allowed their underlings to do so.

Although the particular struggles among contesting parties in East African states were different from those in the West, there are parallels in spatial terms. Over more than three centuries, Ganda royal power grew at the expense of local clan heads; by the later 1800s royal cults were of limited importance in holding the kingdom together in comparison with the rulers’ managerial capacities.

Besides expanding territorially, Ganda kings increased their power pragmatically by displacing local leaders and replacing them with royal appointees. Sometimes these appointees were, or quickly became, leaders of clans. But unlike their predecessors, these notables owed their positions to the Ganda king. With the territorial conquests of the eighteenth century and the plundering expeditions of the nineteenth, these men became the dominant influence in the Ganda political system. The king’s power now depended essentially upon the king’s men. Ganda

royal power was managerial power [in the later 1800's]. . . . Externally, it depended upon the effective management of frequent plundering expeditions. Internally, it depended upon skillfully managing an intricately interlocking network of appointive chiefs together with the associated structures of clientage and chattel slavery (Twaddle 1993:9).

In the Great Lakes states, as elsewhere, there was a strong gender aspect to the contestation between kings at the center and local male lineage heads. Competing male authorities sought to intervene in women's spheres, particularly "women's association with life, fertility, and healing." These struggles again had well defined spatial aspects, particularly when rulers tried to strengthen themselves by coopting and controlling women's local ritual authority. As Iris Berger has shown, however, women struggled to maintain their own conceptions and sources of power associated with fecundity vis a vis both kings and lineage heads. Their principal means was the *kubandwa* spirit mediumship ceremonies by which they could temporarily escape their subordinate position (see below). Especially in the south, ". . . *kubandwa* officials held high positions at court that attested to the close relationship that developed over time between centralized authority and local, female-dominated religious idioms" Berger 1995:69). Nevertheless, as priestesses, women sought to maintain autonomy and bargaining strength against rulers, and this was recognized in legends, roles in royal rituals, and respect for ceremonial sites.³³

The center-local contestations can also be seen where Islamic movements attempted, with varying degrees of success, to remake societies. Jihadists and other reformers, their followers, and allies created new spatial formations through the leaders' vision and personal attractiveness and through resource mobilization, migration, a sense

³³ Berger notes that the relationship between royal power and family power varied greatly from area to area, and with it women's ritual opportunities. In some of the Cwezi areas ". . . probably during the early struggles against centralized rule, formerly female ceremonies were reinterpreted and reshaped, probably by local politico-religious figures. This process involved elevating one group of deities to the status of 'Cwezi' and ideologically demoting others. . . . In doing so, the religious tradition associated with women was demoted to a secondary, and sometimes unfavourable position, whereas the male-associated Cwezi gained spiritual and political hegemony." In Bunyoro, though, by the nineteenth century ". . . Cwezi adherents formed a powerful religious organization that cross-cut [the now weakened] kinship boundaries and enhanced women's authority in local affairs. Nyoro group mediums, most commonly women, held such high status that household heads had to treat them respectfully at all times" (Berger 1995:74).

of ethnicity, the functioning of the *turuq* (“brotherhoods”), and other means. David Robinson has demonstrated how El Hajj Umar Tal and those around him built in the 1850s and early 1860s a vast edifice in the inner Senegambia and along sections of the upper Niger. That structure depended upon obtaining enslaved people, food, gold, and European weapons, but, more importantly, upon Umar’s prestige and magnetic ability to draw *talibe* and other followers, a Fulbe consciousness, and a strong religious conviction among the core adherents (Robinson 1985). Umar, however, “gave little attention to the construction of an Islamic state,” and the territorial cohesion he had achieved could not be sustained. “[T]he biggest deficiency was Umar’s own inexperience and lack of interest in establishing courts, schools, mosques, and other institutions of an Islamic state . . .” (Robinson 2000a:142). French pressure played a role in weakening it, but more basic was Umar’s policy of war mobilization, the opposition of other leaders who had their own territorial base and personal and ideological claims, resistance of conquered peoples, divisions among constituents of the movement, and rivalry between his sons situated in the cities of Segu and Dingiray. Underlying this were other problems: the jihad had been very costly in lives and materiel and the agricultural base of the previous Seguvian state was not restored. (Robinson 2002a:140–143; 2002b:143–150).

Moreover, a fundamental spatial issue can be identified by comparison with the Sokoto caliphate, namely the importance of institutions that forged territorial cohesion. The Sokoto Caliphate in its early decades also had a charismatic, inspired leader, Uthman dan Fodio, to whom family members, disciples, and followers were dedicated; a strong sense of Fulbe identity among many of the leadership core; and other features that paralleled, in fact were a model for, Umar Tal. While there were important differences between the two movements and states that cannot simply be explained in spatial policy, a major factor in the ability of Sokoto to survive dan Fodio’s death and consolidate can be found in the way Muhammad Bello (dan Fodio’s son who was caliph from 1817 to 1837) institutionalized the state by reshaping space. He drew into Sokoto and surrounding settlements immigrant families, mainly of scholars, who had a deep loyalty to his father’s memory and to him; in addition to this support, they held posts as judges and teachers that helped consolidate the regime. He provided them with land and a labor force made up of enslaved captives taken during campaigns or

supplied by the emirs who headed the subsidiary states. For defense against external enemies but also to check the fissiparous politics of Fulbe clan-leaders, he directed the building of numerous *ribats*, many of which were walled, strategically located villages. Then under their protection, promoted the establishment of mosques, schools, markets, and workshops, along with the necessary specialists such as teachers, leaders of prayer, and judges. Family members, close friends, and appointed officials served as intermediaries between outlying districts and the capital, and senior titled officials had responsibilities for overseeing territories. These innovations among other things helped to balance power that accrued to princes leading some of the *ribats*. Critical in holding the caliphate together was a succession of viziers, close counselors, and chief ministers of the caliphs, who served as emissaries with the capacity to handle affairs throughout the caliphate, even appointing new emirs, and advising on other actions. All in all, territorial integration was critical to the survival of the caliphate, which was one of the most extensive empires in sub-Saharan Africa during the nineteenth century (Last 1967:79–80, 94–95, 101, 125, 178ff., 230–231).

At a more theoretical level the several historical cases illustrate different ways in which a commonality of ideas and some sense of identity were established over space through hierarchical and non-hierarchical processes. In Shehu dan Fodio's early career, his household was the center for networks of kin and followers, and he extended his connections through ambulation over the countryside and preaching. Later, political and military alliances gave coherence to his fighting force. Through such personal ties the faith was expanded and deepened, and a movement was gathered and set into action. Much depended upon connections to and communication with the center. For Umar Tal, his own movement over space, the operation of his schools, and later the physical relocation of his community was important. In both instances, communication, primarily through informal networks and nodal institutions gave rise to functional regions. Once the Sokoto caliphate was proclaimed, the institutional mechanisms described above forged political integration; a territory was created in the sense Sack uses the term, and Islamicization proceeded more hierarchically. The processes of building a sense of Asante identity through institutions was somewhat parallel. Different models might, however, be applied fruitfully to other cases, such as the prophetic movements described by Berger. Looking at Mexico,

Lomnitz-Adler has proposed a mechanism of regional communication that results in a greater commonality of ideas and identity over time without imposition by a central authority, or a reticulated network, or a traveling agent of change. Against a deep, somewhat generic set of ideas, such as a predisposition toward prophesy, a new wave of prophetism could arise by exchange among various centers or sub-regions. All would contribute some thought to the multi-lateral exchange, thus moving their common concepts to a new plane, but each would retain a different mix that combined what they previously had with some of the new shared elements (Lomnitz-Adler 1991).

Violence and Spatial Transformation in the Late Precolonial Era

The period covered in this book was a violent one for many regions in Africa. Violence brought spatial transformation and often affected memory and spatial perception. War, slave raiding, disruption of production, destruction of centers, fragmentation of networks, along with death, capture, and forced labor transfers were integral to the dynamics of many regions. State-building was always a violent process, in Muslim and other cases. Organized raiding groups and civil wars altered the physiognomy of villages and cities during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and colonial conquest brought new forms of violence. The combination of organized power and mobility gave raiders, cavalries, foot armies, and, in a few instances, navies the capacity to have a profound spatial impact. Communities found ways to resist attack, however, through fortification, retreat to less accessible places, and other means that involved spatial reorganization.

The Atlantic, Indian Ocean, trans-Saharan, and internal slave trades generated widespread upheaval. Perhaps nowhere has this been so fully described as in the Congo/Angola area. There the demographic significance of the transformation wrought by Atlantic slaving lay less in aggregate population losses than in profound changes in settlement patterns, epidemiological exposure, and reproductive capabilities of populations who remained behind, according to Joseph Miller, whose findings are worth quoting in detail.

The entire series of local transformations, viewed over the three centuries of the Angolan slave trade, resembled a moving frontier zone of slaving violence. It took shape with the first border raids of the

newly centralized Kongo kingdom shortly after 1500 and continued in the shudders that ran through that state in the late sixteenth century. . . . [G]rowth of the Mbundu kingdom of the Ngola a Kiluanje and a similar collapse of its conquered domains . . . advanced the slaving frontier south from Kongo beyond the Kwanza. . . . The wars in the area immediately around Angola began in the 1620s and 1630s, when militaristic Portuguese governors at Luanda employed African mercenaries, the Imbangala or “Jaga,” to raid north . . . and bought slaves from others south of the Kwanza. . . . The slaving frontier’s advance into the Kwango valley and up the mountains [took place] between 1650 and 1680. . . . The same commercial expansion from Loango fanned flames of civil warfare in neighboring Kasanje, just to the south, during the general distress of the 1680s. . . . The Lunda *mwaant yaav* [was] put in touch with the coast [after 1700], then carried the violent phase of slaving east by raiding the wetter and densely inhabited latitudes north of their capitals. Related political centralization among western Lunda nobles convulsed the regions just east of the Kwango in warfare during the 1740s and 1750s. . . . But pressures were simultaneously building in the west to expand the zone of Atlantic-financed slaving southeastward once again, beyond its mid-eighteenth-century perimeter (Miller 1988:141–146).

The demographic and spatial impacts were amplified by ecological disaster: “the spread of slaving from Kongo south to the Mbundu living above the Kwanza provided the first instance of the correlation of ecological stress, warfare, and exports of refugees as slaves. . . .” The same drought pushed the southern slaving frontier inland, and recurrent drought between 1715 and 1725 provoked more warfare and Portuguese military expeditions, while in “the 1780s and 1790s, ecological disaster and slaving once again spread together over western central Africa” (Miller 1988:150–151).³⁴

Mounted raiding groups operated in several regions of West Africa, wreaking havoc upon settled societies through a cycle of continuous recruitment and expansion. Eventually, this cycle played out and mechanisms for rearranging social and political practices took hold, but at great human cost and with new spatial patterns. Fardon has examined these processes for central Cameroon during the era of the Fulbe jihad and conquest of Adamawa.

³⁴ Boubacar Barry has given an integrated account of slave raiding and trading, state building, and related processes in the Senegambia macro-region during the 18th and 19th centuries (Barry 1998:61–80ff).

Initially, parties of mounted raiders, whether Fulani, Chamba, or allies of either, were able to make rapid inroads into settled populations of village-based cultivators. Their success seems to have depended less upon new means of destruction than upon willingness to deploy their methods ruthlessly, without regard to the future survival of the communities that were raided. In the short term, an impact policy of this wasting kind is capable of yielding considerable gains, but without the constant opening of new areas to exploitation, the policy is unstable. Raiding breeds ever larger numbers of raiders as the alliances recruit, split, raid, recruit again, and so on, in a widening arc of disruption. With increasing competition for diminishing resources, the necessity emerged for a reroutinization of territorial relations to allow renewable resources of tolls, tithes, debt enslavement, labor demands, and controlled seizures to be tapped. Throughout the area, an early stage of impact policy was replaced by later attempts at consolidation and reroutinization (Fardon 1988:11–12).

The violence of capture, sale, movement, and enslavement reflected the fact that power was differentiated in terms of gender, age, and spatial location. Traders as well as raiders and soldiers transferred women, men, and children to those places where powerful authority holders and military figures resided; such places often became centers of redistribution in which leaders rewarded followers with wives and workers, building chains of patronage that emanated outward. Boys and youths might be trained as soldiers. Conversely, some places were drained of women and children, as Elizabeth Schmidt has shown for Shona country (Schmidt 1992:33–35).

Increasingly during the nineteenth century, regional trading systems transferred dependent laborers to areas of commercialized food and export crop production from areas of political weakness, drought, or poverty, as seen in the earlier discussion of the Maraka region. Production areas exported commodities to neighboring regions and abroad. With investment and the use of enslaved labor, production rose rapidly and exchange centers grew in importance. “The export trade in ‘legitimate’ commodities accounts for many of the slaves used in production and commerce in the West African coastal regions in the nineteenth century but not all.” Production of kola, peanuts, palm oil, and kernels, and foodstuffs; gold mining; and transport demanded many enslaved workers. Some lived in villages, but “plantations were found near the coast and along the rivers of Sierra Leone, in Asante, Dahomey, and the Yoruba states, and at scattered locations in the Biafaran interior. Small holdings were found almost

everywhere” (Lovejoy 2000:166; for the demographic impacts, see Manning 1990).

Frederick Cooper has charted the rise of slave-based plantation agriculture on the East Africa coast. Malindi, which had declined and been sacked, rose from an abandoned site in 1850 to become the leading grain (millet) supplier on the coast by 1880. Along with Mambui just to the north, there were then 5 to 10,000 slaves working fields that stretched miles inland and along the coast. While most farms were small, the richest men had large holdings; the Omani Suleiman bin Abdalla Al-Mauli had over 250 slaves and devoted more than 1000 acres to grain and coconuts. Zanzibar, Mombasa, and the zones surrounding them also expanded production substantially during the same period (F. Cooper 1977:81–91, 97–105). This form of commercial development affected neighboring areas:

By the 1850s and 1860s . . . plantations in the Takaungu and Malindi districts produced grain for export to Zanzibar, Somaliland, and the Hadramawt. In times of famine, when thousands of Miji Kenda had no choice but to exchange their children for grain, individual planters had sufficient stores to acquire hundreds of pawns. Their children were then carried by dhow and sold in Lamu, Somaliland, and Pemba (Morton 1994:29–30).

Thus, within a regional economy, human resources were transferred from one place to another, affecting the households and networks of both those who lost kin or other members and those who obtained laborers. The labor demands and social relations of slavery were site specific, and, along with the ideology that supported bondage, were contextualized regionally. Many scholars have analyzed this in depth so it is only necessary to draw out spatial aspects from an example or two. On the East coast, the impact of the market and the nature of paternalism “. . . varied from place to place. New forms of labor organization were most important in Malindi, where the most labor-intensive variant in agriculture coincided with the least developed social life. Change in the use of labor was the least in Mombasa, where the possibilities of agricultural expansion were limited and the rewards of urban life comparatively great. . . . Yet in Malindi the heavy labor requirements of grain cultivation were countered by a geographical and demographic situation that gave slaves some recourse against excessive demands . . .,” most notably escape (F. Cooper 1977:211).

People developed various physical, social, political, and supernatural defense strategies against warfare and raiding, strategies that often had great influence on regional patterns and nodality. Even in the Luanda hinterland, the slaving frontier did not expand mechanically or evenly. “The resourcefulness of old rulers, the survival of the agricultural way of life that they represented, and the resiliency of the institutions they created often held back the wave’s advance for years . . .” (Miller 1988:149). Those in danger commonly altered the nature of their settlements: they built walls around villages and towns, reduced the size of doors and number of entryways, constructed trenches and mazes around sites, planted thorn bushes and other natural deterrents, and found new ways to farm (Klein 2001). Military architecture in the Sudan was highly developed, and could be part of the effort of expansive states to hold an outer line, as well as a component in a defensive posture. Many towns in the western Sudan were planned with an ultimate, central place of defense, often equipped with a high observation tower, and surrounded by a labyrinthine series of defense works. The outermost walls, 2.5 or more meters thick at the base and 6 to 10 or more meters high, were in some instances crenated and had a series of extended towers that enabled soldiers to fire out in all directions and ensure that there were no blind spots. Beyond, at varying distances, often lay fortified sites designed to slow or stave off attackers. Towns built along rivers had barrages and other constructions to hinder enemies. From the 1850s, these included the French (Bah 1985, 121–130, 155–170ff.). All in all, around a capital, an area with a diameter of many kilometers could be transformed into a layered defense, and the core linked with similar if smaller, defended sites over a region. Capitals and other towns were often moved.

It was not uncommon for those regularly assaulted by slavers and aggressive state builders to move their settlements, even capitals and sizeable towns, to more secure sites (Diouf 2003). In some cases people of different communities located their defense works in close proximity so as to gain greater protection. As Jan Jansen describes in this volume, farmers on the upper Niger, under attack from expansionary Muslim states during the nineteenth century, retreated from the riverine plain to the hills and their margins where they constructed adjacent *tatas*. Those ensconced in one could protect the flank of another, and vice versa, multiplying the security of all.

Decentralized communities near the West African coast, such as the Balanta, also adopted strategies of moving settlements from open savanna and upland areas to the riverine and mangrove swamp zones along the ocean. There they developed compact, fortified villages and methods of counter attack, in some instances using guns or home-made weapons from iron purchased by selling captives. In the process they also perfected paddy rice production, expanded into new areas, and re-shaped the coastal region economically and environmentally (Hawthorne 2003a and 2003b). War and raiding, often linked with the Atlantic slave trade, plus disease and natural disasters disrupted many communities and brought population decline or relocation over sections of middle Africa prior to colonial conquest. People were torn from their homes and channeled into the external or internal slave trade. On the other hand, people, including those in small-scale communities, took the initiative in dealing with regional and global forces and, to varying degrees, were able to re-shape their spatial patterns of existence.

Place, Movement, Regional Interaction, and Identity

People also re-shaped their memories and identities through movement across space, settlement in new places, and discourse about those processes. Traveling—far from being a modern or post-modern phenomenon defined by contact with the “West”—characterized the lives of many people in the 18th and 19th centuries—and earlier. People also constructed identities around processes that occurred across space and by interactive relationships in regional contexts. Those who moved regularly, especially traders and other specialists, often assumed one role or identity in one place, another elsewhere; yet while situational analysis has been used in many twentieth-century studies, it has rarely been applied to the pre-colonial period. Since many older migratory patterns continued, even though modified, after colonial rule was imposed, the study of people’s movement helps to bridge the pre-colonial/colonial division in spatial history and to determine more precisely which changes were associated with colonialism.

In all societies, individuals change status and identity as they age and move through time socially. During the period studied here, physical movement often meant someone’s social position and social

age was altered. Enslavement typically involved a physical move: the person was bodily transferred to a different household, a sacred center, or a mine or other place of work, and this was accompanied by social, and undoubtedly psychological and spiritual, shifts in identity. This could be dramatized by rituals designed to erase old ties and bring a new integration (Miller 1977:212–213; Cookey 1974:13).³⁵ Children were especially subject to non-volitional movement as pawns, wards, or *talibe*, and in widespread patrilocal areas young brides were expected to join their husbands' households. Wrenching dislocation caused by war or environmental disaster often meant people suffered a loss of social and other resources and with it a change in status.

Social formations, memories, identities, and space itself were generated through movement, under varying constraints. In some instances people were aware of and actively engaged in the processes of space and identity formation, but not always. For pastoralists, the relationships of identity and movement was especially fluid and contextual. A revealing example would be the transhumanant (and mixed pastoralist-farming) people known as Mursi who according to Turton are "*merely a temporary coalescence*, brought about largely by ecological and geographical features, in a huge migration of cattle-keeping people from the general direction of the southern Sudan into the Ethiopian highlands, where they are *destined to become sedentary agriculturalists*" [emphasis added] (Turton 1978:128). The "age groups" of cattle-keeping men (between about 15 and about 30 years of age) claim exclusive territories, each of which cuts across flood land, bush, and wooded grassland, but given the exchanges among men in different "groups," between those men and farming families, and between Mursi and their neighbors, such territories are an illusion and the structural relations among the territories are changing constantly, "mediated by activities and beliefs to do with age" (Turton 1978: 101–108). Most interestingly, Turton feels that these activities and territorial identifications "help to shield the Mursi from the realization that their society is, by its very nature ephemeral" (Turton, 1978:128).³⁶ Douglas H. Johnson has demonstrated that the "classical"

³⁵ It is interesting to note that enslaved people of high status often were physically mobile and were distinguished by special dress and identifying marks—*cheddo* (in the Senegambia) and *ajele* (in the Yoruba-speaking area) immediately come to mind.

³⁶ It should be noted that this analysis is based on field work in 1969 and the early 1970s.

ethnographic work of E. E. Evans-Pritchard in the upper Nile was done during an atypical period when the coincidence of floods, cattle disease, and locust attacks caused a temporary resettlement and segregation of peoples, which in turn led Evans-Pritchard to see Nuer and Dinka as separate. By examining the memories of great floods and of peoples' responses to them, Johnson has concluded that floods have affected "human settlement to the point where there are few strict political or ethnic boundaries in the region" and that the economy Evans-Pritchard thought operated exclusively among the Nuer actually existed throughout the region in a vast system of interdependence (Johnson 1989).

The identity of many professional trading communities can only be understood as a product of interaction within a commercial region. For many decades, scholars have examined trading groups by employing spatial concepts, particularly by labeling such communities diasporic. (A. Cohen 1971) This term implies a chain of settlements formed by people who have diffused from an imputed center of origin. Such analysis has had strong structural-functional aspects, both in some earlier anthropological writing and in newer literature on development.³⁷ In many historical cases, however, the processes of community building and regional integration were much more complex and multi-lateral than a diasporic ethnic model suggests. Curtin has shown that the Diakhanke organized a grid in the Senegambia rather than simply a series of through routes and that, while having their own sense of identity, worked closely with merchants of other backgrounds, those in particular lines of trade developing a strong sense of solidarity (Curtin 1971; Curtin 1975:59–91ff.) Also, in contrast to the model of a migratory dispersal of an "ethnic group," cases reveal that as diverse people were drawn into particular sectors of trade, they assimilated to a mediating culture. The commonalities were built through interaction in a commercial region. Lovejoy has shown that the Hausa kola trading communities in the Volta basin comprised people who originated in Nupe, Borno, and elsewhere in the Central Sudan (Lovejoy 1973). In Sierra Leone and

³⁷ Specifically, within the new institutional economics it has been argued that in an area with cultural heterogeneity and weak transport and communication infrastructure, an "ethnic monopoly" can resolve business problems and bring efficiency (Ensminger 1992).

the surrounding region colonized by Mande-speaking traders, *jula* did not simply move outward from a few interior cities in a diasporic chain, although centers such as Kankan contributed many immigrants. Rather, Mande of diverse backgrounds and occupations emigrated from many places, along roads that lay in a grid-like pattern. Arriving over several generations, in layered fashion, they settled in numerous sites. Interacting with one another, with Mande-speakers who remained itinerant, and with non-Mande-speakers, they forged communities out of the amalgam. Furthermore, Hal Pulaar speakers (Fulbe/Fulani) and others assimilated into Mande communities. They constructed a Mandingo identity particular to the region through a complex process of generating cultural markers, differentiating themselves from others living in the region, and negotiating with European authorities (Harrell-Bond, Howard, and Skinner 1978; Howard 1999).

European colonial imaginings about migration, race, and tribe resulted in essentialist and archtypal constructions of such people as the Fulani and Tutsi; such models were diffusionist and drew upon specious reconstructions of the migration of so-called aristocratic lineages, ethnicities, and racial groups. To counter this, Amselle invokes space. Thus, he argues, Fulani identity “can be defined only in a system of relations involving neighboring identities.” Rather than a historically dispersed “group” that can be traced back to a place of origin, the Fulani were repeatedly intermixed with other people and repeatedly reinvented in different contexts (Amselle 1998:43–49). David Newbury and Catharine Newbury have written with regard to the “Tutsi” and other peoples in Rwanda:

The social groups did not “arrive” as corporate groups, or with their current labels; instead, more recent social identities emerged as part of the larger processes of social flux, individual action, and political power. There was a great deal more individual mobility and interchange than any static model of some collective “Rwandan past” can account for. The state was not created by a single culture hero or even by a single group. Power and ethnicity did not coincide originally; they took shape and salience in relationship to each other, not in confrontation with each other. Before the mid-eighteenth century—and in some contexts, long after—region was more important than royalty in defining identity and ecology more influential than ethnicity in molding people’s lives. In short, there was much more individual confrontation, social contestation, and local effervescence than normally ascribed to historical processes in this region. (Newbury and Newbury 2000:840)

People redefined themselves in many dynamic regional contexts during the nineteenth century. Migrant settlers shaped themselves in relationship to local people, who for their part redefined themselves by interaction with newcomers—all within an economic or ecological framework that allowed differential opportunities. As in the pastoralist cases described above, changes in gender relations and identities were associated with spatial dynamics. Jan Bender Shetler has shown that as Maasai expanded in the Serengeti in the second half of the nineteenth century, other people responded in ways that preserved some of their own cultural features but integrated through a number of devices into a “meta-ethnic” regional system of age-sets “to such a degree that members of the same age-cycles of different ethnic groups often lived together in one territory” (Shetler 2003:404). Maa-speakers who settled in the second half of the nineteenth century on Mount Meru shaped a Maasai identity by developing a particular role within a regional social economy.³⁸ “Retention of Maasai ethnicity, social relations, and cultural values conveyed a number of advantages for Arusha” (Spear 1993). Although they became highly successful farmers, they did not take up the ways of their Meru neighbors but continued to participate in the trading and raiding economy of the plains while preserving advantageous links with Maasai pastoralists. Relocation onto Mount Meru and a different position within the regional economy resulted in a new set of social dynamics: *muran* (“warrior” age grade) raiding brought more cattle, women, and children into Arusha society, which translated into a larger labor force and faster population growth than the Meru had. It also enabled men to settle, marry, and become elders at a younger age, without the kind of control by elders that had existed previously. Working with age-mates, younger men cleared forests and opened land up the mountain side, where more labor could be concentrated. An overall result was the establishment of many new farms and a great increase in Arusha population. In the peak of their late-nineteenth century power, Arusha assimilated numerous neighboring people, who in many respects became Maasai even though they did not speak Maa. Such assimilation was most thoroughly carried out

³⁸ For an interactive, spatial perspective on long-term processes of becoming Maasai, see Spear, “Introduction” in Spear and Waller (1993).

in the central Arusha areas and was less effective on the borderlands (Spear 1993:126–131).

Others who did not move in search of new land shaped their sense of themselves in a regional context of commercial travel, new contacts, and incipient colonial expansion. During the second half of the 1800s, the people of Biriwa in northern Sierra Leone redefined themselves as Limba with a particular meaning attached to that identity. Many who participated in this process were not originally Limba-speakers, or at least their ancestors were not. The remolding of identity happened in a context where long-distance trade was increasing, Mande-speakers and other outsiders were settling in larger numbers, Biriwa were journeying more frequently to Freetown and other coastal points, and European political pressure was intensifying. The assertion of “Limba-ness” was both an offensive and a defensive strategy in that people sought to draw on new economic opportunities but wished to guard their political and other interests against incursions. Their self-image employed “deep” concepts of Limba involving rice production and agricultural self-sufficiency, but also took on certain “negative” notions that others held of them, such as their dangerousness, turning those supposed traits to advantage (Fanthorpe 1998). Peoples’ development of concepts of Arusha “Maasai-ness,” “Limba-ness,” or “Mande-ness” can only be understood in the context of a region that they and others were forming around them. Such “ethnic” identities, often temporary and different in content than later ethnicities, involved mobilizing some sense of community identity.³⁹ As we have noted previously, this could involve discourse around notions of the past or certain core symbols. Agreement around such an identity might have occurred indirectly through processes such as those described by Lomnitz-Adler, or more directly along networks that bound people.

As the Limba case illustrates, in the 1800s and earlier, coastal enclaves were intricately meshed with regional systems of exchange and migration, which in turn affected community formation and identity. François Manchuelle, however, challenged standard thinking that the oceanward migratory practices of interior people were

³⁹ See Howard 1999. The approach here and in several chapters has parallels with that of Bill Bravman (1998:3–17).

primarily responses to overseas economic stimuli. He showed that labor migration was deeply ingrained in the social economy, thought, and self-conception of Soninke (living along the middle Senegal River) prior to any colonial stimulus. From the middle ages Soninke had been engaged in the desert-side trade described previously and also joined exchange circuits reaching south to the Niger and beyond. Most likely by the late 1700s, Soninke youth were going to the coast to grow grain, partly to meet food demands stimulated by the Atlantic slave trade, and then before the mid-nineteenth century they took up peanut farming (the *navetanes*). Others entered wage-earning jobs in Saint-Louis and other centers and in the French Navy and commercial fleet that operated on the Senegal River and coast. Although slaves also handled many of the same kinds of work, these jobs were sought after by Soninke notables, including chiefs. Rather than being driven out by rural poverty, migrants were attracted by the high wages offered, and many used their wealth to create households, build networks, and enhance their social standing and power (Manchuelle 1997:41–84). Migratory labor cycles fed the formation of nodes in the interior and contributed both to a sense of Soninke identity and to internal tensions along class and age lines.

Cosmopolitanism has long typified cities throughout middle Africa, with traders, craftspeople, Muslim *morimen*, and sometimes migrating royals arriving as strangers and finding various modes of integration.⁴⁰ Enclaves along the entire coast of Africa were particularly diverse during the era from the 1700s through early 1900s because they attracted people from a wide hinterland and many overseas points of origin. They became sites for the generation of unique identities and cultural blends. During the slave trade era, such communities witnessed new Euro-African and Arab-African meldings, and after abolition returnees and freed slaves added to the mix (Wyse 1989). In West Africa during the era of the Atlantic slave trade such people as the *signares* of St. Louis and Goree found wealth and status as cultural brokers and gave rise to novel modes of public conduct (Brooks 1976). Later, St. Louis saw *metis* families, most remarkably the Devès, and then Muslim merchant and civil servant

⁴⁰ We lack the space to discuss such important migratory occupations as *morimen*, blacksmiths, and leatherworkers, or African soldiers in colonial armies.

families, assert social and political leadership, while in varying degrees facilitating or challenging French imperial and commercial expansion (Robinson 2000b:97–139). As mentioned earlier, for centuries professional traders had been locating in both coastal and interior cities where they established quarters, although they also resided in dual towns where local rulers sought to contain their presence (Boutillier 1971). Great traders, hosts or landlords, and sometimes Muslim clerics and teachers dominated the communities, and bargained out their relations with local authorities, producers, and consumers. In our period and beyond, trading communities established themselves in the growing towns along the railroads, in cash crop areas, and in the ports, tapping opportunities for contracts with European governments and investing in new sectors such as housing and, later, motor transport. In some instances, older sources of income, such as weaving, declined, forcing traders into new occupations, altering kin networks, and leading to the formation of new associations (Launay 1982; Jalloh 1999).

For generations, cities of the Swahili coast had been places where people reworked cultural elements, and from the late 1700s the cosmopolitan qualities of many of those centers were enhanced with the settlement of new groups of Africans from the interior and people from the Arabian peninsula, south Asia, Europe, and elsewhere. The social economies varied from place to place, which meant that identities were formed in different urban and regional contexts. To take one example, because of changes in Bagamoyo and Dar es Salaam and along interior routes, particularly the growing dominance of Arab merchants, Nyamwezi were gradually reduced from independent traders to porters. They resisted this growing “proletarianization” by retaining a notion of themselves as “autonomous agents engaged in a prestigious quest for honor and adventure. Caravan labor was seen not as a way to earn a living, but as a way to prove one’s manhood” (Glassman 1995:59ff.; see also Sheriff 1987). A different situation prevailed in the rapidly growing center of Saadani, where Nyamwezi and Zigua settled and “found few obstacles to their attempts to gain access to urban citizenship.” Many became Swahili. The legendary founder-hero, Bwana Heri, was a Zigua who took on the garb and life style markers of an Arab and came to be perceived by some as “white” (Glassman 1995:64–68).

On the west coast, earlier global-regional-local interactions also influenced social formations that were based on networks and had

particular characteristics. Kru-speaking migrants from the interior first were organized patrilineally on one section of the Liberian coast, then drawn into maritime work on slaving ships. Nineteenth-century Kru identities arose out of a diverse body of people who were brought together through their patron-client and other community structures; their experience as pilots, ship's hands, and longshoremen on the west coast; and their recognition by employers and officials in the coastal enclaves, particularly in Freetown, then later in England (Frost 1999). As "legitimate" trade and a European commercial and administrative establishment stretched out along the West African littoral, Ga-speaking (Gold Coast) carpenters, masons, blacksmiths and other artisans and tradesmen, often trained in the Basel Mission workshop at Osu, found employment in towns along the Nigerian coast, at Fernando Po, and in the Congo. As in the Kru case, extensive networks of less skilled Ga workers were assembled by recruiters (Parker 2000:35, 122ff).

Such enclaves had for generations been giving rise to "creole" communities that blended African and European cultural elements, and in some instances ancestry. Such families had long existed in Accra and other towns of the Gold Coast, but in the early 1800s a new body of "independent, literate Euro-African merchants began to rise to prominence in town affairs" and were accorded the title *owula*, "with connotations of gentlemanliness, learning and urbanity," that distinguished them from Ga big men (*oblempon*) with whom they had close ties (Parker 2000:33). The elite among the *owula* of Accra apparently held hundreds of enslaved people who produced goods for internal trade and export. Some were deeply involved with the politics of the Ga towns and states. Politics in the coastal towns in the late 1800s and early 1900s, however, were dominated to a considerable degree by Ga merchants and "western educated" members of local lineages who also assumed "traditional" offices or drew strength from membership in *asafu* associations. Some Sierra Leonean migrants or their descendants also were part of the elite. (Parker 2000, 122–133, 169–174ff).

Perhaps the best known of the new communities that arose in the coastal enclaves were the Sierra Leone Krio (Creoles). The communities that grew up in Freetown and on the peninsula during the nineteenth century were varied in composition, reflecting the convergence of Atlantic and African networks that included Nova Scotian Blacks and Jamaica Maroons repatriated from the Americas, Liberated

African captives from many parts of west and central Africa, local Africans, West Indians—and their intermingled descendants. By the late nineteenth century a Krio identity emerged both out of ideas and social practices generated by the Christian “western educated” (and a very much smaller Muslim) elite and those at lower socioeconomic levels and out of interaction with other Africans and Europeans. Some scholars see the Krio, the Christian elite of Lagos and Abeokuta, and similar communities elsewhere as representing a unique, “modern” social formation defined by monogamous households (nodes), “Western”-derived educational and other associations (networks), an Atlantic regional orientation in cultural and “racial” consciousness, and new forms of status defined with reference to the colonial state, but others stress the “Africanness” of their culture (Spitzer 1974; Wyse 1989:1–88ff.).

The perspective offered here, however, is different. Rather than treating such migratory trajectories, networks, and communities (with their nodal institutions) as distinct from more internal and ostensibly more authentically African patterns, a regional perspective integrates them into the larger framework of African history. Cyclical migration to obtain wealth that could be transferred into household formation and local status back home typified both Soninke and Kru, although the sociocultural content was different. The Krio and related communities—in Freetown and the peninsula villages, Banjul, Lagos, Abeokuta, Port Harcourt, central Nigeria, and elsewhere—can be interpreted regionally. Each was internally differentiated by gender, religion, and other variables and had different relationships with the local people among whom they settled. For instance, *Saro* who returned to southwestern Nigeria developed out of a particular set of historical and cultural ties with Sierra Leone and with Yorubaspeakers in the Abeokuta and Lagos region. They forged local networks and contributed to building nodal religious, educational, and political institutions that both gave the community a unique character and mediated their relations with others (Wise 1989; Johnson-Odim and Mba 1997). Local and extensive network building and local institutions also distinguished the *Saro* in Port Harcourt and other Sierra Leonean emigre communities. In each place where they settled, the actions of one or more prominent leaders and of ministers, teachers, civil servants, traders, artisans, catechists, and laborers set the cultural tone for the communities and helped mediate relations within towns and over the broader interactive regions (Dixon-Fyle 1999).

Such migratory histories also suggest a long transitional period into the full colonial era. In many respects, *Saro*, Krio, and other migratory currents during the 1860s had parallels with flows of the 1910s and 1920s. There was no single chronological break in those spatial patterns; rather it varied from place to place. For those who had gone into the immediate hinterland of the Sierra Leone Colony, there was a rupture in 1898 when some Krio were killed and many driven out during the wars of resistance against British imperialism. Many later returned inland. On the other hand, the *Saro* only arrived in Port Harcourt about 1912, and the rupture for them, after they were defined as strangers, came with the rise of local Nigerian nationalism in the 1940s. Manchuelle stresses the continuity of Soninke migration over several generations into the 1960s and beyond, with differences in the direction of movement as Soninke began to orient toward France and more recently the United States and elsewhere (Manchuelle 1997). These examples are not given in order to deny the deep impact of colonial policies and global economic forces in the twentieth century, but only to draw attention to the complex mixture of continuity and change during the long transitional era.

When Mande and Fulbe *jula*, Soninke, Kru, Krio or others settled in new locations, the nodal institutions and communities they created often were modeled on those in the places from which they came, but the interactive environments they lived in were equally or more important social and cultural determinants. It is possible to conceive of such immigrants and local residents as having a border between them and then of certain newcomers as border crossers. The interpretive framework then is either from the perspective of those who moved or those who were resident. Such an approach yields insights, but tends toward a dyadic analysis. However, rather than assuming the prior existence of "groups," it may be more fruitful to focus on interaction in dynamic local and regional settings. That approach takes into consideration variations in experience, identity, and perspective according to age, gender, religion, and class. It also helps to distinguish those situations where a defined group possessing an identity moved through space and settled from those situations, which were much more common, where a group or community formed and gained an identity through interactive processes. A spatial approach draws attention to the fact that many interactive situations cannot be understood dyadically, even when migrants are

involved, but are better understood in terms of a complex, highly diverse social field.⁴¹

*Spatial Changes in the Late Pre-Colonial and Early Colonial
Transitional Era*

Although the imposition of colonial rule brought fundamental spatial changes, formal political takeover should not be seen as the only or most significant spatial break of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In many parts of Africa there were a series of significant spatial shifts decades before and after the fixing of colonial boundaries and administrative structures. Rather than a time marker based mainly on formal European political control, a spatial perspective suggests that there was a long transitional period with different chronologies depending on what aspects of spatial structure and dynamics are emphasized. As seen above, the spatial approach incorporates the chronology of how people in various areas responded to the political, military, environmental, and epidemiological crises that characterized the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and also to the increased flow of resources that marked that era in some regions.

People's actions during the transitional era were not, however, simply responses to outside influences; on the contrary, the subsequent section demonstrates how people continued to shape nodes, networks, and regions within a changing context, within new structural constraints. There was considerable continuity from the pre-colonial to colonial eras, as well as dramatic change. The transitional era has not been examined sufficiently because scholars often have artificially bifurcated time and become locked into the division. As Allman and Tashjian have stated, the intellectual "deadzone" existing in the study of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

⁴¹ For instance, Femi J. Kolapo has described the history of CMS missionary stations at Gbebe and Lokoja on the Lower Niger from 1858 to 1880, where most of the agents were Sierra Leonean. Those two towns, which grew exponentially during that period, had a "multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multireligious" character. People associated with the CMS were engaged with local people not only through religion but also socially, economically, and politically. In such circumstances, an analysis in terms of paired opposites is inappropriate (Kolapo 2000).

is not simply a gap in research or chronology, but more importantly is “substantive and conceptual.” They show through a study of the first generation of colonized Asante women, “that words like ‘colonial’ and ‘precolonial’ lack explanatory power; that what historians have called ‘precolonial legacies’ were part and parcel of a lived colonial world and that colonialism itself was experienced in uneven, episodic, and highly gendered ways” (Allman and Tashjian 2000:1–2; see also McCaskie 1986).

The characteristics of the long transitional period varied widely from region to region. Although there was a generalized crisis, some areas were particularly hard hit by a combination of disease, drought, famine, and other forces that coupled with colonial violence in a deadly way. Some places were deeply affected demographically, as population plummeted and ratios of men to women and young to old shifted. Some places, on the other hand, experienced rapid population increase; among the most notable were coastal cities and those sub-regions where production rose dramatically and attracted people (Curto 1999).⁴²

Europeans and other immigrants from abroad became more deeply involved in regional networks, using them to advantage where possible and seeking to recast them. Colonialists at first used a great deal of violence to bring about spatial change, followed by efforts to generate new regions through investments and structural impositions. Over several decades prior to the division of middle Africa into colonies, Europeans had been negotiating zones of influence with Africans, making treaties among themselves, and establishing lines of demarcation on the coast and varying distances inland (Hargreaves 1963). Partitioning of territory and fixing of borders proceeded in an intense manner during the later years of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. During this long period of establishing spheres of influence and then colonies, Europeans often shaped space through violence, notably by bombarding or attacking towns, cities, and religious shrines to weaken African power holders, divert trade, or eliminate the bases of resisters (Gueye and Boahen 1990). Dramas of domination, execution, and exile were staged to demon-

⁴² The exact chronology of population rise and fall and of changes in birth and death rates varied from region to region in the period of the 1860's to 1920's (Cordell and Gregory 1987).

strate publically that a new spatial order was being established. Once-mighty rulers prostrated themselves before European officers of middle rank, symbolizing the loss of territorial sovereignty. Africans, Afro-Arabs, and others who had built commercial spheres in the late pre-colonial era, then militarily resisted the European take over, were tricked into surrender or defeated, sent into exile, or in some instances hung. Their removal symbolized the opening of territories to a new spatial imprinting (Cookey 1974:135–168; Person 1968, vol. 2; Glassman 1994:249–279). In many places, European repression of resistance, coupled with disease, destruction of crops, and starvation, resulted in massive population losses and a modification of the environment that in some instances lasted decades.⁴³

In certain areas, people remember this long transitional era as a period with particular characteristics, and in some instances have named it. Jamie Monson has shown how in the southern highlands of Tanzania “Maji Maji” refers to “an extended period [from about 1870 through the First World War] of competition for territory, labor, grain and livestock, as well as the political loyalty that ensured access to these resources” (Monson 1998:95). Trade in ivory, slaves, and rubber brought some Africans new opportunities for obtaining wealth and also stimulated political struggles that primarily revolved around alliances and territorial control. Alliances between powerful and weaker leaders, established kin groups and refugees, marriage partners, and blood brothers cut across class line and blurred identities based on language, “ethnicity,” and state allegiance. German administrators and military figures and European missionaries fit

⁴³ Iliffe writes the following about the aftermath of the German repression of the “Maji Maji” resistance: “Famine covered the land, a famine that killed. While [the leader] Chabruma remained free, Captain Richter in Songea prevented cultivation and appropriated all food for his troops. ‘The fellows can just starve’, he declared. Not until April 1908 was food generally available again in Ungoni. Uvidunda was thought to have lost half its population. ‘What shall I rule?’ Ngwira asked when he returned from prison. Götzen thought more than half the Matumbi died in revolt. A missionary reckoned that more than three-quarters of the Pangwa perished. A careful study of Ulanga made in the 1930s concluded that in the rebel areas, in addition to the immediate deaths, ‘the famine reduced the average fertility of the surviving women by over 25 per cent.’ Total deaths in Maji Maji and its aftermath are unknown. Dr. Gwassa estimated them at 250,000–300,000, or perhaps one-third of the area’s total population, and he may be right. In return the rebels killed 15 Europeans, 73 askari, and 316 auxiliaries” (Iliffe 1979:199–200).

themselves into such alliance complexes and altered them through their power, leading Africans to reposition themselves. Some resisted the German advance, others saw advantages in it. Women—who were critical to alliances because of their production of food and reproductive capacities—suffered from sexual abuse, abduction, forced marriage, and heightened demands for their agricultural labor. German authorities abetted such practices by allowing allied African troops to take women as booty and similarly rewarding cooperative chiefs. After the Germans suppressed the “Maji Maji” uprising, the ensuing famine caused a dispersal of people who often resettled at mission stations, government centers, and the towns of allied chiefs (Monson 1998). Social and spatial changes were complexly interconnected and shaped by violence.

Europeans used violence not only to put down resistance but also to help establish and patrol colonial boundaries and bring about other spatial changes. Once borders were established, administrators and military officials justified their custom stations, patrols, and passes by arguing that they were seeking to prevent Africans from smuggling, poaching, obtaining arms, or avoiding taxes (in labor, kind, or money).⁴⁴ In addition to interfering directly with pre-colonial functional regions based on commerce and politics, European authorities, planters, and settlers deeply altered broader spatial patterns by commanding forced labor, requisitioning food, requiring forced delivery of crops, and other means. In the so-called settler colonies, armed might was fundamental to the formation of white enclaves and the seizure of farm land.

Europeans also attempted to rearrange cultural landscapes to conform to their notions of an ordered society. Following on the writings of David Harvey and Mary Louise Pratt, Christopher Gray made a critical point in his study of southern Gabon. The early explorers, particularly the renown and widely read DuChaillu and DeBrazza, “appropriated” Gabon with their commanding gaze that incorporated all that they saw into a European mental schema. As they looked over the landscape they also looked into the future and envisioned a land “developed” in a European mode. A step toward

⁴⁴ European officials claimed that establishing borders and manning patrols would help to interdict slave raiding and trading and at times they did attempt such controls, but enforcement policies were inconsistent and ambivalent, given their need for labor and worries about generating opposition (Miers and Roberts 1988:19–21ff).

that goal was mapping, and by its very nature mapping meant erasure of the specificity of the local and the regional as interpreted by residents. From the Europeans' perspective, a river, even as vast as one as the Ogooué, was an entity, the same from its interior origins to the sea. Naming it was part of the "imposition of modern territoriality." The particular meanings that sections of the river had to those living along its banks were irrelevant to the cartography of orderly administration, and were voided in official maps (Gray 2002:102–110). Europeans sought to refashion African landscapes by erecting administrative headquarters and missionary stations, silencing certain local spatial histories along with privileging other histories, creating ethnic and racial segregation, and charting terrains through cartography, followed by the use of maps in legal and other exertions of authority and ownership. Colonial space, however, was established unevenly over the land; the imprint varied greatly from colony to colony and within colonies. For Europeans, making and patrolling borders (both between and within colonies) involved control of people and territory and access to resources. But also important were colonialists' notions of efficiency, their imagined imperial agenda, and their views of African "tribes" and history.⁴⁵

When colonialists' looked out upon the landscape they saw states and "tribes." Barrie Sharpe has shown that prior to the late 1800s, Europeans knew about northern Nigeria from African, especially emirate, sources and travelers' accounts which depicted "significant allies, known enemies, and trade routes," and also zones of safety and danger (Sharpe 1986:30). After conquest, they distinguished, in maps and texts, between Hausa states and tribal areas, and they also ranked peoples according to indices of civilization. Such thinking directly affected policy. For instance, when the British altered the Sudan-Uganda border in 1914 (based on previous surveys), it was to ensure both that certain places were more accessible from administrative centers and that people they imagined to be members of "tribes"

⁴⁵ There has been a long debate about whether Europeans were arbitrary in partitioning. Regarding Nigeria, Anene felt that "the diplomatic negotiations show that wherever possible the boundary negotiators sought and assembled data on existing indigenous states. They invariably began by claiming entire state areas on the basis of treaty relations with those states." Despite the fluidity of African state borders and ethnic groups, "boundaries represented to a surprising degree the realities that existed at the time" (Anene 1970:286–288).

would be kept together. Although those who did the marking on the ground sometimes realized that it was impossible to assign people to “tribes” or to determine borders on that basis, they generally did not abandon the concept (Blake 1997:xvii–xxv, 95–100).

An economic view of the landscape, coupled with self-interest, often determined where Europeans drew lines. Anene concluded that inter-European contests along what became Nigeria’s border demonstrated “the prime importance of the trade motive in the demarcation of territories . . .” (Anene 1970:286). Early consuls in Central and East as well as West Africa often sought first to control urban centers or major trade and communication arteries, such as rivers and roads, in order to exclude rivals and direct human and material flows (Fetter 1983:36). This could result in a strengthening of existing African spatial orientations; alter them radically, as when imperial troops or police redirected caravans; or give rise to new opportunities for profit by border crossing (Howard 1976; Nugent 1996).

Administrative rationality was often the ideological justification for assigning areas to particular colonial governments or for changing internal borders. Officials sought to establish territories that they could govern in what they considered a rational manner, using such criteria as accessibility to a headquarters town. After the era of conquest, colonial spheres and boundaries often remained in flux as Europeans made adjustments. There were several major territorial changes in the twentieth century, such as the retro-cession of the Lado enclave from King Leopold to Great Britain, which then prompted substantial shifts of land between Sudan and Uganda. Following their victory in the First World War, the allies allocated Germany’s colonies which brought changes in borders and in the spatial orientation for African, most notably in Togo and Cameroon which were in effect divided between France and Britain (Blake 1997). Europeans subdivided all of their colonies into smaller administrative units (provinces, districts, *cercle*, etc.), typically with headquarters towns, and attempted to order Africans’ behaviors, for instance, by locating law courts and other facilities in such centers. Once administrators learned more about the suitability of particular areas for export crops or rivers for transport, and then built rail lines, they accordingly readjusted internal district and provincial boundaries and the location of headquarters (Fetter 1983 45ff.; Howard 1966). Fetter writes that the former Belgian Congo “under-

went some three thousand changes of internal boundary between 1888 and 1959, the majority of them after 1930!" (Fetter 1983:15). Such spatial reorganizations meant that Africans had to adjust, often repeatedly, their patterns of movement and their networks as they dealt with changing centers for gaining permits, paying taxes, attending court, and handling many other matters.

In all instances, the effective establishment of colonial rule was brought about through an administrative hierarchy, with offices erected in existing towns or new centers. Often the early administrative headquarters were nondescript places, but some such as the *boma* at Arusha were fortified sites "meant to impress [European] political and moral order on the surrounding countryside" (Spear 2000:113). Foreign traders and missionaries often were attracted to them. Colonial towns were designed to mark the new hierarchical "racial" order on the ground through patterns of segregation. Broad, landscaped avenues often led to the administrative center, which was elevated if possible. European officers were ensconced in suburbs or special residential locations, where the amount of space and other amenities allocated to them corresponded with rank. In many towns European merchants lived in another section; Indians and Lebanese often were assigned to an area set aside for them, or they gained ownership within compact zones located in or near the central business district. Theories of sanitation justified separation of African districts (Spear 2000:110–111ff.; Goerg 1998). Colonial authorities particularly sought to put their mark upon cities, controlling marketing and other economic activities, enforcing new definitions of vagrancy and criminality, and building in a monumental style to create a sense of awe among their subjects.

Perhaps more deeply etched upon the ground than colonial administrative hierarchies were the infrastructural changes brought by public and private investment in rails, roads, port facilities, mines, warehouses, stores, and other fixed capital. Road construction and improvement tended to be directed toward the areas of most valuable agricultural and mineral resources, which meant that roads were very unevenly distributed within and among colonies. A region such as southeastern Ghana had a fairly well integrated system of light motor roads by the First World War, in part built by entrepreneurial farmers and traders, but other regions lacked such development (Dickson 1969:218–227). Roads often were located so as to serve metropolitan interests by directing commodities to the rail and/or

main port of a colony. Many of the new infrastructures were dendritically ordered and tended to reinforce an emerging colonial urban hierarchy. Thus, for instance, the French in Guinea attempted to seal off borders with Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Portuguese Guinea, establish a customs regime around the colony's perimeter, and, where possible, re-channel commerce to the newly created capital of Conakry (Howard 1972; Goerg 1980). France did not, however, necessarily make infrastructural decisions that had spatial impact with only one colony in mind, as the Dakar to Bamako rail illustrates. In some instances, imperial considerations weighed heavily in locating infrastructure, perhaps most notoriously in the building of the Trans Zambesia Railway and, later, the Zambezi bridge that together saddled Nyasaland (Malawi) with a ponderous debt. They served the interests of a private British company in adjoining Mozambique and helped fix Nyasaland as a labor reserve for the larger region, while failing to advance the colony's economy or integrate its transport web (Vail 1975).

Along with the new infrastructures came vehicles, boats, a mail service, banks, and other space-bridging devices. Spatial power increasingly involved access to and control over such economic resources. The ability of multinational firms—notably Unilever, CFAO, SCOA in West Africa—to move capital from abroad enabled them to reorganize commercial space within colonies and reduce African competitors by installing a series of produce collecting stations along rail lines and feeder roads (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1975). The larger, hierarchically organized firms did this in several colonies within a short period of time. Unprecedented conflicts arose over access to and use of space-shrinking technologies. For instance, small-scale traders fought to get the same carload rail rates as large firms in an attempt to remain competitive in palm kernels and other commodities (Howard in preparation).

Fetter calls the administrative centers and elite schools in Central Africa "loci of opportunity" as revealed by the large number of people who flocked to them, but proximity to space defined as European could also be costly and dangerous, most obviously when colonists usurped land (Fetter 1983:94–100). Particularly in settler colonies and so-called colonies of extraction, authorities sought to rationalize the space economy through forceful intervention. They were, in effect, seeking to create regions by matching production in mines or on the land with sources of labor and by controlling African movement and

residency. Schemes sought to rationalize space by encouraging investment in land. Efforts began early in many colonies and often met severe resistance. In 1892, officials in Mozambique, lacking financial capability and unable to attract Portuguese investors, rented out nearly two-thirds of the Zambezi valley to two British firms (one receiving over 50,000 square miles). The companies failed to “develop” the region and relied on brutal methods of control and extraction, giving rise to continuous resistance culminating in the massive Barue revolt of 1917. Companies, their sub-renters, and colonial officials recruited, often forcibly, the labor of tens of thousands of workers who were sent to places as far afield as São Thomé, Bourbon and Réunion, the mines of South Africa and Rhodesia, and other districts of Mozambique (Isaacman and Isaacman 1976:76–89). This was one element in what became a vast region of labor recruitment for the South African mines that included most colonies in southern and central Africa.

In many sections of central Africa, colonialists shaped new regions through imposition of law and administrative regulations, coupled with coerced delivery of crops or usurpation of land for white farmers and planters. Again, African resistance was widespread. When after the First World War authorities in the Belgian Congo decided to implement a regime of forced cotton growing, they attempted to reorganize space by selecting particular production areas and intervening at the level of peasant households and local politics. The cotton regime—which profited business firms and accomplished the Belgian goal of finding a low cost, secure source of raw material—was enforced by passes, whipping, imprisonment, and other forms of violence. Africans resisted exploitation by various means, notably flight and through the Leopard-Man Society that attacked and killed chiefs and others who collaborated. While Africans were able to negotiate some terms of the new space economy, it was imposed and continued to operate throughout the colonial era. By 1930, over 105,000 households were involved, by 1940 700,000, and in 1959 nearly 875,000 (Likaka 1997:29–30, 46–56, 113–130ff.). In Southern Rhodesia, between 1904 and 1914 the acreage held by Europeans went from 20,000 to over 183,000, boosted by loans, subsidies for seeds and other inputs, and state-constructed road and irrigation works. In the Goromonzi region, African farmers now faced severe competition in supplying food to mines and towns; maize prices fell sharply, and cultivators expanded acreage in an effort to maintain

income. This was followed in 1920 by a reallocation of land to whites; African reserves were cut by one million acres, and much of the best land was seized for European use (Schmidt 1992:67ff). Many similar examples could be adduced.

Much of the radical re-structuring of space associated with colonial rule occurred in the 1920's or later, however, and the resulting multi-level spatial transformations—in households, networks, and regions—can be used to mark the end of the transitional era in many colonies. This is not to say that earlier patterns were totally eradicated. The colonialists' goals of spatial reorganization were not achieved easily or completely because of lack of knowledge about the environment, competing interests and goals among colonialists, and African resistance. Perhaps, borrowing from Elias Mandala, it could be said that the colonial spatial economy, linked to the global order and enforced politically, was established when there was a framework where “peasants had either to sell their labor power or to produce commodities; they could not completely resist both without breaching the colonial relation” (Mandala 1990:276). This point was reached at different times and to varying degrees in different regions. Individuals and households had different positions within that order. Many Africans were spatially dislocated; others escaped for the most part, while still others adapted and actively furthered the spatial transformations.

*African Reorganization of Space in the Transitional Era: Households,
Networks, Regions and Landscapes*

While colonists' military strength, technological hardware, and capacity to extract wealth brought profound structural changes, peasants, rural capitalists, migrant workers, traders, religious elites, and others continued to exert spatial agency. They did so within the framework of both colonial rule and global capitalism, which was not simply “expanding” geographically but taking new forms, often mediated through introduced technologies and hierarchical production and commercial organizations. African actions were, in part, reactive. But Africans also attempted to preserve precolonial spatial patterns, at least in modified forms, and to assert their own forms of control over space. The ability of Africans to react to spatial opportunity and risk, and to influence spatial patterns and meanings, differed greatly according to their class position, gender, age, and other

factors. Those Africans who were able to sustain or enhance their power, wealth, and authority attempted to govern how others acted in space and perceived the landscape, but their domination frequently was contested. Moreover, as people changed their perceptions of the dynamic landscapes around them their efforts to shape space also changed. New divisions and modes of cooperation opened.

Africans did not see colonial spaces in a singular way. While many dreaded the administrative headquarters, with their commandants, tax collectors, and jails, others gravitated toward the new sources of power.⁴⁶ If many rejected Christianity, for others, including young wives and the enslaved, the early missionary stations became symbols of freedom and places of refuge. Even before the Europeans conquered the interior, escapees went to custom posts along the rivers and coast, or to colonial enclaves such as Sierra Leone, with the hope of protection (Rashid 1998). Fearing a growing uncontrolled (“vagrant”) population in the colonial capital and loss of productive labor in the Protectorate, and responsive to the appeals of chiefs who assisted them in administration, British authorities legally sanctioned “Tribal Headmen” in Freetown in the early 1900s to monitor and report on newcomers and return them to the hinterland (Harrell-Bond, Howard, and Skinner 1978:137–138).⁴⁷ Migrants continued to arrive in Freetown by the hundreds, even thousands, each year, and such legislation was not implemented systematically. Its passage, however, demonstrated that Africans and colonial officials alike were aware of the tensions created by the co-existence of adjoining different legal and social spaces and the difficulty, even impossibility, of patrolling boundaries between them.

As Europeans colonized the interior, they often created spaces of freedom in unexpected ways. When in 1899 Lagos and Egba authorities entered an agreement with British officials to allow a railroad to be constructed through Egba territory, they also ceded a strip of

⁴⁶ Novels and autobiographies convey the sense of fear inspired by the sites and rituals of colonial power; see for instance Ferninand Oyono, *The Old Man and the Medal* (1969).

⁴⁷ Master and Servant or vagrancy laws were put on the books in many colonies with a goal of sustaining household production in rural areas; guarding the interests of African elites, European settlers, and others employers; disciplining labor; or controlling urban growth—but not protecting workers as such. The degree of control and the results varied widely (Lovejoy and Hogendorn 1993:85–88ff.; Anderson 2000).

land one hundred yards wide on both sides of the track. Young married and betrothed women ran away to this zone and often formed partnerships with rail employees. Authority in this strip was for a few years in the early twentieth century exercised by Railway Commissioners, and they not only refused to return such women when husbands, fathers, and chiefs requested it, but became a kind of court of appeal who tended to decide divorce and bride wealth cases in favor of the women and actually advocated divorce. Thus not only did women exercise more options within this colonial space, but actions there gave rise to a broader moral debate over who controlled marriage and what was considered acceptable behavior (Byfield 1996). In Kampala-Kibuga during the early decades of the twentieth century, women found opportunities for freedom of movement and self-definition through their sexuality and liaisons outside of marriage, challenging the efforts of African authorities, missionaries and church leaders, and colonial administrators to label them as “bad,” control their behavior, and return them to a normative household sphere (Musisi 2001).

While the new colonial spaces attracted people and opened up changes in family and marital relations, there were much larger forces at work that induced renegotiations within households. Households were perhaps even more dynamic and varied in the transitional and early colonial eras than pre-colonially, and it is impossible to do more than indicate a few patterns. Taxes, wage employment, “western” schooling, urban migration, and many other changes often led people to form smaller units or to join residential collections not glued by any form of kinship. The great households of the pre-colonial era often lost nodality as members emigrated or established their own units. That process went on for decades, however, and large units continued or were reestablished in major towns and elsewhere. Within households, status, gender, and age relations were profoundly affected by broad changes in spatial structures. Such forces also meant that different households in the same center varied greatly in their capacities to build networks and respond to new regional patterns, as did members of the same household.

The decline and then formal abolition of slavery had a profound and lasting impact upon the ability of senior members of households to marshal wealth in people and pursue their own interests. This fundamental change in nodality was widespread, but the timing and social relationships varied greatly according to colonial policy, the

regional economy, and other factors. In the Middle Niger and surrounding regions, the end of slavery was decisive. In 1905 a “massive and spontaneous exodus of slaves” began in Banamba and “it spread throughout the Western Sudan in ever-widening circles over the next ten years” (Roberts 1987:184). Up to 1904, Maraka in the region had invested in plantations and enslaved workers, who were supplied by traders and political and military leaders such as Samori Toure. By establishing a base in Bamako, the French stimulated greater demand for grain and thus increased slave holding. “With the end of slavery, however, the Maraka lost their distinctive place in the economy and society of the Middle Niger valley. Previously dynamic and wealthy Maraka commercial centers were reduced to depressed communities” (Roberts 1987:200). But elsewhere the impact upon households and hierarchical networks was not as rapid and profound. As the British conquered the Sokoto Caliphate and instituted a colonial government, at least 200,000 slaves left their masters between 1897 and 1907. Yet this was perhaps only one-tenth of the total. “Individual masters may have lost many of their slaves and suffered a severe loss of wealth, but other masters probably only lost a slave or two at once, which would have allowed them time to adjust to the loss . . .” “Women, including concubines, were numerous among the fugitive population,” but many women were forced to return, and authorities used the notion of marriage to disguise concubinage. In a context where the economy was expanding, small holdings increased in number, but many plantations and large estates continued to exist for decades, supported by those who remained in servile status and only gradually became sharecroppers. Many men were able to take advantage of wage labor openings, but few women (Lovejoy and Hogendorn 1993:62–63, 116–126, 128–134, 199–225ff.).

Regional and global economic forces as well as official practices created varying opportunities for the enslaved to alter their status and conditions. In Ilorin (western Nigeria) there were brief periods in which slaves left households in large numbers (for example after the 1897 expedition by the Royal Niger Company), but many remained in the first decade of the twentieth century and often were sent to rural farms. Elites kept control in part because of the British policy of ruling through them and because the regional economy did not offer slaves and peasants a strong opportunity for bargaining, such as existed in areas farther north. Also in contrast with places where escape was common, emigration to areas of greater economic growth

was a limited option for those who were oppressed. The ability of elites to dominate the town and to preserve their position through their households, however, was at times challenged by an impoverished underclass of peasants and former slaves (O'Hear 1997:63–89). In Zanzibar, although British authorities attempted to generate a wage earning class out of former slaves, they failed. Planters, who saw their land unweeded and cloves unpicked, bargained with and made concessions to ex-slaves, many of whom sought land to work and, in return for that, were willing to accept relations of partial dependency as well as wage labor. It was easier for people to make such arrangements during the long transitional period lasting into the mid-1920s because high clove prices on the world market helped buffer tensions. Gradually, however, former slaves and other workers developed a sense of unity as members of a working class, and the old dependency relations within households and plantations declined (F. Cooper 1980:69–172).

Elsewhere, chiefs and some senior males in rural areas of tropical Africa were able to take advantage of colonial policies and wider economic forces to create new alliances with Europeans and among themselves, enhancing their wealth and social positions and that of their households overall. But more broadly, the same economic and political forces tended to shift the sexual and generational division of labor within households, resulting in increased work burdens upon women and children, while many young men chose to or were obligated to become migratory workers within large regional systems of recruitment. In the Congo, the Belgian implementation of the cotton regime had profound impacts upon regional demographics, gender and age relations in households, and the configuration of local power:

. . . by a decree of July 1914, the notion of *homme adulte valide*, meaning “healthy adult male,” became a unit of labor for all industry, labor, and taxation. This constructed administrative category and semantic distortion hid the central role of women and children in cotton cultivation [and] established the liaison between a male head of the household and the local administration, heightened his power, determined the distribution of cotton money, and kept women behind the scene. Second, because the global colonial economy relied on an estimated nine million people who were difficult to reach, the administration applied a wide range of labor policies which turned most Africans into migrant laborers or peasants, without allowing them to pursue other ways of making a living. Third, . . . local African leaders succeeded in creating customs which led to the appropriation of unpaid labor for

collective public work on the chiefs' cotton plots. Moreover, the polygyny of these same leaders increased at first, making them more affluent. (Likaka 1997:27)

While the general trend was toward a loss of the kind of nodality associated with the large households of the precolonial era, the compounds of those with administrative backing, sources of wealth and political power, and religious influence often were sustained or even grew. As Berman and Lonsdale have described, after the early colonial days in the Nyanza and Kikuyu sections of Kenya chiefs were appointed

from among individuals or lineages that had already come to the fore as accumulators of wealth and power. . . . the years before 1914 were the first heyday of the progressive chief, both agent for the diffusion of the readily divisible benefits of peace and markets and the appropriator of his people's labor on his own fields, his self-interest backed by British power. With conquest recent and consent fragile, the joint interest of commissioner and chief in funding their personal authority was the fulcrum of expanded household production. The legitimacy of the colonial state was hitched to the oxcart of African accumulation. (Berman and Lonsdale 1992:87)

Others besides such chiefs were able to enhance production and households during this period before white settlers became entrenched. The often celebrated success of yeoman and tenant farmers in central and southern African settler colonies during the early decades of the twentieth century was not simply because those families became Christian and acquired some education and capital. Their prosperity also came about because they were astute at building networks with administrators, missionaries, and their fellow farmers and at reshaping the composition and activities of their households.

For many rural families in those regions where Europeans recruited substantial numbers of laborers for mines, plantations, and building infrastructure, the seasonal or long-term loss of men altered household and family patterns. The income possessed by young migrant men strained the relationship between them and senior men, while their absence often put heavier work burdens upon women. In Taita (Kenya), older men claimed a right to at least a share in their sons' wages and succeeded during the period studied here in channeling it into livestock with a strategy of lineage preservation (Bravman 1998:115–127). In some other places elders' ability to exert authority declined.

The abilities of women and youth to renegotiate relations within and beyond households and the overall nodality of some households were affected by administrative actions and the regional and global economies. As the slave-based plantation economy had expanded in the Middle Niger region in the later 1800s, free Maraka women had been able to increase their production of indigo cloth, but after the slave exodus they lost that opportunity. New tensions arose within households as husbands sought to control their wives' labor and exploit youth, who in turn often fled and found wage employment. These forces, interconnected with the loss of slaves and of inheritable property, meant that Maraka families were seriously weakened and household units shrunk in size and social significance (Roberts 1987:199–200ff.). Quite universally, women were forced to take on more work tasks. One response by women was to become more mobile themselves, escaping arranged or unhappy marriages by going to cities or negotiating arrangements with men. As indicated above, the colonial state, often in collaboration with senior African men and sometimes missionaries, attempted to limit such movement and women's freedom through legislation or other means. The intensity of women's migration varied considerably from colony to colony and region to region depending on a mix of forces but the health of the rural economy was a major factor. In Southern Rhodesia women's rural exodus grew slowly from the 1890s, but then intensified greatly in the 1920s as land alienation to white settlers increased and other factors led to impoverishment of the peasantry (T. Barnes 1992). In Goromonzi, as early as the 1910s gender relations were changing within farm households as "the augmented workload fell primarily on the shoulders of women and children." Furthermore, "(a)s the decline of Goromonzi peasantry accelerated in the 1920s and 1930s, a growing number of households could only meet their cash needs by sending male members into the wage labor market. Others continued to battle against the rising tide. In either case, the on-going presence of women and girls at home became even more critical to household survival. . . . Whereas both men and women had once participated in trading activities, increasingly that job was left to women (who) were expected to carry their maize even further afield in search of better prices" (Schmidt 1992:67, 78–79). Women resisted in a number of ways that affected household nodality, including hiring laborers to assist them and escaping to towns or mission stations.

Particularly in West Africa but elsewhere as well, peasant and small-scale capitalist farmers created new regions through the pro-

duction of cash crops and investment of the wealth obtained. Many such areas were linked to global markets by rail lines and roads. On the rich volcanic soils of Mount Kilimanjaro, Chagga pioneer coffee growers already had planted some 100,000 trees by 1916. "Rising prices after 1912 caused them to clean their plots and sell seedlings to imitators. Ideas passed quickly among close-packed Chagga homesteads. By 1925 there were 6,716 Chagga coffee growers with 987,175 trees. Five years later there were nearly six million trees" (Iliffe 1979:274). In southern Gold Coast, capitalist-minded migrant cocoa farmers, in family-based firms or companies of friends and relatives, transformed a vast acreage while increasing production from nothing in 1890 to 40,000 tons in 1911 (Hill 1970:22–28). With the wealth generated, such people invested in commerce, vehicles, housing, and the education of their children, and in so doing modified the social and economic character of towns and regions. Elsewhere, similar if less dramatic expansion brought regional transformation if not "development" and also resulted in a great variation in the level of economic activity between those regions where cash crop production was concentrated and those which became fonts of migrant labor (Austen 1987:137–147ff.). Rather than the diffusion of innovation along radiating arcs of "modernization"—as was once portrayed by some geographers of "development"—such spatial changes were brought about by local groups who responded to and attempted to influence the effects of global market forces and colonial administrative policies, and who acted on the basis of their own social as well as economic goals.⁴⁸

Although urban growth accelerated greatly from the 1920s onward, even during the transitional era urban Africans were reformulating the structure and dynamics of households, networks, and social and cultural regions. The different patterns are too numerous to survey, but a few examples will illustrate the range of people involved in re-shaping space. First, in certain areas, notables maintained large households, extensive networks, and in some instances sections of towns. They organized space in ways resembling the late nineteenth century, albeit while adapting to the changing milieu. Such notables

⁴⁸ We are unable to survey the literature on spatial "modernization," but note that typically statistical data was used to generate maps that showed "modern" amenities and social practices flowing unevenly over a colony from the capital and others centers, often following rail and road lines.

included headmen, town chiefs, and other political authorities, some of whom were agents of colonialism; Muslim clergy and other leaders of urban ja'ama; and wealthy merchants who provided foodstuffs and other goods for towns and cities (Apter 1992; Robinson 2000b; Twaddle 1993). In the old coastal towns that had been city states or capitals of kingdoms, ruling and elite families often retained substantial authority and influence into the 'twenties, even as the cities (some of them now colonial capitals) expanded in size and social diversity. The degree to which they were able to maintain their positions varied considerably, but an important component of that continuity was the preservation of the physical space of the old town and of cultural practices whose meanings were site specific. In other words, certain aspects of the urban landscape remained familiar to people who were inheritors of the precolonial past (Parker 2002: 154–201). As cities became larger and more diverse after the First World War, newcomers pursued the accumulation of wealth and status, particularly in West Africa. There immigrant elites became the core members of communities and patrons of expansive client networks that integrated migrants, often reinforced with an ethnic identity. The ownership of urban rental property was a central strategy for many. Some women also operated in a similar vein. (S. Barnes 1986; A. Cohen 1967; Harrell-Bond, Howard, and Skinner 1978; Jalloh 1999). In most such cities, however, by the 1920s, "western" educated men and women constituted an alternative leadership group, often linked with chiefs and other notables, but typically operating through new networks and beginning to espouse different ideas about how to organize cities and challenge colonial rule, as will be discussed below. Furthermore, the capitals and other large urban complexes increasingly contained wage earning populations and members of the informal economy, women in particular, who build social networks at least partially autonomous of the chiefly and other elites. That trend was marked in the specialized mining and rail towns, some of which were totally new centers that lacked a precolonial leadership group.

The working population had a major hand in shaping centers and also regions, perhaps most notably through labor migration. Soninke migrants continued to build networks after the French take-over. "Chambres" (*kompá xoore*), or "great houses" under the leadership of elders from chiefly families, were residences in Dakar and other towns where migrants obtained housing, food, job information, and vari-

ous forms of assistance. These units had existed precolonially, but gained importance in the framework of growing urban employment. Cyclical migrants, moreover, remained intimately involved in homeland politics, for instance, by influencing selection to offices (Manchuelle 1997:123–130ff.). Elsewhere, intra- and inter-colonial migration either began or expanded greatly in the early colonial era when people sought opportunities to raise incomes; many left under duress—forced by taxes, drought, and a general impoverishment—while others were drawn by employment opportunities. The networks they forged were channels for the transmission of assistance, information, and wealth—and helped to create extensive regions.

Coerced labor of various forms, paid and unpaid, was common in mines, on docks, and on rail building projects; not uncommonly such workers toiled side by side with those who volunteered for employment. Conditions were harsh and dangerous, and pay was low, although oftentimes better than alternatives. Given those realities, the racism of employers and officials, and affronts to workers' masculinity, workers went on strike in many places during the 'teens and 'twenties, coming together to seek better wages and improved conditions. In some towns and cities, workers in certain sectors struck regularly, while elsewhere periodic strikes exploded into more general urban protests against prices of food and other grievances. Miners, dock workers, and others had formed new networks and perceptions of themselves around the work site. Colonial authorities, however, generally blocked significant institutional changes, and labor unions were a rarity in the period being examined here (Abdullah 1994; Brown 2003:139–175).

With their mobility and capital, traders often were able both to sustain or revive precolonial commercial patterns and to take advantage of new transport routes; many moved to expanding colonial centers and became suppliers of them. There was a great decline in Asante trade after the 1874 British attack on Kumase, but as people rebuilt and expanded it from the late 1800s onward, they did so to a considerable extent along the roads that had existed prior to the disruption. Precolonial productive and commercial sectors (gold, kola, and rubber) fed into cocoa.⁴⁹ The Wasolon (Wasalu) of

⁴⁹ For a synthesis of the recent historiography that emphasizes continuities from the nineteenth century and an argument for a gendered interpretation of continuity and change, see Allman and Tashjian (2000:5–18).

Kooroko (Mali), who had long been involved in commerce across ecological zones and were one of the main agents of *Almami* Samori Toure, settled in large numbers in Bamako after it became the capital of the French Soudan. On the route to the Ivory Coast, they maintained the features of the precolonial kola trade into the 1930s, whereas on the route to Senegal, they sent the nuts by rail to Kayes and then on by river craft (Amselle 1985:27–134). For centuries before colonial rule, people had trafficked kola from Sierra Leone up the coast to Guinea Bissau and Senegambia; once steamer traffic linked the main ports, Africans, including many Krio, accompanied their baskets northward on the ships. Later they developed a system of unaccompanied transit. Kin and business partners constructed a web of communication and trust along the coast that enabled them to place orders and send payment by post and telegraph. Africans continued to dominate the business until the First World War when Lebanese gained the upper hand (Howard, in preparation).

Men and women often differed in their mobility during the early colonial era, just as they had precolonially. Given social and political constraints, women traders in general did not have the mobility or capacity to form new extensive, long-distance commercial networks comparable to that of men—or to such women as the Krio kola traders. Yet, even in the era before the First World War, when many colonial cities were still small, women moved to the new centers to take up familiar trades in foods and other commodities, or to experiment in new sectors. In Asante, women assumed a much greater role in local and regional trade than they had precolonially, and by the 1930s “were active as traders in the full range of imported goods available in Asante, and . . . monopolized the expanding local foodstuffs trade” (Allman and Tashjian 2000:13). In Kenya, women set themselves up in the new commercial centers. When Nairobi grew substantially after the First World War, women struggled to maintain a share in urban provisioning; they tended to be confined to marketing and local trade while competing under difficult circumstances with Indian and African male traders. Men and women continued to struggle for commercial spaces in the ensuing decades (Robertson 1997:76–86ff.). Particularly in some of the older, precolonial cities, women were able to maintain or expand their role in craft production, sometimes shifting to new sectors less affected by imported commodities. A 1926 survey in Abeokuta found that about a quarter of the population of 50,000, mostly women but chil-

dren and men as well, were involved in one phase or another of *adire* cloth production, including design, dyeing, and trading. Wealthy women, typically master dyers, organized and coordinated in their compounds and subsidiary units a complex, hierarchical division of labor that also involved training apprentices, granting credit, and contracting. The compounds were integrated backward to European and African merchant suppliers of cloth and other necessities and forward to wholesalers and traders who distributed the cloth widely in Nigeria, West Africa, and even the Congo (Byfield 2002:87–125).

“Western” schools, medical clinics, churches and other Christian and syncretistic social and cultural nodes were very unevenly distributed within and among colonies, as were Muslim mosques, schools, and spiritual or cultural centers. Broad sections of inland western Africa had relatively few Christian sites, but areas like southeastern Nigeria saw dense concentrations of churches and schools that in effect constituted cultural regions. In the transitional era (and of course beyond), people often engaged in a struggle to define holy places and shape perceptions of the religious landscape. Foreign missionaries were, with some notable exceptions, unable to perceive Africans’ indigenous religious and spiritual landscapes, dismissing as heathen such practices as offering sacrifices and pouring libations at the graves of ancestors (Lema 1999:54). In some instances, missionaries located their stations on African sacred sites and encountered impassioned resistance. In the Kamba-speaking areas, the soil that missionaries walked on was purified by those protecting indigenous faiths and the eyes of those who looked upon missionaries were cleansed (Sangren 1999:175–176). Even where sanctions against African religious practices were backed by colonial law as well as missionary fiat, many communities resisted. Networks and perceptions were sustained through regular ceremonies involving dance, drink, and food, as well as festivals and ceremonies that drew people together (Ohadike 1994:222–223). Yoruba-speakers, for instance, maintained their attachments to shrines where priests of Ogun were trained and underwent transformation. Beliefs and practices were kept vital and responsive to a changing environment by such means as dance ceremonies during which devotees were possessed and the community as a whole bonded with one another and with the *orisha*. (S. Barnes 1997:xiii–23).

It has been well documented that many early Christian converts were from low status groups or were people who sought protection

or aid. Decisions about the location of missionary schools had profound spatial implications, but the quality of the services provided was often a major factor in the development of new nodes and networks (Ekechi 1989). Missionaries wished to have African bodies acting in visible ways that demonstrated support for church operations. In what is perhaps an extreme example, missionaries in the Zaramo area of Tanzania gave people food during a famine if they brought in stones used to build a church (Kimambo 1999:67–72). Conversion⁵⁰ itself was not an event, but a complex, non-linear process that over time altered people's outlooks toward themselves, fellow Christians, and non-Christians (Spear 1999:5–6; Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:200–206). Among Maasai, in the early decades “converts were not only *il ashumpa* ([like] whites) but also *isingan* (menials)” because of the farm work they did at the station, which itself “became identified as an enclave of poverty and deviance,” socially isolated because the institution conducted itself “as a rival authority to family and elders” (Waller 1999:92). Given the shunning and criticism converts often encountered from the surrounding communities, churches became sanctuaries in more than one sense (Sangren 1999:175–179).

But if the material benefits of schooling, medicine, and protection against colonial exactions drew many to the mission stations, so too did Africans find the ideas and symbols associated with those places attractive. Baptism, other sacraments, and other public rituals were used to mark, for observers, both the bodies of converts and holy sites. Similarly, plowed fields, newly introduced crops, painted fences, spires, and other physical etchings upon the earth symbolized both the religious and secular aspects of Christian centers. Converts formed networks around individual preachers and teachers and around small groups of missionaries who built churches, schools, roads, and other facilities; their names were widely known.⁵⁰ Over time, as African Bible readers and catechists grew in numbers, they formed the critical networks that expanded Christianity from the mission stations into the countryside where new chapels and schools were established. Christians created new kin and friendship networks around mission churches and also around schools, including independent schools

⁵⁰ An example would be George Rhoad of the Africa Inland Mission in the Kamba-speaking area of Kenya (Sangren 1999:172–173).

operated by Africans questing after cultural, intellectual, and social autonomy. In a few areas, such as Buganda, massive conversion took place early, resulting in the creation of a Christian region. In the Bugandan case, the African Anglican church “effectively became the established state church in all but the few districts set aside for Catholics and Muslims . . .” and Ganda undertook the conversion of neighboring territories. “Energized by a local revival in 1893–4, Ganda catechists eagerly volunteered to proselytize as far afield as Kore, Koki, Toro, Bunyoro, Busoga, Acholi, Teso, and Sukuma. Ganda Catholics soon followed suit, while Luo converts residing in Buganda carried their new faith home with them to western Kenya, where they established local prayer houses prior to missionaries advancing into the area” (Spear 1999:12–13). Other revival movements emerged in East Africa before the First World War.

Christians in Lagos and many other cities and towns in West, East, and Central Africa created new kinds of households, social networks, and visible cultural markers, such as “white wedding,” during this period. In monogamous marriages and nuclear households, conversion involved negotiation of gender relations between husbands and wives and parents and children, especially daughters. It also involved working out relationships of households to colonial legal institutions (Mann 1985). Masculine and feminine identities and gender and generational relations were reformulated among groups of teachers and church folk and within their institutions (Johnson-Odim and Mba 1997; Miescher 2003).

European racism; disputes over schooling, marriage, and other issues; and a sense that missionaries made poor or insensitive judgments led Africans to criticize and oppose orthodox churches, and create alternatives. Beginning in the late 1800s, Africans in southwestern Nigeria, Uganda, and elsewhere formed separatist, or independent churches and schools. Syncretistic churches also multiplied in numbers and converts by the end of the transitional era. Visionary leaders, sometimes drawing on both indigenous and Christian prophetic strains, collected extensive followerships and gave birth to churches, either through their own agency or that of disciples. Spatial transformation often began with the words and actions of prophets and preachers; the message and the mediator both mattered. They won many converts by walking from place to place, uttering inspired words, and healing. Through ceremonies they brought sacred sites into existence. Others concentrated on the material, forming schools

for literacy and training in new skills. No matter what their approach, their initial followers became the core of a network and, for the most successful, the embodiment of a movement. In the period before the 1920s, those varied paths can be seen in the Province Industrial Mission headed by John Chilimbwe, the Watch Tower around Elliot Kamwana, and the initial stages of what later became the church of Simon Kimbangu. (Fetter 1983:42–45; Opoku 1990; Gray 1990; Anderson and Johnson 1995)⁵¹ Missionary, independent, and syncretistic Christianity gradually became established within the landscapes of Africans. Beginning in the colonial enclaves with such famous churches as the Freetown's Anglican cathedral and Lagos' St. Paul's Breadfruit, the physical component of the religious landscape took form. But, as the above illustrates, the landscape also came to include famous preachers, prophets and healers, male and female; sites for water healing ceremonies; places where instantaneous conversions were witnessed; as well as schoolyards and the domiciles of the faithful (Briedenbach 1981; Walker 1979).

In subsequent decades, as some churches grew institutionally, they, like their Muslim counterparts, spanned colonies and redesigned cultural landscapes broadly. The dimensions of such cultural regions, and the circulation of ideas and practices within them, did not conform to the regions created through the hierarchies of commercial or administrative centers, although many churches were organized in the growing colonial towns, and the rail and road lines were important for the spread of ideas and communication among adherents. While the patterns of twentieth-century religious movements have rarely been mapped, some scholars have offered descriptive and explanatory models. Some churches seem to have radiated outward from the main centers, with the strength of popular commitment indicated by concentric circles. Elsewhere non-hierarchical patterns of interaction appear to have been more common, adherents being gained through personal networks, the establishment of dispersed chapels or meeting halls, and similar means (Werbner 1977).

⁵¹ While this survey does not continue on into the 1930s and beyond, similar figures have continued to emerge, building networks and central institutions around them and their closest disciples: among the more widely known would be Alice Lenshina, Simeon Mulandi, and the African Brotherhood Church among the Kamba (Sangren 1999).

Prominent Muslim spiritual leaders and educators also promoted social and cultural changes that influenced the character of centers and regions. Such people provided a core for towns and sections of cities in the transitional era as they had pre-colonially. David Robinson has traced the history of leading Muslim families in Senegal and Mauritania through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Far from being “traditionalists” who did not look outward, Muslim families in St. Louis accumulated wealth through business and extended their networks to include French administrators, merchants, and the francophone Senegalese elite. Spiritual leaders such as Sidiyya Baba and Malik Sy built extensive networks emanating from their main *zawiya*s and created spheres of “significant influence,” in effect regions of spiritual attachment (Robinson 2000b:117–139, 178–207). While the French kept Sheikh Ahmadu Bamba Mbacke in exile or virtual house arrest for many years and would not allow him to return to his center at Touba until 1925, the leaders of his *tariqa* continued to expand their networks and regional sphere in a fashion similar to the other orders. After his death his tomb became a pilgrimage site for thousands each year; the orientation of the faithful toward Touba, with its grand mosque, Bamba’s tomb, and the Mbacke family compounds, has continued up to the present. Ahmadou Bamba’s sons have managed “their father’s spiritual legacy, for which they are collectively responsible. . . . With time, each of the sons has established a distinct lineage (*ker* in Wolof) within the *tariqa*, and each lineage continues to wield a measured authority over its particular constituency. . . . These sons have all occupied great compounds (also called *ker*) in the center of Touba, and nothing better illustrates the highly centralized nature of the Mouride *tariqa* and the spiritual legitimacy it is built upon than this ring of great compounds that encircles the Touba Mosque” (Ross 1995:233). While the spiritual regions created by Sidiyya Baba, Malik Sy, and Ahmadu Bamba and their disciples had different shapes, they were overlaid in the more urbanized belt along the coast from Dakar to St. Louis (Robinson 2000:190–239).⁵²

⁵² Robinson argues that the particular pattern of Islamic expansion, accommodation to the French, and spatial organization in northwestern Senegal and southwestern Mauritania is unique because of the region’s history and is not found elsewhere in West Africa (Robinson 2000b).

Continuity and Change in African Spatial History

The creation of new cities, business districts within those cities, and regional patterns of production illustrates the power of imperialists and local agents of global capital to transform space. The colonialists' capacity to use violence, accumulate tax revenues, and invest capital were particularly significant in their ability to generate new spatial patterns. The cities where governors were headquartered often assumed a position of primacy within colonies. Colonial administrations installed an administrative hierarchy concerned with law, policing, taxation, and maintenance of infrastructure. Like the titles of officials, the names of the territorial units into which colonies were divided reflected a hierarchical ranking, and directives from the top and information from below moved through the centers in step-wide fashion. Typically the colonial capitals also were the locations of the higher level banking, managerial, and import-export activities of the multinational firms that organized the articulation of the local and global economies. Places of lower rank contained lower-level functions connected with the giving of credit to traders, collection of commodities being readied for export, local telegraph stations and mercantile outlets, and so on. During the transition era in most colonies, African business people increasingly were pushed down the commercial hierarchy in functional and locational terms, being reduced to petty traders or buying agents (Mbodji 1992). In seeking to extract Africans' labor, control their movements, or alter their spirituality, the interventions of European administrators, employers, and missionaries were directed toward nodal places, specifically households, and affected the sites of social reproduction and gender and generational relations (Schmidt 1992). The spatial structures and nodes that colonialists created—borders, administrative hierarchies, ports and rails, courts and jails, produce buying stations, and churches—shaped Africans' life decisions in space and entered their mental landscapes.

Yet, the colonialists did not succeed in imposing their modernist structure. A spatial analysis which emphasizes the creation or manipulation of regions through powerful mechanisms associated with capitalism and colonial rule is insufficient and ultimately unsatisfying, since space was subject to bargaining and interpretation (Entrikin 1989:33). Though under constraints, Africans negotiated with Europeans and—more importantly—among themselves over the meaning of

places and the form and content of networks, which were especially significant before the 1930s when new kinds of associations began to take hold. Slaves and masters struggled over use of land and identity, chiefs and subjects over work obligations and migration, and husbands, wives, and children over the nature of households. Those with wealth and power attempted to achieve their ends and impose their perspectives, but were met with resistance. People's bargaining capacity as well as their perceptions varied according to age, sex, family connections, mobility, and wealth. Yet, some places in the landscape came to have widely shared meanings. As Islam and Christianity expanded in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the words, qualities, and actions of leaders and of those who formed communities around the leaders (or memories of the leaders) gave meaning to sacred places such as Touba. People constructed such places socially and mentally through participating in Friday prayers and Sunday hymns, miraculous events, and ceremonies of marriage and burial, and by hearing sermons, accounts of history, and narratives of wondrous lives. Through these and many other processes, places, their spiritual qualities, and the human networks around them became part of peoples' landscapes. As the social, economic, and religious histories of the transitional era demonstrate, places and regions—which people formed and re-formed—became “sources of cultural identity and thus part of the real world of social actors” (Entrikin 1994:229, citing Alexander Murray).

Scholars of the new Social Geography have maintained that spatially fragmented identities are quintessentially part of the post-modern condition. Yet, as authors here argue, in precolonial Africa and during the transitional era social identities and cultural practices were encoded spatially in ways that enabled people to retain certain locally significant elements while sharing other elements more widely, communicating them regionally, even globally. People were able to form and re-form themselves in “sites of emergence,” constituting in the process meanings in places and more extensive social formations. Through collective action people gave rise to regions. In the decades following the transitional era, African politicians made efforts to forge national identities that coincided with territorial states, but had only limited success as other invented identities, often with local and regional references, took precedence and as clientelist networks became linked to competition for resources and eventually with despotism (Mamdani 1996). More recently, powerful global forces have been

undermining local sites of action and identity, while simultaneously affording some Africans new opportunities for international agency launched from dispersed local platforms, in the words of AbdulMalik Simone. The present challenge for the people of Africa, particularly in the burgeoning, amorphous cities, is to organize a fruitful existence in and give meaning to the local, while entering networks of varied scales and moving in regions of many dimensions (Simone 2001).

REFERENCES

- Abdullah, Ibrahim. 1994. "Rethinking the Freetown Crowd: The Moral Economy of the 1919 Strikes and Riot in Sierra Leone." *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines*. 28:2, 197–218.
- Adjaye, Joseph K., ed. 1994a. *Time in the Black Experience*. Westport: Greenwood Press.
- 1994b. "Time, Identity, and Historical Consciousness in Akan," in Joseph K. Adjaye, ed., *Time in the Black Experience*, 55–77.
- Agnew, John. 1993. "Representing Space. Space, scale and culture in social science," in James S. Duncan and David Ley, eds., *Place/Culture/Representation*, 251–271.
- Agnew, John A. and James S. Duncan, eds. 1989. *The Power of Place. Bringing Together Geographical and Sociological Imaginations*. Boston: Unwin Hyman, Inc.
- Aidoo, Agnes Akosua. 1985. "Asante Queen Mothers in Government and Politics in the Nineteenth Century," in Filomina Chioma Steady, ed. *The Black Woman Cross-Culturally*, 65–77.
- Ajayi, J. F. A. and Michael Crowther, eds. 1985. *History of West Africa. Volume One*. Third edition. New York: Longman.
- Alagoa, E. J. 1985. "The Niger Delta States and their Neighbours to c. 1800," in J. F. A. Ajayi and Michael Crowther, eds. *History of West Africa Volume One*, 372–411.
- Allman, Jean and Victoria Tashjian. 2000. "I Will Not Eat Stone" *A Women's History of Colonial Asante*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- Ambler, Charles H. 1988. *Kenyan Communities in the Age of Imperialism. The Central Region in the Late-Nineteenth Century*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Amselle, Jean-Loup. 1985. "Lignage, Esclavage, Contrat, Salariat. L'évolution de l'organisation du commerce à longue distance chez les Kooroko (Mali)," in Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch and Paul E. Lovejoy, eds. *The Workers of African Trade*, 123–136.
- 1998. *Mestizo Logics. Anthropology of Identity in Africa and Elsewhere*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Anderson, David M. 2000. "Master and Servant in Colonial Kenya, 1895–1930," *The Journal of African History* 41:3, 459–485.
- Anderson, David M. and Douglas H. Johnson, eds. 1995. *Revealing Prophets. Prophecy in Eastern African History*. London: James Currey.
- Anderson, David M. and Richard Rathbone, eds. 2000. *Africa's Urban Past*. Oxford: James Currey.
- Anene, J. C. 1970. *The International Boundaries of Nigeria 1885–1960*. New York: The Humanities Press.
- Apter, Andrew. 1992. *Black Critics and Kings. The Hermeneutics of Power in Yoruba Society*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Arens, W. and Ivan Karp, eds. 1989. *Creativity of Power. Cosmology and Action in African Societies*. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press.

- Asiwaju, A. I. 1984. *Partitioned Africans*. London: Christopher Hurst, 1984.
- Austen, Ralph A. 1987. *African Economic History. Internal Development and External Dependency*. London: James Currey and Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- ed., 1999. *In Search of Sunjata. The Mande Oral Epic as History, Literature, and Performance*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Bah, Thierno Mouctar. 1985. *Architecture Militaire Traditionnelle et Poliorcétique dans le Soudan Occidental (du XVII^e à la fin du XIX^e siècle)*. Yaounde: Editions Clé.
- Barnes, Sandra T. 1986. *Patrons and Power. Creating a Political Community in Metropolitan Lagos*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- ed. 1997. *Africa's Ogun. Old World and New*. Second Expanded Edition. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- 1997. "The Many Faces of Ogun: Introduction to the First Edition," in Sandra T. Barnes, ed. *Africa's Ogun. Old World and New*, 1–26.
- Barnes, Sandra T. and Paula Girshick Ben-Amos, "Ogun the Empire Builder," in Sandra T. Barnes, ed. *Africa's Ogun. Old World and New*, 39–64.
- Barnes, Teresa A. 1992. "The Fight for Control of African Women's Mobility in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1900–1939," *Signs*. 17:3, 586–608.
- Barry, Boubacar. 1998. *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*. New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Barry, Boubacar and Leonhard Harding, eds. 1992. *Commerce et Commerçants en Afrique de l'Ouest. Le Sénégal*. Paris: Editions Harmattan.
- Bassett, Thomas J. 1998. "Indigenous Mapmaking in Intertropical Africa," in David Woodward and G. Malcolm Lewis, eds. *Cartography in the Traditional African, American, Arctic, Australian, and Pacific Societies*, 24–48.
- Bassett, Thomas J. and Philip W. Porter. 1991. "'From the Best Authorities': The Mountains of Kong in the Cartography of West Africa," *The Journal of African History* 32, 367–413.
- Bauer, Dan. 1989. "The Sacred and the Secret: Order and Chaos in Tigray Medicine and Politics," in Arens and Karp, eds., *Creativity of Power*, 225–243.
- Baum, Robert M. 1999. *Shrines of the Slave Trade. Diola Religion and Society in Precolonial Senegambia*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Baxter, P. T. W. and Uri Almagor, eds. *Age, Generation and Time. Some Features of East African Age Organizations*, 95–131.
- Bay, Edna G. 1998. *Wives of the Leopard. Gender, Politics, and Culture in the Kingdom of Dahomey*. Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press.
- Berger, Iris. 1976. "Rebels or Status-Seekers? Women as Spirit Mediums in East Africa," in Nancy J. Hafkin and Edna G. Bay, eds. *Women in Africa. Studies in Social and Economic Change*, 157–181.
- 1995. "Fertility as Power. Spirit Mediums, Priestesses & the Precolonial State in Interlacustrine East Africa," in David M. Anderson and Douglas H. Johnson, eds. *Revealing Prophets: Prophecy in Eastern African History*, 65–82.
- Berman, Bruce and John Lonsdale. 1992. *Unhappy Valley. Conflict in Kenya and Africa. Book One: State and Class*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- Blake, G. H. ed. 1997. *Imperial Boundary Making. The Diary of Captain Kelly and the Sudan-Uganda Boundary Commission of 1913*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Boahen, A. Adu, ed. 1990. *General History of Africa VII. Africa Under Colonial Domination 1880–1935*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bohannon, Paul and George Dalton, eds. 1962. *Markets in Africa*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Boutillier, Jean-Louis. 1971. "La cité marchande de Bouna dans l'ensemble économique Ouest-Africain pré-colonial," in Claude Meillassoux, ed. *The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa*, 240–252.
- Bravman, Bill. 1998. *Making Ethnic Ways. Communities and Their Transformations in Taita, Kenya, 1800–1950*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

- Briedenbach, Paul S. 1981. "The Two Elders: Maame Harris 'Grace' Tani and Papa Kwesi 'John' Nackabah," *Tarikh* 7:1, 33–46.
- Broch-Due, Vigdis. 2000. "The Fertility of Houses and Herds. Producing Kinship and Gender among Turkana Pastoralists," in Dorothy L. Hodgson, ed. *Rethinking Pastoralism in Africa*, 165–185.
- Brooks, George E. 1976. "The *Signares* of Saint-Louis and Gorée: Women Entrepreneurs in Eighteenth-Century Senegal," in Nancy J. Hafkin and Edna G. Bay, eds. *Women in Africa*, 19–44.
- . 1993. *Landlords and Strangers. Ecology, Society, and Trade in Western Africa, 1000–1630*. Boulder, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press.
- Brown, Carolyn A. 2003. "We Were All Slaves" *African Miners, Culture, and Resistance at the Enugu Government Colliery*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- Byfield, Judith. 1996. "Women, Marriage, Divorce and the Emerging Colonial State in Abeokuta (Nigeria) 1892–1904," in *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines* 30:1, 32–51.
- . 2002. *The Bluest Hands. A Social and Economic History of Women Dyers in Abeokuta (Nigeria), 1890–1940*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- Carney, Judith A. 2001. *Black Rice. The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press.
- Clarke, John I. ed. 1966. *Sierra Leone in Maps*. London: University of London Press.
- Cohen, Abner. 1969. *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa. A Study of Hausa Migrants in Yoruba Towns*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- . 1971. "Cultural Strategies in the Organization of Trading Diasporas," in Claude Meillassoux, ed. *The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa*, 266–281.
- Cohen, David William. 1977. *Womunafu's Bunafu. A Study of Authority in a Nineteenth-Century African Community*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Cohen, David William and E. S. Atieno Odhiambo. 1989. *Siaya. The Historical Anthropology of an African Landscape*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- Comaroff, Jean and John Comaroff. 1991. *Of Revelation and Revolution. Volume One. Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Cookey, Sylvanus. 1974. *King Jaja of the Niger Delta. His Life and Time, 1821–1891*. New York: NOK Publishers, Ltd.
- Cooper, Barbara M. 1997. *Marriage in Maradi. Gender and Culture in a Hausa Society in Niger, 1900–1989*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- Cooper, Frederick. 1977. *Plantation Slavery on the East Coast of Africa*. New Haven and London: The Yale University Press.
- . 1980. *From Slaves to Squatters. Plantation Labor and Agriculture in Zanzibar and Coastal Kenya, 1890–1925*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Coquery-Vidrovitch, Catherine. 1975. "L'impact des intérêts coloniaux: S.C.O.A. et C.F.A.O. dans L'Ouest Africain, 1910–1965," *The Journal of African History* 16:4, 595–621.
- Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch and Paul E. Lovejoy, eds. 1985.. *The Workers of African Trade*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Cordell, Dennis D. and Joel W. Gregory, eds. 1987. *African Population and Capitalism, Historical Perspectives*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Cordell, Dennis D., Joel W. Gregory, and Walter Piché. 1987. "African Historical Demography: The Search for a Theoretical Framework," in Dennis D. Cordell and Joel W. Gregory, eds. *African Population and Capitalism, Historical Perspectives*, 14–32.
- Curtin, Philip D. 1971. "Pre-colonial trading networks and traders: the Diakhanké," in Claude Meillassoux, ed. *The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa*, 228–239.

- 1975. *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa. Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Curto, José. 1999. "The Anatomy of a Demographic Explosion: Luanda, 1844–1850," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 32:2–3, 381–405.
- Diaz, Jill R. 1981. "Famine and Disease in the History of Angola, c. 1830–1930," *The Journal of African History* 22:3, 349–378.
- Dickson, K. B. 1969. *A Historical Geography of Ghana*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Diouf, Sylviane A., ed. 2003. *Fighting the Slave Trade. West African Strategies*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- Dixon-Fyle, Mac. 1999. *A Saro Community in the Niger Delta, 1912–1984: The Potts-Johnsons of Port Harcourt and Their Heirs*. Rochester: The University of Rochester Press.
- Duncan, James and David Ley, eds. 1993. *Place/Culture/Representation*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Ensminger, Jean. 1992. *Making a Market. The Institutional Transformation of an African Society*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Entrikin, J. Nicholas. 1989. "Place, Region, and Modernity," in John A. Agnew and James S. Duncan, eds., *The Power of Place: Bringing Together the Geographical and Sociological Imaginations*, 30–43.
- 1994. "Place and Region," *Progress in Human Geography* 18:2, 227–233.
- Ekechi, Felix. 1989. *Tradition and Transformation in Eastern Nigeria: a Sociopolitical History of Owerri and its Hinterland, 1902–1947*. Kent: Kent State University Press.
- Fairhead, James and Melissa Leach. 1996. *Misreading the African Landscape: Society and Ecology in a Forest-Savanna Mosaic*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Falola, Toyin. 1984. *The Political Economy of a Pre-Colonial African State: Ibadan, 1830–1900*. Ile Ife: The University of Ife Press, Ltd.
- 1995. "Gender, Business and Space Control: Yoruba Market Women and Power," in B. House-Midamba and F. K. Ekechi, eds. *African Market Women and Economic Power. The Role of Women in African Economic Development*, 23–40.
- Fanthorpe, Richard. 1998. "Limba 'Deep Rural' Strategies," *The Journal of African History* 39, 15–38.
- Fardon, Richard. 1988. *Raiders & Refugees. Trends in Chamba Political Development 1750–1950*. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- 1990. ed. *Localizing Strategies. Regional Traditions of Ethnographic Writing*. Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press and Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Feerman, Steven. 1990. *Peasant Intellectuals. Anthropology and History in Tanzania*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Fetter, Bruce. 1983. *Colonial Rule and Regional Imbalance in Central Africa*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Frost, Diane. 1999. *Work and Community among West African Migrant Workers since the Nineteenth Century*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- Giblin, James L. 1992. *The Politics of Environmental Control in Northeastern Tanzania, 1840–1940*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Glassman, Jonathon. 1995. *Feasts and Riot. Revelry, Rebellion, and Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast, 1856–1888*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- Gray, Christopher. 2002. *Colonial Rule and Crisis in Equatorial Africa. Southern Gabon, ca. 1850–1940*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press.
- Gray, Richard. 1990. "Christianity," in Andrew D. Roberts, ed. *The Colonial Moment in Africa: Essays on the Movement of Minds and Materials, 1900–1940*, 140–190.
- Greene, Sandra E. 1996. *Gender, Ethnicity, and Social Change on the Upper Guinea Slave Coast. A History of the Anlo-Ewe*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- 1997. "Sacred Terrain: Religion, Politics, and Place in the History of Anloga (Ghana)," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 30:1, 1–22.

- 2002. *Sacred Sites and the Colonial Encounter. A History of Meaning and Memory in Ghana*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Goerg, Odile. 1980. La destruction d'un réseau d'échange précolonial: l'exemple de la Guinée," *The Journal of African History* 21:4, 467–484.
- 1998. "From Hill Station [Freetown] to Downtown Conakry [First Ward]: Comparing French and British Approaches to Segregation in Colonial Cities at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century," *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines* 32:1, 1–31.
- Gomez, Michael A. 1998. *Exchanging Our Country Marks. The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South*. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Gueye, M'Baye and A. Adu Boahen. 1990. "African Initiatives and Resistance in West Africa, 1880–1914," in A. Adu Boahen, ed. *General History of Africa VII. Africa Under Colonial Domination 1880–1935*, 55–71.
- Guyer, Jane I. and Samuel M. Eng Belinga. 1995. "Wealth in People, Wealth in Things," *The Journal of African History* 36, 83–90.
- Hafkin, Nancy J. and Edna G. Bay, eds. 1976. *Women in Africa. Studies in Social and Economic Change*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Hargreaves, John. D. 1963. *Prelude to the Partition of West Africa*. London: Macmillan.
- Harrell-Bond, B., A. M. Howard, and D. E. Skinner. 1978. *Community Leadership and the Transformation of Freetown (1801–1976)*. The Hague and New York: Mouton Publishers.
- Hartwig, Gerald W. 1978. "Social Consequences of Epidemic Diseases: The Nineteenth Century in East Africa," in Gerald W. Hartwig and K. David Paterson, eds. *Disease in African History. An Introductory Survey and Case Studies*, 25–45.
- Hartwig, Gerald W. and K. David Paterson, eds. 1978. *Disease in African History. An Introductory Survey and Case Studies*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Hawthorne, Walter. 2003a. *Planting Rice and Harvesting Slaves. Transformations along the Guinea-Bissau Coast, 1400–1900*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- 2003b. "Strategies of the Decentralized. Defending Communities from Slave Raiders in Coastal Guinea-Bissau, 1450–1815," in Sylviane A. Diouf, ed. *Fighting the Slave Trade. West African Strategies*, 152–169.
- Hill, Polly. 1970. *Studies in Rural Capitalism in West Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hirsch, Eric. 1995. "Landscape: Between Place and Space," in Eric Hirsch and Michael O'Hanlon, eds. *The Anthropology of Landscape: Perspectives on Place and Space*, 1–30.
- Hirsch, Eric and Michael O'Hanlon, eds. 1995. *The Anthropology of Landscape: Perspectives on Place and Space*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hodgson, Dorothy L., ed. 2000a. *Rethinking Pastoralism in Africa*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- 2000b. "Gender, Culture & the Myth of the Patriarchal Pastoralist," in Dorothy L. Hodgson, *Rethinking Pastoralism in Africa*, 1–28.
- Hodgson, Dorothy L. and Sheryl A. McCurdy, eds. 2001. "Wicked" *Women and the Reconfiguration of Gender in Africa*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- Hoffer, Carol P. 1977. "Madam Yoko: Ruler of the Kpa Mende Confederacy," in Alice Schlegel, ed. *Sexual Stratification*, 173–187.
- Hopkins, A. G. 1973. *An Economic History of West Africa*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- House-Midamba, Bessie and Felix K. Ekechi, eds. 1995. *African Market Women and Economic Power. The Role of Women in African Economic Development*. Westport, CN: Greenwood Press.
- Howard, Allen M. 1966. "Administrative Boundary Changes," in John I. Clarke, ed., *Sierra Leone in Maps*, 30–31.

- 1972. *Big Men, Traders, and Chiefs: Power, Commerce, and Spatial Change in the Sierra Leone-Guinea Plain, 1865–1895*. Ph. D. dissertation. University of Wisconsin-Madison.
- 1976. “The Relevance of Spatial Analysis for African Economic History: the Sierra Leone-Guinea System,” *The Journal of African History* 17:3, 365–388.
- 1981. “Trade without Marketplaces: The Spatial Organization of Exchange in Northwestern Sierra Leone to 1930,” *African Urban Studies* 11, 1–24.
- 1997. “Trade and Islam in Sierra Leone, 18th-20th Centuries,” in Alusine Jalloh and David E. Skinner, eds. *Islam and Trade in Sierra Leone*, 21–63.
- 1999. “Mande and Fulbe Interaction and Identity in Northwestern Sierra Leone, Late Eighteenth through Early Twentieth Centuries,” *Mande Studies* 1:1, 13–39.
- 2000. “Mande Identity Formation in the Economic and Political Context of North-West Sierra Leone, 1750–1900,” *Paideuma* 46, 13–35.
- In preparation. *Traders, Accumulation, and Spatial Power: Commercial Change in Sierra Leone and Guinea, 1780–1930*.
- Howard, Allen M. and David E. Skinner, 1984. “Network Building and Political Power in North-western Sierra Leone, 1800–1865,” *Africa* 54:2, 2–28.
- Hurst, Michael Elliot. 1972. *A Geography of Economic Behavior. An Introduction*. North Scituate, MA: Duxbury Press.
- Iliffe, John. 1979. *A Modern History of Tanganyika*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 1989. “The Origins of African Population Growth,” *The Journal of African History* 30:1, 165–169.
- Isaacman, Allen F. and Barbara Isaacman. 1976. *The Tradition of Resistance in Mozambique. The Zambezi Valley 1850–1921*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Isichie, Elizabeth A. 1997. *A History of African Societies to 1870*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Jalloh, Alusine. 1999. *African Entrepreneurship. Muslim Fula Merchants in Sierra Leone*. Athens: Ohio University Center for International Studies.
- Jalloh, Alusine and David E. Skinner, eds. 1997. *Islam and Trade in Sierra Leone*. Trenton: Africa World Press.
- Johnson, Douglas H. 1989. “Political Ecology in the Upper Nile: the Twentieth Century Expansion of the Pastoral ‘Common Economy,’” *The Journal of African History* 30:3, 463–486.
- Johnson-Odim, Cheryl and Nina Emma Mba. 1997. *For Women and the Nation. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti of Nigeria*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Kaba, Lansiné. 1974. *The Wahhabiyya. Islamic Reform and Politics in French-Speaking Africa*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- 2000. “Islam in West Africa: Radicalism and the New Ethic of Disagreement, 1960–1990,” in Nehemia Levtzion and Randall L. Pouwells, eds. *The History of Islam in Africa*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 189–208.
- Kea, Ray A. 1982. *Settlements, Trade, and Politics in the Seventeenth-Century Gold Coast*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Kimambo, Isaria N. 1999. “The Impact of Christianity among the Zaramo. A Case Study of Maneromango Lutheran Parish,” in Thomas Spear and Isaria N. Kimambo, eds. *East African Expressions of Christianity*, 63–82.
- Klein, Martin A. 1998. *Slavery and Colonial Rule in West Africa*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- 2001. “The Slave Trade and Decentralized Societies,” *The Journal of African History* 42:1, 49–65.
- Kolapo, Femi J. 2000. “CMS Missionaries of African Origin and Extra-Religious Encounters at the Niger-Benue Confluence, 1858–1880,” *African Studies Review* 43:2, 87–115.

- Kopytoff, Igor. 1987. *The African Frontier. The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Krapf-Askari, Eva. 1969. *Yoruba Towns and Cities. An Enquiry into the Nature of Urban Social Phenomena*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Last, Murray. 1967. *The Sokoto Caliphate*. New York: Humanities Press.
- Launay, Robert. 1982. *Traders without Trade. Responses to Change in Two Dyula Communities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Law, Robin. 2000. "Ouidah: a Pre-colonial Urban Centre in Coastal West Africa 1727–1892," in David M. Anderson and Richard Rathbone, eds. *Africa's Urban Past*, 85–97.
- Lema, Anza A. 1999. "Chaga Religion & Missionary Christianity on Kilimanjaro. The Initial Phase, 1893–1916," in Thomas Spear and Isaria N. Kamambo, eds. *East African Expressions of Christianity*, 39–62.
- Levtzion, Nehemia and Randall L. Pouwels, eds. 2000. *The History of Islam in Africa*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- Likaka, Osumaka. 1997. *Rural Society and Cotton in Colonial Zaire*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Lindsay, Lisa A. and Stephan F. Miescher, eds. 2003. *Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- Lomnitz-Adler, Claudio. 1991. "Concepts for the Study of Regional Culture," *American Ethnologist* 18:2, 195–214.
- Lovejoy, Paul E. 1973. "The Kambarin Beriberi: The Formation of a Specialized Group of Hausa Kola Traders in the Nineteenth Century," *The Journal of African History* 14:4, 633–651.
- 1986. *Salt of the Desert Sun. A History of Salt Production and Trade in the Central Sudan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 2000. *Transformations in Slavery. A History of Slavery in Africa. Second Edition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Lovejoy, Paul E. and Stephen Baier. 1975. "The Desert-Side Economy of the Central Sudan," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 7:4, 551–581.
- Lovejoy, Paul E. and Jan S. Hogendorn. 1993. *Slow Death for Slavery. The Course of Abolition in Northern Nigeria, 1897–1936*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Mabogunje, A. L. 1968. *Urbanization in Nigeria*. New York: Africana Publishing Corporation.
- Mackenzie, A. Fiona D. 1999. "Betterment and the Gendered Politics of Maize Production, Murang'a District, Central Province, Kenya, 1880–1952," *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines* 33:1, 64–97.
- Mamdani, Mahmood. 1996. *Citizen and Subject. Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Manchuelle, François. 1997. *Willing Migrants. Soninke Labor Diasporas, 1848–1960*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- Mandala, Elias C. 1990. *Work and control in a peasant economy: a history of the lower Tchiri Valley in Malawi, 1859–1960*. Madison, Wis. : University of Wisconsin Press.
- Mann, Kristin. 1985. *Marrying Well. Marriage, Status and Social Change among the Educated Elite in Colonial Lagos*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Manning, Patrick. 1990. *Slavery and African Life: Occidental, Oriental, and African Slave Trades*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mbodji, Mohammed. 1992. "D'une frontière à l'autre, ou l'histoire de la marginalisation des commerçants sénégalais sur la longue durée: La Gambie de 1816 à 1979," in B. Barry and L. Harding, eds. *Commerce et Commerçants*, 191–241.
- McCaskie, T. C. 1984. "Ahyiamu—'A Place of Meeting': an Essay on Process and Event in the History of the Asante State," *The Journal of African History* 25:2, 169–188.

- 1986. "Accumulation, Wealth and Belief in Asante History II: The Twentieth Century," *Africa* 56:1, 3–23.
- 1995. *State and society in pre-colonial Asante*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- McIntosh, Roderick J. 1993. "The Pulse Model: Genesis and Accommodation of Specialization in the Middle Niger," *The Journal of African History* 34:2, 181–220.
- 2000. "Clustered Cities of the Middle Niger. Alternative Routes to Authority in Prehistory," in David M. Anderson and Richard Rathbone, eds. *Africa's Urban Past*. 19–35.
- McIntosh, Susan Keech. 1999. *Beyond Chiefdoms. Pathways to Complexity in Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Meillassoux, Claude. 1964. *Anthropologie Économique des Goutro de Côte d'Ivoire. De l'économie de subsistance à l'agriculture commerciale*. Paris: Mouton.
- ed. 1971. *The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Miers, Suzanne and Igor Kopytoff, eds. 1977. *Slavery in Africa, Historical and Anthropological Perspectives*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Miers, Suzanne and Richard Roberts, eds. 1988. *The End of Slavery in Africa*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Miescher, Stephan F. 2003. "The Making of Presbyterian Teachers: Masculinities and Programs of Education in Colonial Ghana," in Lisa A. Lindsay and Stephan F. Miescher, eds. *Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa*, 89–108.
- Miller, Joseph C. 1982. "The Significance of Drought, Disease and Famine in the Agriculturally Marginal zones of West-Central Africa," *The Journal of African History* 23:1, 17–61.
- 1988. *Way of Death. Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade 1730–1830*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Mitchell, J. Clyde. Ed. 1969. *Social Networks in Urban Situations. Analyses of Personal Relationships in Central African Towns*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Monson, Jamie. 1998. "Relocating Maji Maji: The Politics of Alliance and Authority in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania, 1870–1918," *The Journal of African History* 39:1, 95–120.
- Morton-Williams, P. 1964. "An Outline of the Cosmology and Cult Organization of the Oyo Yoruba," *Africa* 34:3, 243–261.
- Moore, Henrietta L. 1996. *Space, Text, and Gender. An Anthropological Study of the Marakwet of Kenya*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Musisi, Nakanyike B. 2001. "Gender and the Cultural Construction of 'Bad Women' in the Development of Kampala-Kibuga, 1900–1962, in Dorothy L. Hodgson and Sheryl A. McCurdy, eds. "Wicked" Women and the Reconfiguration of Gender in Africa. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 171–187.
- Newbury, David and Kathleen Newbury. 2000. "Bringing the Peasants Back In: Agrarian Themes in the Construction and Corrosion of Statist Historiography in Rwanda," *American Historical Review* 105:3, 832–877.
- Norman, Neil L. and Kenneth G. Kelly. 2004. "Landscape Politics: The Serpent Ditch and the Rainbow in West Africa," *American Anthropologist* 106:1, 98–110.
- Nugent, Paul. 1996. "'Arbitrary Lines and People's Minds' A Dissenting View on Colonial Boundaries in West Africa," in Paul Nugent and A. I. Asiwaju, eds. *African Boundaries. Barriers, Conduits, and Opportunities*, 35–67.
- Nugent, Paul and A. I. Asiwaju, eds. 1996. *African Boundaries. Barriers, Conduits and Opportunities*. New York: Pinter.
- Obudho, Robert A. and Peter P. Waller. 1976. *Periodic Markets, Urbanization, and Regional Planning. A Case Study from Western Kenya*. Westport: Greenwood Press.
- O'Hear, Ann. 1997. *Power Relations in Nigeria. Ilorin Slaves and Their Successors*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press.

- Okonjo, Kamene. 1976. "The Dual-Sex Political System in Operation: Igbo Women and Community Politics in Midwestern Nigeria," in Nancy J. Hafkin and Edna G. Bay, eds. *Women in Africa*, 45–58.
- Opoku, K. Asare. 1990. "Religion in Africa during the Colonial Era," in A. Adu Boahen, ed. *General History of Africa VII. Africa Under Colonial Domination 1880–1935*, 217–228.
- Oyono, Ferdinand. 1969. *The Old Man and the Medal*. London: Heinemann.
- Parker, John. 2000. *Making the Town. Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- Parkin, David. 1990. "Eastern Africa: The View from the Office and the Voice from the Field," in Richard Fardon, ed. *Localizing Strategies. Regional Traditions of Ethnographic Writing*, 182–203.
- Peil, Margaret with Pius O. Sada. 1984. *African Urban Society*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Pemberton, John III and Funso A. Afolayan. 1996. *Yoruba Sacred Kingship. "A Power Like That of the Gods"*. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Person, Yves. 1968. *Samori Une Révolution Dyula. Tome II*. Dakar: BIFAN.
- Pred, Allan. 1990. *Making Histories and Constructing Human Geographies. The Local Transformation of Practice, Power Relations, and Consciousness*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Pred, Allan and Michael Watts. 1992. *Reworking Modernity. Capitalisms and Symbolic Discontent*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Pudup, Mary Beth. 1988. "Arguments within regional geography," *Progress in Human Geography*. 12, 369–391.
- Ranger, Terence O. 1973. "Territorial Cults in the History of Central Africa," *The Journal of African History* 14:4, 581–597.
- Rashid, Ismail. 1998. "Do Dady nor Lef me Make dem Carry me': Slave Resistance and Emancipation in Sierra Leone, 1894–1928," *Slavery and Abolition* 19:208–231.
- Ray, Benjamin C. 1991. *Myth, Ritual, and Kingship in Buganda*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Reid, Richard and Henri Medard. 2000. "Merchants, Missions and the Remaking of the Urban Environment in Buganda c. 1840–1890," in David M. Anderson and Richard Rathbone, eds., *Africa's Urban Past*, 98–108.
- Roberts, Andrew D. 1990. *The Colonial Moment in Africa: Essays on the Movement of Minds and Materials, 1900–1940*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Roberts, Richard L. 1987. *Warriors, Merchants, and Slaves. The State and the Economy in the Middle Niger Valley, 1700–1914*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Robertson, Claire C. 1997. *Trouble Showed the Way. Women, Men and Trade in the Nairobi Area, 1890–1990*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Robertson, Claire C. and Martin A. Klein, eds. 1983. *Women and Slavery in Africa*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Robinson, David. 1985. *The Holy War of Umar Tal. The Western Sudan in the Mid-Nineteenth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 2000a. "Revolutions in the Western Sudan" in Nehemia Levtzion and Randall Pouwels, eds. *The History of Islam in Africa*, 131–152.
- 2000b. *Paths of Accommodation. Muslim Societies and French Colonial Authorities in Senegal and Mauritania, 1880–1920*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- 2004. *Muslim Societies in African History*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Rockel, Stephen J. 2000. "'A Nation of Porters': The Nyamwezi and the Labour Market in Nineteenth-Century Tanzania," *The Journal of African History* 41:2, 173–195.
- Ross, Eric. 1995. "Touba: A Spiritual Metropolis in the Modern World," *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue Canadienne des Etudes Africaines*. 29:2, 222–259.
- Sack, Robert David. 1997. *Homo Geographicus. A Framework for Action, Awareness, and Moral Concern*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

- Sangren, David. 1990. "Kamba Christianity From African Inland Church to African Brotherhood Church," in Thomas Spear and Isaria N. Kimambo, eds. *East African Expressions of Christianity*, 169–195.
- Schmidt, Elizabeth. 1992. *Peasants, Traders, and Wives. Shona Women in the History of Zimbabwe, 1870–1939*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Schlegel, Alice, ed. 1977. *Sexual Stratification*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Sheriff, Abdul. 1987. *Slaves, Spices, and Ivory in Zanzibar: Integration of an East African Commercial Empire into the World Economy, 1770–1873*. London: James Currey.
- Sharpe, Barrie. 1986. "Ethnography and a Regional System: Mental Maps and the Myth of States and Tribes in north-central Nigeria," *Critique of Anthropology* 6:3, 33–65.
- Shaw, Carolyn Martin. 1995. *Colonial Inscriptions. Race, Sex, and Class in Kenya*. Minneapolis: University of London Press.
- Shetler, Jan Bender. 2003. "Interpreting Rupture in Oral Memory: The Regional Context for Changes in Western Serengeti Age Organization (1850–1895)," *The Journal of African History* 44:3, 385–412.
- Simone, AbdulMaliq. 2001. "On the Worlding of African Cities," *African Studies Review* 44:2, 15–41.
- Smith, Carol A. 1976. *Regional Analysis. Volume I. Economic Systems*. New York: Academic Press.
- Smith, M. G. 1962. "Exchange and Marketing Among the Hausa," in P. Bohannon and G. Dalton, eds. *Markets in Africa*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 299–334.
- Spear, Thomas. 1993. "'Being Maasai' but not 'People of the Cattle': Arusha Agricultural Maasai in the Nineteenth Century," in Thomas Spear and Richard Waller, eds. *Being Maasai: Ethnicity and Identity in East Africa*, 120–136.
- . 1997. *Mountain Farmers. Moral Economies of Land and Agricultural Development in Arusha and Meru*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- . 1999. "Toward the History of African Christianity," in Thomas Spear and Isaria N. Kimambo, eds. *East African Expressions of Christianity*, 3–24.
- . 2000. "'A Town of Strangers' or 'A Model Modern East African Town'? Arusha and the Arusha" in David M. Anderson and Richard Rathbone, eds., *Africa's Urban Past*, 109–125.
- Spear, Thomas and Isaria N. Kimambo, eds. 1999. *East African Expressions of Christianity*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- Spear, Thomas and Richard Waller, eds. 1993. *Being Maasai. Ethnicity and Identity in East Africa*. London: James Currey.
- Spitzer, Leo. 1974. *The Creoles of Sierra Leone. Responses to Colonialism, 1870–1945*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Steady, Filomina Chioma, ed. 1985. *The Black Woman Cross-Culturally*. Rochester, VT: Schenkman.
- Sudarkasa, Niara. 1986. "The Status of Women in Indigenous African Societies," *Feminist Studies* 12, 91–103.
- Thornton, John. 1998. *Africa and the Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1800. Second edition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2000. "Mbanza Kongo/São Salvador. Kongo's Holy City," in David M. Anderson and Richard Rathbone, eds. *Africa's Urban Past*, 67–84.
- Tonkin, Elizabeth. 1990. "West African Ethnographic Traditions," in Richard Fardon, ed. *Localizing Strategies. Regional Traditions of Ethnographic Writing*. Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press and Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 137–151.
- Turton, David. 1978. "Territorial Organization and Age among the Mursi," in P. T. W. Baxter and Uri Almagor, eds. *Age, Generation and Time. Some Features of East African Age Organizations*, 95–131.
- Twaddle, Michael. 1993. *Kakungulu & the Creation of Uganda 1868–1928*. London: James Currey; Nairobi: EAEP; Athens: Ohio University Press; Kampala: Fountain Publishers.

- Vail, LeRoy. 1975. "The Making of an Imperial Slum: Nyasaland and its Railways, 1895-1935," *The Journal of African History* 16:1, 89-112.
- ed. 1991. *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Van Allen, Judith. 1976. "'Aba Riots' or Igbo 'Women's War'? Ideology, Stratification, and the Invisibility of Women," in Nancy J. Hafkin and Edna G. Bay, eds. *Women in Africa*, 59-86.
- Van Binsbergen, Wim M. J. 1977. "Regional and Non-Regional Cults of Affliction in Western Zambia," in Richard Werbner, ed. *Regional Cults*, 141-175.
- Vansina, Jan. 1962. "Trade and Markets Among the Kuba," in P. Bohannan and G. Dalton, eds. *Markets in Africa*, 190-210.
- 1984. *Art History in Africa*. New York: Longan.
- 1990. *Paths in the Rainforests. Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Van Young, Eric. 1993. *Mexico's Regions. Comparative History and Development*. San Diego: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies.
- Walker, Sheila S. 1979. "Women in the Harris Movement," in Bennetta Jules-Rosette, ed. *The New Religions of Africa*, 87-97.
- Watson, Ruth. 2003. *'Civil Disorder is the Disease of Ibadan'. Chieftaincy & Civic Culture in a Yoruba City*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- Watts, Michael. 1983. *Silent Violence. Food, Famine and Peasantry in Northern Nigeria*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Webb, James L. A. Jr. 1995. *Desert Frontier. Ecological and Economic Change along the Western Sahel 1600-1850*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Werbner, Richard, ed. 1977a. *Regional Cults*. New York: The Academic Press.
- 1977b. "Continuity and Policy in Southern Africa's High God Cult," in Richard Werbner, ed., *Regional Cults*, 179-218.
- 1990. "South-Central Africa: The Manchester School and After," in Richard Fardon, ed. *Localizing Strategies. Regional Traditions of Ethnographic Writing*, 152-181.
- Wilks, Ivor. 1975. *Asante in the Nineteenth Century. The Structure and Evolution of a Political Order*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- 1992. "On Mentally Mapping Greater Asante: A Study in Time and Motion," *The Journal of African History* 33:2, 175-190.
- 1993a *Forests of Gold. Essays on the Akan and the Kingdom of Asante*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- 1993b. "Land, Labor, Gold, and the Forest Kingdom of Asante: A Model of Early Change," in *Forests of Gold. Essays on the Akan and the Kingdom of Asante*, 41-90.
- Willis, Justin. 1993. *Mombasa, the Swahili, and the Making of the Mijikenda*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Willis, Justin and Suzanne Miers. 1997. "Becoming a Child of the House: Incorporation, Authority and Resistance in Giriyama Society," *The Journal of African History* 38:3, 479-495.
- Woodward, David and G. Malcolm Lewis, eds. 1998. *Cartography in the Traditional African, American, Arctic, Australian, and Pacific Societies*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Wyse, Akintola. 1989. *The Krio of Sierra Leone. An Interpretive History*. London: C. Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd. and Freetown: W. D. Okrafo-Smart & Company.

“REGION” AS HISTORICAL PRODUCTION: NARRATIVE MAPS FROM THE WESTERN SERENGETI, TANZANIA

JAN BENDER SHETLER

Like time, and related to time, space is one of the fundamental ways in which people organize and are organized by their social world.¹ Rather than serving as a neutral backdrop to historical events ordered by time, people actively construct spatial organization through historical process and, in turn, those historical processes are structured by the organization of space already in place.² A spatial approach to history simply means to pay attention to spatial perceptions of social organization (and social perceptions of space) in the past. As some have conceptualized it, we must find ways of perceiving the internal “mental maps” used by people in the past to understand their environment, both social and ecological.³ Oral traditions offer culturally grounded sources for recovering past mental maps, which I prefer to distinguish as “narrative maps.” In this chapter I am particularly concerned with the space of regions, defined by the narrative maps of oral tradition. Localized responses to the demands of the environment in the context of already existing social spaces

¹ This chapter is based on and summarizes much of my Ph.D. dissertation: “The Landscapes of Memory: A History of Social Identity in the Western Serengeti, Tanzania,” University of Florida, 1998. Research for this dissertation in Tanzania from January 1995 to July 1996 was supported by Fulbright I.I.E. and the Joint Committee on African Studies of the Social Science Research Council and the American Council of Learned Societies with funds provided by the Ford, Mellon, and Rockefeller Foundations. A shorter version of this chapter was first presented as a conference paper at the American Historical Association Annual Meeting in Seattle, January 1998, on a panel entitled, “The Spatial Approach to Changes in Society and Identity in African History.” Special thanks are extended to Patrick Malloy and Holly Hanson for reading an earlier version of this chapter and to the government of Tanzania for permission to conduct research under the auspices of the Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology and the History Department of the University of Dar es Salaam.

² See for example Soja (1989) and Pred (1990). For an analysis of how social space both produces and is produced by social groups see Moore (1986).

³ For some of the earliest work on “mental maps” see, Gould and White (1974) and Lowenthal and Bowden (1976).

and a changing historical context created various regions of social interaction.

I define a “region” as the geographical extent of various networks of interaction between local communities. This unit of analysis allows the historian to identify historical processes at an intermediate scale and to develop a framework for understanding them over time. Historians of Africa dissatisfied with the analysis of pre-colonial societies as discrete and isolated “tribes” or ethnic groups will appreciate the spatial analysis of regions as a means for looking at the connections and interrelationships between communities within a larger system, or intercommunicating zone defined by relations of interdependence.⁴ Recent studies in African history have shown that we cannot assume the historical continuity or internal stability of ethnic identities nor were ethnic identities the only or even the most important form of social identity in the past.⁵ A regional study presents a useful spatial lens for perceiving shifts in all kinds of social identities as networks of interaction changed over time.

However, most of the academic work on “regions” defines these constituent networks of interaction by the external, universal criteria of economic relations of exchange, or formalized marketing systems. They assume the preexisting condition of hierarchies or class inequality to create the “central-places” on which the theories are based. In fact, without stratified or hierarchical differentiation, marketing systems do not exist. Rural surplus can only be extracted forcibly by non-food producing elites who are themselves the main beneficiaries of the system (Smith 1976:51). Even the more nuanced cultural approach of Claudio Lomnitz-Adler, that defines a region as “the internally differentiated and segmented culture produced by human interaction within a regional political economy,” assumes structures of hierarchy (Lomnitz-Adler 1991:198). How then might we identify intercommunicating, interacting regional systems where small-scale, locally autonomous communities did not constitute rungs in a political or economic hierarchy, as was the case in much of pre-colonial Africa? Recent work in spatial theory defines the region in ways that treat social and cultural factors on an equal basis with political and economic factors. These theorists understand regions

⁴ Richard Waller does this for interior East Africa (Waller 1985).

⁵ See for example Vail (1989).

not as stable, homogenous units but as historical products that people are constantly negotiating and transforming (Pudup 1989:380). In order to be useful to the historian, "region," as a unit of analysis for the study of pre-colonial Africa, must represent the various and extensive networks of interaction, whether political, economic, social, or cultural, from an internal perspective.

The narrative maps of oral traditions offer some of the best sources for reconstructing these regions by internal locally specific, rather than external universal, criteria.⁶ In an insightful analysis of social space in colonial Nigeria, Barrie Sharpe demonstrates how ethnographers created "the myth of states and tribes" by imposing their own mental maps on locally differentiated space. He reconstructed internal concepts of social space by looking at older grid maps produced by European travelers in the region that did not show "states and tribes" (Sharpe 1986). Without early European maps of the region oral tradition provides another kind of map. The largest social space referred to in a body of oral traditions about the pre-colonial period defines a region. Different bodies of oral tradition within the same community define different regions, or constructions of social space. Past peoples used narrative maps representing these regions to negotiate their various social relationships. Because regions are constantly changing, the boundaries of each of these historically produced regions blur into other regions, overlap and are underlaid with other regional boundaries in oral tradition.

This chapter will take on the project of historicizing "region" in one location of pre-colonial Africa, the western Serengeti of Tanzania. I understand "region" as an ongoing historical production rather than a finished product. The geographical extent, orientation and shape of the region shifted according to the historical context. For example, in the distant past western Serengeti oral tradition defines an interdependent region of interaction between farmers, hunters and herders over an ecologically diverse landscape. As the farmers became dominant the narrative map of region shifted to one in which the crucial process of establishing ritual authority in relation to the land

⁶ Region is a particularly difficult concept to define absolutely because people rarely hold the same kind of loyalties or self-identification with a region as they do with the local community, ethnic group or descent group, for example. See Van Young (1992:10).

defined individual points of power controlled by various descent groups. By the end of the nineteenth century relationships to the west, along the shore lands of Lake Victoria, defined a new region as western Serengeti people sought refuge from famine and raids, developing trade relations along the lake. Each of these regions defines a set of social interactions which people conceptualize using a particular set of spatial images. In this case, the earlier image of the region characterized by reciprocal networks connecting individual settlements was superceded historically by the image of the region as a conglomeration of bounded ethnic territories.

The interpretation of these representations of regional space, although offering internal, locally particular perceptions of past interactions, is also highly problematic. Each oral tradition represents layers of information from various time periods and, without written sources, it is difficult to identify the context of each layer. While archeology, historical linguistics, ecology and comparative ethnography provide useful parallel evidence, the nature of these sources presumes that the historian is involved in an interpretive process, coming to logical, but never fully verifiable conclusions. The problem in this approach is to verify that these narrative maps, in fact, reflect past realities rather than simply legitimizing present social relations. Solving this problem involves an exploration of oral memory itself.

Studies of memory have shown that people store their recollections of the past primarily, though not exclusively, in spatial rather than temporal images.⁷ We remember events and people by narratively locating them in particular places. Memories appear to us as a sequence of places rather than as the orderly passage of time. Although any one tradition may contain elements from many different time periods, narrators remember and construct the story in each telling by the mnemonic device of these core spatial images.⁸ These images are like artifacts from the past, whose meaning can be lost or reinterpreted, but are nevertheless carried along in time because of their function in oral memory.⁹

⁷ See for example Yates (1966), Spence (1984), Carruthers (1990), Johnson (1991) and Bachelard (1964).

⁸ See the original formulation of this theory in Lord (1964), and for the application to African History see Miller (1980:5–9).

⁹ For an analysis of spatial memory in one society or what Renato Rosaldo calls, “a spatialization of time” see Rosaldo (1980:42–58).

The historian can test the relative time depth of these core spatial images by comparison with other kinds of evidence such as archaeology, comparative ethnography or historical linguistics. These comparisons often show that oral tradition amazingly represents the same historical processes about which we know through entirely different, and for scholars more "legitimate," kinds of historical reasoning. Because these two sets of evidence are so congruent the oral traditions themselves must have important elements of content that are old. Otherwise the narrators of oral tradition could not tell a tale that so closely reflects historical reconstruction based on evidence about which they cannot have known. Through the interpretation of these core spatial images alongside other kinds of evidence the historian can situate these spatial images, and the particular "regions" of social interaction that they represent, in relative time frames.

Time is also used to organize social memory but not in a linear fashion. Although the events recorded in oral tradition cannot often be correlated with precise calendar dates, they seem to be ordered according to ongoing social processes operative within a particular temporality or time frame. Braudel organized his classic study of the Mediterranean around three different temporalities: the history of imperceptible changes in the relationship of man to his environment, the slow but perceptible rhythms of social process, and the short term political time of remembered history (Braudel 1992). These different temporalities correspond closely to the indigenous periodization of oral traditions found throughout Africa—the mythical time of origin traditions, the cyclical time of abbreviated and telescoped middle period histories and the linear time of remembered histories in the last few generations (Spear 1981:167–172). Mythical traditions often represent social processes from the distant past with ongoing relevance in the present, while middle period traditions represent more recent changes in social identity still affecting the present but just beyond the reach of remembered history.

Oral traditions are difficult historical sources because any one tradition may contain material from different time frames. Social relationships that developed as a result of interaction with the environment are often represented in origin myths and underlie the formation of a variety of other kinds of relationships within changing historical contexts. People often used narrative maps from the distant past to make sense of more recent interactions. More recent narrative maps

do not replace earlier maps as much as transparently overlay them. In this way different time periods may be represented in one set of oral traditions.¹⁰

This abstract and universal categorization of oral traditions, however, does not exist independent of historical events and people's experiences of them. Just how people remember the mythical past and the telescoped middle time period and when remembered time begins depends upon historical experience. The moment at which traditions become historically grounded in verifiable events seems to represent a point of transition in social identity. Among societies with centralized states, the traditions of historical time often begin with the consolidation of the kingdom under a known king, even if the antiquity of the kingdom is extended by reconfigured genealogies.¹¹ In the oral traditions of the Maasai historical time begins with the leadership of prophets in the late eighteenth century (Berntsen 1979:112). In the western Serengeti the disasters of famine, drought, disease, raids and ecological disaster common across East Africa in the late nineteenth century broke continuity with the past and fundamentally altered historical consciousness itself. From the perspective of oral tradition the disasters represent a rupture in social time, with history divided into the periods before and after the disasters.¹² This era initiated not only a break in time but the introduction of new concepts of time altogether. A new way of calculating social time, embodied in the succession of cycling age-sets, emerged during the period of disasters.¹³

¹⁰ In fact the time sequences are often out of order, see Schoffeleers on "the principle of desynchronization" as one of the "rules which have apparently been operative in relation to objective history." This happens when a crucial event in history is linked with a different time period when different social processes were in motion. The event is then given a different meaning than it originally had (Schoffeleers, 1992:166–169).

¹¹ For kingdoms in Eastern Africa see Feierman (1974), Packard (1981), Newbury (1991) and Wrigley (1996).

¹² Rosaldo describes a similar phenomenon in his study of Illongot society in the Philippines. He found that history was divided into two major periods—before and after the Japanese invasion of 1945. Rosaldo wrote: "The stories of 1945 were so numerous, so vivid, so detailed, so often told that it took me over a year to realize that they represented but a narrow strip in time." This amplified moment in the historical imagination became "the great divide that separated a bygone past from one that merged into the present." Rosaldo's interpretation of various oral narratives had to take into consideration that this brief period had been generalized to represent the whole period before 1945 (Rosaldo 1980:38–54).

¹³ This is worked out in more detail in Shetler (2004:385–412).

For the historian it becomes problematic to interpret the meaning of these dramatic social transformations without access to evidence that is not itself a product of these changes. The way in which western Serengeti people reconfigured social identity during the period of disasters is the product of much longer-term social processes. Yet knowledge of times before the disasters is only accessible to the historian through oral traditions, which the new communities that survived the disasters and established new identities to deal with the changing situation have reworked. The fragments of oral tradition that survived have been taken out of context and given new meaning. The historian must interpret the traditions of the earlier period with knowledge of how people transformed social identities during the disasters.

Oral traditions were necessarily transformed during the disasters because memories are not only *spatially* located but are also *socially* located within various group identities and their members interactions with other groups. Individuals cannot integrally maintain and transmit historical knowledge if the social group in which that knowledge is based radically reconfigures itself.¹⁴ Even in one time period individuals simultaneously employ multiple narrative maps, representing the different social groups in which they hold membership. Members of different social groups may preserve radically different memories about the same time period because each builds on the group's collectively shared narrative map (Connerton 1989:37). Historical memories that define rights and obligations give meaning to each set of social relationships represented by group identity. Yet in a non-centralized society each of these social networks overlaps in a tight mesh of interactions where one person relates to another in a variety of institutional contexts and roles. The narrative map from one set of social interactions would inevitably influence other narrative maps held by the same individual.¹⁵

¹⁴ Lamprey and Waller propose that, "traditions cannot survive the communities that produce them and for which they have meaning." They suggest that if the identity and composition of a community changes dramatically during a period of stress, "it is unlikely that the emergent community will assimilate the old corpus of tradition, except in fragmented form, since these traditions again refer to events and processes in which the community now has no collective part" (Lamprey and Waller, 1990:19).

¹⁵ Called "multiplex" social networks by Gluckman, cited Mitchell (1969:22).

This chapter considers several narrative maps of the same landscape as they are represented in oral traditions. By situating each in a specific time frame or temporality I will illustrate how the definition of region changed over time. Each map identifies an intercommunicating network of relationships defined as a “region” by the social space of a particular body of oral tradition. The narrative maps of oral tradition have been rendered into maps on a geographical grid. Although a bird’s eye view on geographical coordinates is not how local people must envision or experience these spaces it does aid the outsider who has no immediate familiarity with these landscapes. These grid maps are only tools for understanding and should not be mistaken for the narrative maps themselves, which adhere in the historical imagination of the oral traditions.

The narrative maps presented here come from the western Serengeti, located in the Mara Region of Tanzania, which lies on the eastern shores of Lake Victoria and just south of the Kenya border. My mental map of this area that locates it in present day political space appears on the following page. (See Figure 4: Regional Setting of the Western Serengeti) I will concentrate on the eastern portion of this region, south of the Mara River, among what are known today as the ethnic groups of Nata, Ikoma, Ikizu, Ishenyi and Ngoreme. Collectively, I call these groups “peoples of the western Serengeti” because of their orientation to the east, toward the Serengeti plains, for much of the history about which we are concerned. Although oral traditions and cultural practice define this as a cohesive region with a common history there is no local name for this group of peoples as a whole except (*aba*)*Rogoro*, people of the east. Yet (*aba*)*Rogoro* is itself a relative term and changes depending upon where the person using the term is located. The ethnic names themselves seem to have developed in the last half of the nineteenth century.

The Narrative Map of a Region Defined by Ecology and Economy in the Distant Past

The first narrative map derived from oral tradition comes from the origin or emergence stories of ethnic groups. This is the story of the emergence of the Nata people told by Jackson Mang’oha:

Our parents, of Nata are—Nyamunywa, he was a man—and Nyasigonko, was a woman. Nyamunywa was a hunter—Nyasigonko was a

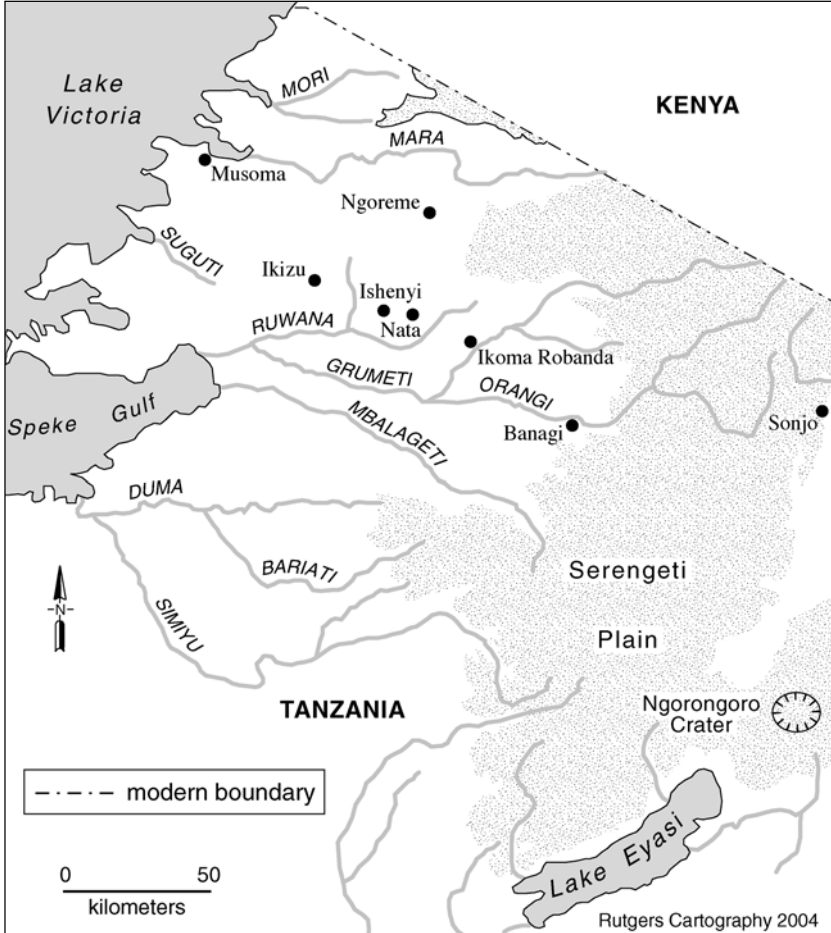


Fig. 4. Regional setting of the Western Serengeti

farmer, the woman. They met—this man, Nyamunywa, shot an animal, which fell near to the field of the woman, Nyasionko. The man, Nyamunywa, was thirsty. When he got to where the animal had fallen he saw some green grass, which is a sign of water, so he went there to look for water. When he got near, he saw there was a person coming out from that place. It was a human, like him, and the woman saw him too. He went to her house in the cave. They could only speak in signs because they didn't know the same language. The man asked for water to drink. She got him some from the spring in a gourd. She then took some millet from her field and brought it to him in an elongated gourd. She put it in his hand and he chewed it. It was mixed with sesame. She asked him, "and what do you eat?" He showed her the animal and skinned it. The man went outside in the bush and made a fire by twirling a stick into a board . . . shweeeeee. She got wood and they roasted the meat. They ate it. They took the meat home and lived in the cave of the woman. Basi (so finally), it became their home. The man followed the woman. They gave birth to the Nata, Nyamunywa and Nyasionko.¹⁶

The core spatial images of this story are the female farmer sitting in front of her cave near the spring greeting the male hunter who comes from the wilderness. The hunter then comes out of the wilderness to live in the domestic space of the farmer and their children form a new community.¹⁷ The same core images with different variations appear in the origin stories of each of the other ethnic groups in the area. These images thus seem to predate the more recent formation into ethnic groups as we now know them.¹⁸ Although the core image of a hunter coming to found a new community is ubiquitous across Africa, the form in which it appears here is representative of a particular set of historical interactions known to us by other forms of evidence. The remarkable congruence of these stories with processes recoverable through the evidence of historical linguistics and archaeology places them in a time frame much older

¹⁶ Interview with Jackson Benedicto Mang'oha Maginga, Mbiso, 18 March 1995 (Nata). Published in Shetler (2003:257).

¹⁷ The images of civilized/wild, cooked/raw, could also be used in a purely structuralist interpretation of how people understand the basic questions of life. While not denying that this interpretation I attempt to use the core images in a historical approach.

¹⁸ Of course the widespread provenance of the story could simply be the result of interaction at a later time, communities within this region seem to have been in constant communication. However, their congruence with earlier social patterns makes it more likely that they are old stories, probably not passed down in this particular form but as various kinds of stories elaborated around very old core spatial images.

than the nineteenth century. These emergence stories seem to represent a past that is so old that it ought to have dropped out of the historical consciousness of the region's people. Yet these memories have survived because the people who tell these stories continue to live in these landscapes, their lives being shaped by its constraints and shaped also by the region's cultural resources.

All of the named sites of these origin stories are places identified by elders today on the hills or rises located to the east of where they now live on the edge of the Serengeti plains and in direct proximity to woodland wilderness areas. The map on the following page shows the division between hills, woodlands and grasslands and the location of the emergence sites of each ethnic group. (See Figure 5: Ecology of the Serengeti Region) Because of social, soil and climatic patterns, the hills are the ecological niche that farmers (like first woman) would have, of necessity inhabited.¹⁹ The earliest German maps of the area and oral tradition identify the woodlands as the territory of Asi hunter/gatherers (like first man) while Tatoga and later Maasai herders inhabited the grasslands.²⁰

This narrative map of ecology and economy is, in the language of Braudel, that of the *long durée*. This landscape of inter-digitated hills, woodlands and grasslands covers an area known to ecologists as the Serengeti-Mara ecosystem reaching from the hills of Sonjo in the east to hills of Ikizu in the west and covering about 25,000 square kilometers.²¹ This ecological definition of region fits well with the geographical extent of the narrative map implicit in the origin stories, since in many versions first man the hunter comes from Sonjo, at the eastern edge of this region, following the wildebeest migration. Considerable evidence from other sources demonstrates

¹⁹ Bantu speakers from around the lake had a tradition of hill or ridge farming, the soil on the hills is best suited for finger millet which requires well drained soils, the concentration of moisture in a heavy rainy season increases the need for soils which do not become water-logged such as that in the plains and low-lands. On the tradition of hill or ridge farming around the lake see Schoenbrun (1998:92-4) and Wagner (1991:26-39). On the requirements for finger millet see Purselove (1972:146-149).

²⁰ For example, Karte von Deutsch-Ostafrika, A.4 Ikoma (Berlin: D. Reimer [E. Vohsen]: 1910), GM 30/3 German Maps, Tanzania National Archives, Dar es Salaam.

²¹ For Sinclair and Norton-Griffiths (1979), see Chapter 1, "Dynamics of the Serengeti Ecosystem: Process and Pattern," and Chapter 2, "The Serengeti Environment," both by Sinclair for an overall view. The Serengeti-Mara ecosystem is defined as that area influenced by the migratory wildebeest population," 31.

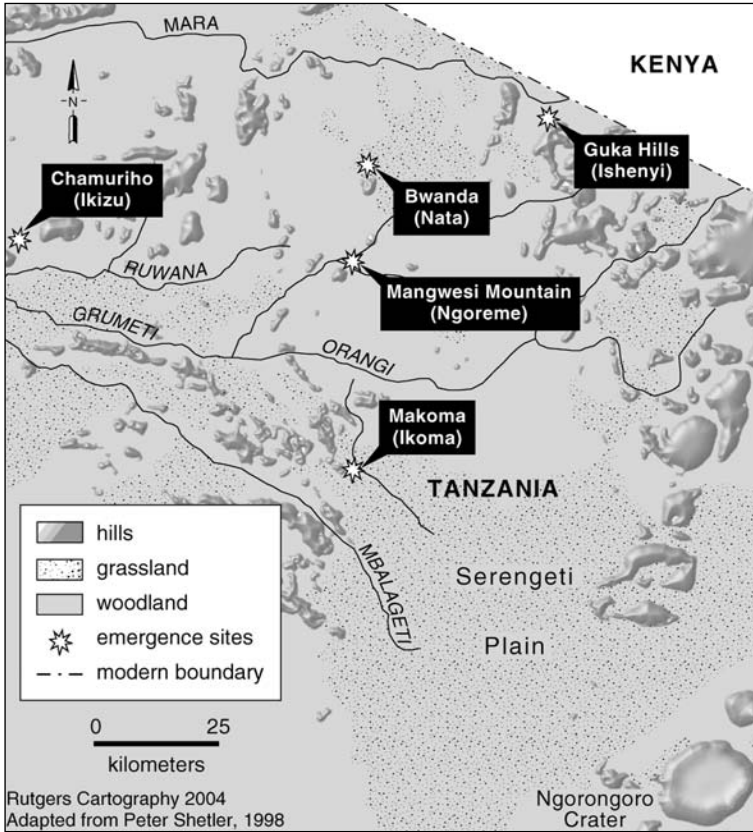


Fig. 5. Ecology of the Serengeti region

that in the past what is now the Serengeti National Park served as a zone of intercommunication between settlements of farmers in the hills on both sides.²²

The region defined by these ecologies of hills, woodlands and grasslands represents a set of interactions between farmers, hunters and herders in the distant past. From the evidence of historical linguistics we know that the farmers were Bantu-speakers moving into an unfamiliar environment around 500 A.D. where they gained rights to the land and knowledge of how to survive from Southern Cushitic or Rub Eastern Sahelian-speaking hunters who were already there.²³ The Mara Southern-Nilotic herders entering the region at about the same time may have provided the farmers with the means for increasing their livestock expertise, while the herders maintained a dominant position in the region expressed through powerful prophets.

As Bantu-speaking farmers began to occupy the hills, they came into direct competition with the hunters who favored this environment because of its location at the ecotone between the woodlands and grasslands. The farmers gradually pushed the hunters into the economically marginal woodlands or assimilated individuals into their farming communities. They gained ritual rights to the land through an acknowledgment of the hunter as first "father" in oral tradition. Without access to optimum environments the hunters became dependent upon exchange with farmers and herders in the region. Each of these three communities (farmers, hunters and herders) traded with each other but also established other kinds of relationships through blood brotherhood, adoptive kinship, cattle clientship, and prophecy. The Nata emergence story provides a parallel account to that based on historical linguistics in which a new society emerged in the distant past on the hill settlements (home of first woman) through the unique combination of hunters and farmers joining forces on the frontier.²⁴

The core images of the emergence story also depict gendered space in which the house and the cultivated fields are female domain while the wilderness and hunting grounds are male. The Nata story of the

²² This thesis was first expounded by A. O. Anacleto (1977:23-34) and by the same author in his Master's thesis (1975).

²³ Archeological evidence for these interactions also exists, see Ambrose (1984).

²⁴ For the linguistic evidence see Schoenbrun (1985:156-7, 182-204), (1993:1-31), (1998) and Ehret (1971:130-132, 40-42).

farming woman taking the hunting man into her home may symbolically illustrate the process whereby farming communities, organized into matrilineal or bilateral descent groups for production and distribution, would have diversified their resource base and gained access to the land by incorporating hunting men as husbands.²⁵ The matrilineal system of individual production and communal distribution was well suited for expansion on the frontier where the distribution of wealth among a man's sister's sons in other localities provided extensive social networks of security in a marginal land. The desire to keep some of that wealth in the homestead production unit, moreover, motivated men to incorporate strangers, whose production they personally controlled. Successful communities were able to attract new members to exploit resources extensively over a large land area rather than intensively on smaller but more productive plots of land (Poewe 1981:3, 21, 25–26, 46–47) (Choi Ahmed 1996:11, 143). Perhaps a woman called Nyasigonko (from the word, *-gonka*, “to suck at the breast”) or a man called Nyamunywa (from the root word, *omunywa*, “mouth”) never existed but, over many generations, countless farming women may have met hunting men, whose descent groups decided that their cooperation would be mutually beneficial.²⁶

These interactions formed a regional system of interdependence and a narrative map of long duration. Richard Waller characterizes most of inland East Africa²⁷ up through the nineteenth century as a frontier zone of ecological variety, in which diverse peoples occupied different economic niches and through their local networks of exchange formed larger regional systems. In this situation primary identities were occupational or situational, used as a means of controlling rights to resources. Yet these identities were flexible enough that individuals frequently crossed these boundaries. The networks of interaction that defined this regional system were based on resource control and allocation within an interdependent, rather than hierarchical, system of exchange (Waller 1985:348–9, 356–7).

²⁵ Evidence for matrilineal or bilateral descent systems, see Schoenbrun (1998:94–97). See Packard (1980:157–177), for an argument that origin myths may represent long-term historical processes rather than a specific series of historical events.

²⁶ An analysis of the gender relations represented in the origin story is presented in Shetler (1998), Chapter 4. See also Shetler, 2003b.

²⁷ The exception being the Lakes Region of East Africa where economic surplus led to a proliferation of centralized states.

The evidence of historical linguistics demonstrates that Bantu-speakers gradually broke down the economic barriers that confined each group to a distinct ecology by combining the strategies of farming, hunting and herding. They settled in the hills, best suited for grain farming and located with easy access to both the woodlands' and the grasslands' economies. At first they learned from and developed interdependent economies with neighboring woodland hunters and grassland herders. Yet as time went on Bantu-speaking farmers increasingly became dominant in the region by encroaching on the ecological spaces of hunters and herders.

As will be demonstrated later in this chapter, the last remnants of this interdependent system collapsed as a result of the late nineteenth century disasters when Maasai raiders pushed farmers farther west out of the eastern hills, Asi hunters moved east to become Maasai clients, and Tatoga herders relocated south as Maasai raiders came to dominate the Serengeti plains. In spite of these vast changes in the regional economy the core spatial images of the emergence traditions still seem to refer to the earlier patterns of interaction between hill farmers, woodland hunters and grassland herders. The fact that the herders are not mentioned in the Nata emergence story is most likely a result of the reconfiguration of oral traditions during the period of disasters when herders became feared raiders and enemies and also because of the much closer historical interaction of farmers and hunters on the hill ecologies.

In some ethnic groups the origin story of first man and first woman, reflecting early patterns of interaction within a diverse ecology, seems to be overlaid with later concerns. For example, in Ikizu first woman becomes a Sukuma rainmaker and first man a local prophet who competed for authority. The success of the rainmaker in this competition symbolizes the consolidation of Ikizu under a rainmaker, with kinship ties to Sukuma, in response to the disasters of the late nineteenth century. Yet the template for these later changes remains the earlier story of interaction between hunters and farmers on the frontier.²⁸ The relationship of farmers, hunters and herders, related to different ecological zones continues as a reoccurring theme in later

²⁸ Evidence for the later consolidation of Ikizu comes from a comparison of chief lists in oral tradition and parallel accounts from the neighboring chiefship of Sizaki in Shetler (2003a:31).

narrative maps. The landscapes themselves continue to structure the range of material possibilities, while the relationships among farmers, hunters and herders shifted and the places each occupied changed.

*The Narrative Map of a Region Defined by the Pointillism of
Descent-group Settlement*

The time in local historical imagination after the period of origins and before the period of disasters presents a different kind of narrative map altogether. As farmers came to dominate the region their traditions began to reflect a concern for establishing ritual control over the land in order to ensure ongoing prosperity. Diversification of the farming economy by hunting and herding, where the ecology varied enormously over a short distance, meant that security was increasingly sought through relations between farming settlements. The identification of individual settlements and the networks of interaction between them defined a new kind of region. People remembered their connections to these past settlements, controlled by particular descent groups, because they offered critical means for providing security and prosperity.

After telling the story of first man and first woman and their children, elders often proceeded to recite a list of place-names which capsulizes for them the long “middle period” of history. Elders sometimes represented these places as stops on a migration route and other times as sequential settlement sites. This is an example told by Megasa Mokiri from Nata:

We are the people of Gitaraga and Mochuri, Rakana and Moteri, Sang’anga and Kyasigeta, Torogoro and Site, Magita and Wamboye.²⁹

Many elders were anxious that I visit these sites and as we walked to them, often located far from present settlements, I gained new insight into the meaning of these traditions. Place-name lists refer to known and identifiable, rather than mythical or forgotten places. All of the places were located within the region rather than referring to migrations from distant places.³⁰ While visiting past settlement sites

²⁹ Interview with Megassa Mokiri, Motokeri, 4 March 1995 (Nata).

³⁰ Many scholars have interpreted place-names in oral tradition as either mythical places to be treated symbolically or as known places used to validate present land claims, see for example Beidelman (1993:67–83).

elders spontaneously told other related stories and identified the socially significant elements in the landscape—each rock outcropping, hill and stream with its own history. I found out that each place, often containing a grave, was connected to the ancestors of a particular descent group with responsibility for its ritual maintenance. These places serve as mnemonic devices to remind people of important events and people from the past. The land is a “text” of history and walking over it with elders is an act of “reading” the past.³¹

Place-name lists in oral tradition collapse a long time period of settlement and taking possession of the land from Asi hunters who went before in the memories of a generation who lived just before the late nineteenth-century disasters. If oral tradition provides any indication of time period, the sites are usually said to have been occupied during the time of named generation-sets that date to around 1850–1870.³² The telescoping of earlier events into one generation seems to be the result of the rupture in time caused by the disasters when the initiation of new kinds of age-sets began to mark the passage of time, rather than the older generation-sets.³³ The social changes brought on by the late nineteenth century disasters were so drastic that people have preserved only unconnected bits of knowledge from the period immediately preceding the disasters. The history of the period before the disasters, like these points on the landscape embodied in lists of place-names, appears as unconnected images of life in the nineteenth century, with no master narrative.

What did survive the disasters were memories of people and events contained in the core spatial image of scattered settlement sites, each named in reference to a particular descent group. This narrative map refers to the space of descent groups, in contrast to the spaces of occupational categories in the distant past, because it is concerned with the places of known ancestors at whose graves rituals to maintain the fertility and security of the land must still take place. By contrast, narrators only identify the places of origin or emergence

³¹ In much the same way Ranger describes pilgrimage places in Zimbabwe, Ranger 1987:158–194). For a similar approach outside of Africa see Basso (1990).

³² In Nata the generation-sets of Abamaina, Amatara, Amasura.

³³ This was particularly the case among the eastern groups of Nata, Ikoma and Ishenyi. For a fuller explanation of this extremely complex shift see Shetler (1998), Chapter 9. The telescoping of time into abbreviated and cryptic middle period histories is a common feature of oral traditions throughout Africa, see Vansina (1985:23).

stories as a vague area or direction, no graves are evident there and they do not propitiate the spirits of the original parents. These places represent the first settlements of people whom western Serengeti people name as remembered ancestors of four to five generations removed with power in present life and historical imagination to provide protection and security for the living.

From linguistic and ethnographic evidence we know that people organized settlements during the period before the disasters through a descent-based idiom (Schoenbrun 1998:94–97). Because land was plentiful and people scarce, western Serengeti communities gave inclusiveness high priority. There were specific mechanisms by which individual strangers and even stranger descent groups were assimilated into the community to become “natives” or “home-born” (*abibororu* from the verb “to be born”). People who proved their worth in work were incorporated into existing descent groups or grafted onto the genealogical tree. Within one community people thought of their relationship to one another at various degrees of distance using the imagery of the homestead—as coming “out of the same gateway” (through your father’s kin) or “living in the same house” (through your mother’s kin). People had to be incorporated into local descent groups because prosperity was dependent upon a relationship to the land through the guardianship of the ancestors.

References to many of the places named in middle period traditions as *emisambwa* sites, usually marked by the grave of a famous rainmaker or prophet, make explicit the relationship between the health of the land and the descent group. The word *erisambwa/emisambwa* in Mara languages derives from the old Lakes Bantu root, *samb-(ua)*, meaning “territorial or nature spirit, which protects first-comers, often represented as an agnatic group.”³⁴ *Emisambwa* spirits around the lakes region are always located spirits connected to the fertility of the land. In Mara languages the spirit of particular important ancestors who had power to bring rain, healing or protection has been collapsed with the spirit of particular places of power to the point where the land and the ancestors are now synonymous as *emisambwa*. These were probably ancient sacred places infused with new meaning as new communities emerged on the frontier.³⁵

³⁴ For the Great Lakes Bantu distribution of the word see Schoenbrun (1996:#347).

³⁵ Information on *emisambwa* from innumerable interviews and informal discus-

The people who claim descent from the *emisambwa* do so as first-comers who have authority to propitiate the spirits for the health of the land. The rituals performed at these sites mediate the dangerous forces of the wilderness for use in cultivated spaces.³⁶ *Emisambwa* sites are always located away from present settlements and people are not allowed to cut trees there, fostering untamed growth inhabited by wild animals.³⁷ Most of the *emisambwa* sites are controlled by descent groups who name their founding ancestor as an Asi hunter, from whom ritual control over the land was obtained in the origin stories. Others were strangers who gained the status of first comers by their extraordinary powers. These descent groups who claim *emisambwa* are part of larger genealogies which incorporate everyone in the settlement, on behalf of whom the appeal for the health of the land is made. The survivors of the disasters passed on knowledge preserved by descent groups because of these obligations to spirits who acted as guardians of the land and mediators of the forces of the wilderness.³⁸

The narrative map of place-name lists represents a ritual construction of space. Elders of the descent group possess and claim the land by naming these places and performing rituals at those sites. This is why oral traditions represent the land as empty before first man and first woman came—because one's own ancestors did not people the land. The land is empty not when no people occupy it, but when no ancestral spirits of the land dwell there. An Ikizu story tells how the cultural hero Muriho claimed the land by planting ancestral spirits in different places to expel the "short people" who lived there before and to guard the land against their return.³⁹ The

sions, in particular Kinanda Sigara (Ikizu), Nyawagamba Magoto (Nata), and Mahiti Kwiwo (Ikizu), Machang'oro, 19 January 1996; see also Ruel (1965:295–306) and Kirwen (1987:6) for neighboring groups. For the infusion of new meaning into old sacred places see Schmidt (1978:105).

³⁶ Feierman and Packard demonstrate the role of the king or chief as intermediary between wilderness and culture in other East African societies, Feierman (1990:69–93) and Packard (1981:1–54). For more detailed analysis of these rituals see Shetler (1998:340–343).

³⁷ A common theme in many interviews about these sites, in particular, interview with Sochoro Kabati, Nychoka, 2 June 1995 (Nata).

³⁸ For a wider reading on this concept see Schoffeleers (1978) and Maddox, Giblin and Kimambo (1996).

³⁹ P. M. Mturi and S. Sasora, "Historia ya Ikizu na Sizaki," in Shetler (2003a: 45–9).

Ikoma obtained the spirit that guards the land from Tatoga herders who were understood to possess the land before them. Because of this history, the Ikoma now consider the Tatoga to be their “father” in a ritual adoption of the spirit that guards the land.⁴⁰

Other place-names in oral traditions of the middle period refer not to *emisambwa* but simply to the prosperous settlements of wealthy and influential men who gained their position by “feeding the people” and were recognized as descent group leaders.⁴¹ The place-names of Torogoro and Site are remembered by the Nata during the generation just before the disasters because there was so much food that they had lots of leisure time to dance. The Maina generation danced on the field at Torogoro until it was pounded into a depression still visible today.⁴² The word for “the land” in Mara languages is the *ekyaro*, which also refers to the larger descent-based group that occupied the various settlements within one location (Ruel 1962:15). A relationship between the people and the *ekyaro* was maintained by the generation-set in power as they walked over the land each eight years to plant the medicines of protection and rain, assuring fertility and security or “cooling the land” (Shetler 1998:373–413). The well being of the land was synonymous with the collective well being of its people. By naming and remembering settlements of prosperous people and times of plenty, narrators identified the social capital necessary for prosperity. People appealed to wealthy patrons in other settlements through the ties of kinship and passed on that knowledge to their children.

Yet not all former settlement sites organized by descent group are represented in these narrative maps. In spite of a history of settlement mobility people still remember these particular sites while living in settlements at a considerable distance removed. Does the location of the sites themselves tell us anything about why these were particularly powerful places? Placing some of these sites on a map of geographic coordinates, provided on the following page, produces

⁴⁰ Interviews with Machota Sabuni, Issenye, 14 March 1996; and Bokima Giringayi, 26 October 1995 (Ikoma), among others, see further analysis in Shetler (1998), Chapter 7.

⁴¹ The word for a wealthy man is *mwami*, always used in this region not as “chief” but as a man with authority as a lineage elder. See Schoenbrun (1996: #261) and Schoenbrun (1998:183).

⁴² Matias Mahiti Kebumbeko, Torogoro, 2 April 1996 (Nata).

a pointillist map of individual settlements. (See Figure 6: Nineteenth Century Settlement Sites in the Serengeti). The map in Figure 6 shows only the east part of the map in Figure 5 and at a larger scale. The main settlement site of the Ikizu, Chamuriho, and the Nata site, Moderi are located off of this map, to the west. These sites are also located on the hills, indicating the ongoing existence of the first map, but further to the west than the origin or emergence sites. It demonstrates that the points of power in the relationship between the land and the people were the ecotone sites from which the ecologies of the hills, woodlands and plains could be exploited and close access to other settlements provided.

Yet narratives about the middle period connect these points of settlement, these nodes of relationship between the land and the people, together in a narrative of traveling or moving from one to another. Elders today identify each settlement site by its ethnic affiliation because the descent groups responsible for these sites are now members of ethnic groups. However, the settlement sites of each ethnic group are located side by side with, and often closer to, the sites of other ethnic groups than to other sites of their own group. This patterning could be read to suggest that if these descent groups who are now members of one ethnic group were connected to one another in the past they formed loose chains of affiliation rather than a bounded and exclusive territory. Different descent groups claim some of the same settlement sites, such as Mangwesi Mountain, showing that this was an early point of power for many.

Although bounded ethnic groups seem to be a creation of the post-disaster period, some form of descent-based affiliation probably linked these settlements with one another. This is evident from descent-based groups commonly known as "clans" which both have responsibility for the land of a number of settlements in one area and share a common name, avoidance and origin story with clans across the region. Through clan affiliation one could claim obligation from people in distant settlements. Relations of purported descent also seems to have been a way of establishing networks throughout the region necessary for exchange and help in times of trouble.⁴³ The recitation of place-names provided a map to the

⁴³ For a more in depth presentation see Shetler (1998:246–312) and Shetler (1995:69–112).

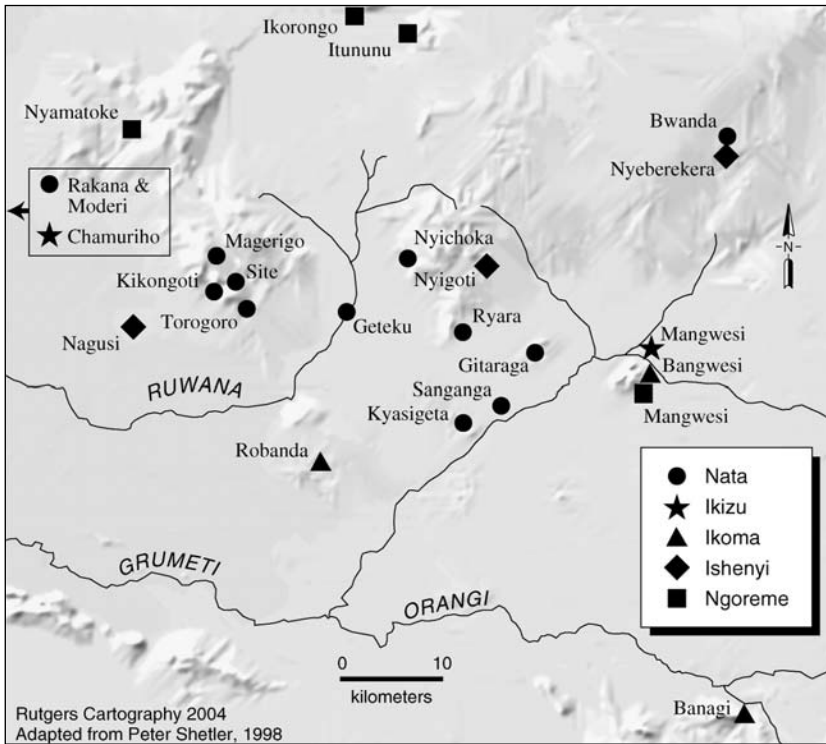


Fig. 6. Nineteenth century settlement sites in the Western Serengeti

network of places where one might seek refuge or appeal to the ancestral spirits of the land. Naming a place common to the traditions of others established a connection in the past which must be honored today.

What we learn then about the history of the middle time period is that one social unit of critical importance was the descent group, which held authority for maintaining a right relationship to the land and provided the mechanism for maintaining reciprocal obligation with others. The picture by mid-nineteenth century is an ongoing narrative map of relationships between herders, hunters and farmers across an ecologically varied landscape, overlaid with a map of specific hill farmer settlements as points on the landscape connected to each other by descent relationships across the region. The region shifted west as relations of trade and interaction with lakeshore peoples became more important. The narrative map of place-name lists is better understood not as sequential settlements in a "tribal" migration history but as historically constituted points for securing the relationship of people to the land and to each other.

*The Narrative Map of Region Defined by Late Nineteenth Century
Territorial Age-Sets*

The next narrative map was formed as a result of the devastating disasters of the late nineteenth century common across East Africa. During this period a series of famines, disease and cattle raids displaced refugees in this region as far south as Sukuma and necessitated drastic changes in settlement patterns and economic strategies at home. The introduction of new diseases with the caravan trade, drought and the spread of cattle disease set off a series of ecological disasters that changed the face of the landscape itself. Land that had previously been open savanna was transformed into dense bush inhabited by tsetse fly, the sleeping sickness vector.⁴⁴ Incoming Maasai, who gained dominance over the regional system of economic interaction by controlling pastoral resources, drove the Tatoga herders south. The Maasai, who had not established interdependent relations with the farmers, raided them to gain more livestock, particularly

⁴⁴ On environmental changes concerning tsetse fly habitat see Ford (1971), Waller (1990), and Giblin (1990:59–80).

after cattle disease devastated their herds between 1880 and 1890. The Asi hunters who had been so important in the previous set of regional relations gradually became the clients of the dominant Maasai and moved farther east as the farmers moved farther west (Shetler 2004).

These events destroyed the previously existing regional economic system and left the farmers particularly vulnerable to the famines and epidemics of foreign disease that swept over the land. The response to this feeling of insecurity is described by a Ngoreme elder, Philipo Haimati, in this way:

Then a law was passed that each parent should not have all his sons living in one homestead in one village. If a war came in one village then not all of the brothers would be killed at once. So they divided out each age-set to be one company of soldiers, five circumcision sets in all would be combined. The first children of the age-set who were circumcised were called the Saai and were given land to live on from Maji Moto up to Busawe. This land was called Ikorongo. The Saai called themselves by another name which they made up, the Mar'osikeera. They were given the horn and the drum. Others made their own weapons. These were the first company of soldiers. The second year other children were circumcised, they were called the Amatara who were given the land of Kisaka to settle. They called themselves the Bongirate and were given the horn and the drum and made their own weapons. In the third year the next children were circumcised and given the same names of Amatara and Abangirate, but occupying the land of Kewantena and Bumara. . . . In the fourth year the children who were circumcised were called Abagamutenya and were given the land of Ring'wani up to Masinki to live . . . The fifth company of soldiers was called the Amasuura and they called themselves the Abarumarancha, living in the land of Iramba. They, too, were given the horn and the drum and made their weapons. This division, following the circumcision sets, was made by a man who had five sons. He would spread them out among the five companies as they were circumcised in successive years. [. . .] [Each of these companies would take turns ruling the whole country, when they would become too old they would be driven out by the younger company who would then rule in their turn.] [. . .] At that time each lineage lived together in one settlement. They built forts to protect themselves from the raids . . . These forts were built with high walls made of rocks. In this way each homestead was inside of the big wall and inside each homestead were the houses. These settlements were built on the mountain sides and they went down toward the plains to herd and farm. The lineages lived separately because they despised each other. But they helped each other when it was necessary and fought their common enemies. They made a plan together to strengthen the companies of youth when they became circumcised. There were five companies of

soldiers and each one had more than 2,000 men (*Haimati and Houle 1969*).

The narrative map provided by this story depicts a conscious reorganization of social space, from the pointillism of descent group settlements, whose connections radiated out in complex networks of affiliation and identity all across the region, to more concentrated settlements joined in an enclosed and bounded territory of age-sets linked together by the patrilineage and primarily connected to outsiders by the affinity of age-mates. The emphasis is on the warrior ethos of these "companies of soldiers" but the logic behind this formation argues that the spreading out of the sons of one man in different areas, bound together into a territory for mutual support and resource management, would preserve the patrilineage. In times of societal stress the concentration of a descent group in one territory was a liability rather than an asset. The map on the following page shows my representation of this narrative map of age-set territories (See Figure 7: Age-set Cycles of the people in the Western Serengeti). The map I have drawn is not of Ngoreme, whose story was presented above, but of its three neighbors to the south, the Ikoma, Nata and Ishenyi, where the same named age-sets of Bongirate, Borumarancha and Busaai also functioned.

An age-set is a peer cohort who progresses through the life cycle as a formally constituted group with specific social responsibilities as part of a larger system of hierarchically ordered age-sets (Baxter and Almagor 1978:1-2). When land was given to the age-set of peers in power, of course other people besides the age-set lived there, but they were identified with that age-set and "ruled" by the age-set in power at the time. What is new about this map is that territories came to be named after a particular age-set in the cycle, rather than a descent group, and these territories were linked together into a larger territory by the cycling of age-sets as they came of age or into "power." In Ikoma, for example, the Busaai age-set would first "rule" all the Ikoma territories, followed by the Bongirate, followed by the Burumarancha and then back to the Busaai again, in roughly eight-year periods. The cycling of age-sets ruling over time linked these three territories into one unit, now taking on the ritual designation of "the land" or the *ekyaro*.

The grid map demonstrates the close relationship between peoples from the same age-set in different territories. Note that age-set territories with the same name from different ethnic groups overlap.

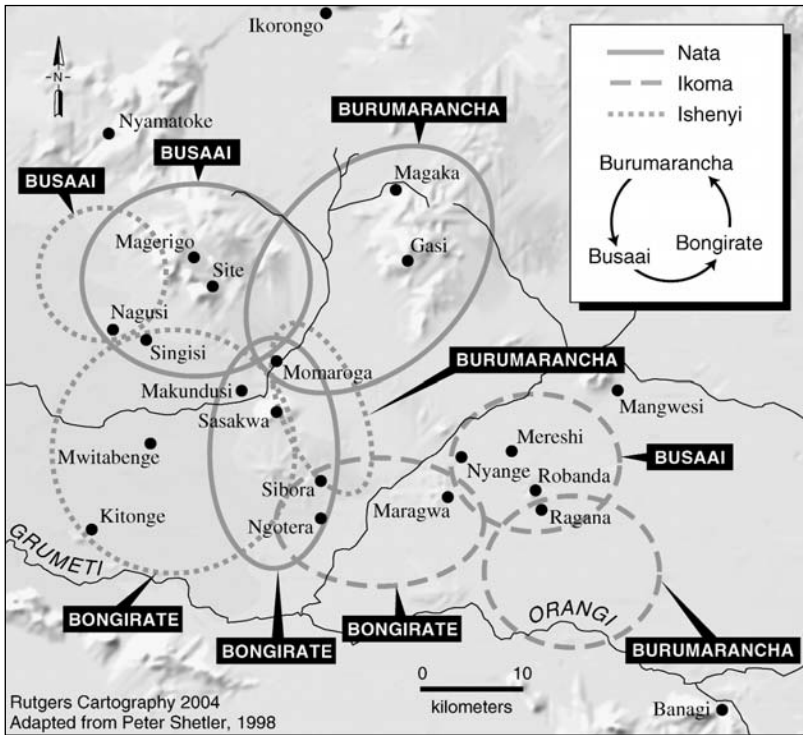


Fig. 7. Age-set cycles of people in the Western Serengeti

Here the Bongirate from Ishenyi, Nata and Ikoma all occupy what is known as the plain of Sibora. Much evidence exists that the primary form of social identification at this time was that of age-set cycles, linking a man to age-mates throughout the region. In this narrative map the region is defined as the area in which this system of interlocking age-sets functioned, including Maasailand where the age-set ceremonies had to start before moving west. In spite of frequent animosity age-set names were shared with the Maasai and they were often treated as brothers.

The hill farmers used age-set as the means of reorganization because of their admiration for Maasai age-sets, which were the most visible symbol of Maasai dominance. As one scholar put it, age organization among the Maasai was a framework for "creating a potent force out of a widely dispersed population" (Galaty 1993:82). The Maasai system celebrated and gave a place of honor to the ethos of youthful prowess and aggression necessary for organizing conflict and its resolution. The new age system was clearly appealing to young men who sought to emulate Maasai *murr*anhood as a way of gaining respect in their own communities dominated by elders (Galaty 1993, 81–82).⁴⁵ Yet the age-set system developed by the hill farmers was clearly an original innovation, adapted to serve their own needs. Its structure bears little resemblance to the Maasai system. Western Serengeti peoples used the cycling names and sets based on the principles of generation, along with the outward trappings and ideology of age-sets, to produce a system that both respected the older values of the generation and recognized the need for unity and the mobilization of young men. Although traditions describe this reorganization as a response to raids, it was primarily defensive, so that not all the sons of one man would die in one battle—as a mechanism for preserving the patrilineage.

Elders also describe the division into age-set territories as a response to the need for reformulated networks of security. Fathers dispersed their sons among each of the age-set territories so that the family always had a place of refuge, as well as wider sources of information. Division into age-set territories was a means of spreading out risks and maximizing opportunity. Because drought tended to be

⁴⁵ The word for individual circumcision sets in this region is *siriti*, a Maasai loanword.



Fig. 8 Remains of Stone walls, Western Serengeti

localized, within smaller microclimates, crops might fail in one area, while neighboring areas harvested in abundance. Elders described the territorial age-sets of the Nata as inhabiting different ecologies and subsistence strategies—Busaai in the hills as farmers and herders, Bongirate on the grasslands as herders and hunters, Borumarancha in the woodlands as hunters and farmers. Through this reorganization into age-set territories connected to each other by the ties of patrilineage, people found a way of reformulating the interdependent economic strategies of woodlands, hills and grasslands.⁴⁶

Haimati's account also describes the reorganization of the dispersed settlements and somewhat isolated homesteads of descent groups into "forts." The remains of these stone structures all over the Mara Region testify to the movement into concentrated settlements in fortified positions on the hillsides. The German explorer Baumann described a Ngoreme fortified settlement with walls two meters tall and almost two kilometers around. One entered the settlement through a gate locked from the inside, finding a large open space inside where the homesteads were built (Baumann 1894:56). The German traveler Kollmann (1899) described villages up in the rocky hillsides surrounded by high hedges of euphorbia or thorns. Near to Ngoreme he found even more strongly fortified villages with stone walls five feet high and three feet wide (Kollmann 1899:177–178). (See Figure 8: Remains of Stone Walls, Serengeti).

Both the reorganization of space into age-set territories and the fortified settlements indicate the need for boundary formation in times of social stress. New kinds of identities emerged as people created new kinds of social space. What made the reorganization of age-sets into territories so important for the transformation of social identity was that it corresponded to a different way of organizing social space. The core spatial images in these stories of nineteenth century transformation are those of enclosure and boundary formation. Age-sets rather than descent groups became the basis for organizing settlements into enclosed territories. The ritual enclosure of the age-set territory provided both a larger-scale community that unified many descent groups and made connections with common age-sets regionwide. The territorial move to age-set settlements cut across the ties of descent groups at all levels, uniting people of diverse affiliations into one age-set unit.

⁴⁶ Interview with Nyamaganda Magoto, Bugerera, 3 March 1995 (Nata).

*The Narrative Map of a Region Defined by the Social Space of
Ethnic Groups*

Territories created by the ritual incorporation of three or more cycling age-sets formed the basis for the emerging ethnic identities of the early colonial years. As people began to identify themselves with an age-set territory rather than a descent group settlement, they also began to think of their relationship to the land in terms of the age-set. Ethnic identity developed as the age-set began to take responsibility for maintaining a ritual relationship with the land, the *ekyaro*, in the larger territory of the three cycling age-sets. The age-set in power now performed the ritual to encircle the land with protective medicines.

According to Fredrik Barth, ethnicity functions to monitor access to critical resources. This observation explains the formation of age-set territories grouped into ethnic units. They ensured permanent access to a wider range of resources than was previously possible. The disasters threatened the survival of those who were isolated (Barth 1969:18–19). The descent group networks of patronage and prophecy that previously existed between individual settlements were not enough to ensure survival. The only sure method of gaining support over a wider region was to construct dense networks of relationships held together by the loyalty of “sons” who could not betray their “fathers.” Western Serengeti people seamlessly expanded the concept of “the land,” the *ekyaro*, from the descent based settlement to encompass the ethnic territory in the late nineteenth century.

Because western Serengeti people formed a sense of ethnicity within the cradle of age organization, they were provided from its inception with regional ties that transcended ethnic identity. Just as western Serengeti ritual associates an enclosure without an opening with death so the bounded territory depended upon outside associations.⁴⁷ Age-set identity facilitated all kinds of regional interaction and trade only realized by the sons of this “generation of disasters.” The sense of ethnicity that evolved out of the space of age-cycle territories was quite different either from colonial ideas about “tribe” or present day definitions of ethnicity.

⁴⁷ See Ruel (1958) on Kuria ritual.

Age-set territories were the form of spatial organization in evidence when the Germans arrived to make chiefs in 1902. Since none of these groups had chiefs, when they were asked to name one, they often designated the leader of the territorial age-set. It was only when the British felt the need for larger units of administration that the three linked cycles appointed one "tribal" chief and thus began thinking of themselves as an ethnic group. In this way the colonial regime produced the final narrative map—of "tribes". (See Figure 9: Tribal Map of the Musoma District)

The colonial officers in the Musoma District did not create "tribes" as much as mold these other kinds of groups, conceived on a very different basis, into the administrative units necessary for colonial rule. The older concept of ethnicity, connected to the spreading of risk and the ritual health of the land, is still current today. Although the colonial "tribal" map may resemble the mental maps of the colonizer throughout Africa, this narrative map of western Serengeti ethnicity was not only a creation of the colonial state but internally generated in a particular historical context. Small-scale units, closely corresponding to the older notion of the ritually maintained land of the ancestors necessary for prosperity survived in spite of attempts by colonial officers to create Paramount Chiefs and Federations of "tribes."

Yet the ethnicity of western Serengeti peoples was never exclusive and was formed in relation to other ethnic groups within a regional system crosscut by other kinds of social identities. The narrative maps of previous eras still functioned to maintain relationships between farmers, hunters and herders, and between people of different descent based settlements or age-sets, albeit in a dramatically changed context. Today, the narrative maps of oral tradition still allow an Ikoma man to claim kinship in Sonjo, patronage from an Asi hunter, or brotherhood with a Maasai age-mate. The inter-digitated ecological niches of wilderness woodlands and cultivated hills, the networks of reciprocity operating between points of ritual power and the enclosed and bounded space of a territory, each operate within a different context, and now each within the space of the nation.

The extent of the region defined by the social space of "tribes" increasingly corresponded to the colonial administrative boundaries of the Musoma District. The emergence stories defined a much larger region that included Sonjo across what is now the Serengeti National Park and Kanadi to the south in Sukuma. The oral traditions of the

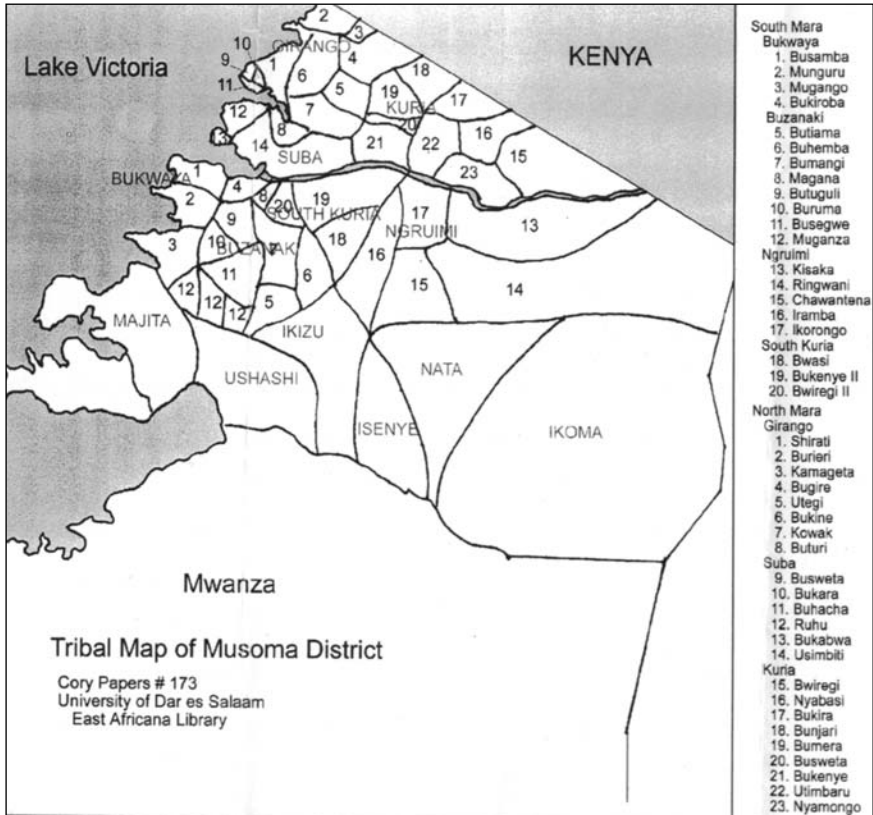


Fig. 9. Tribal map of the Musoma District

late nineteenth century disasters also included the Maasai. Although the definition of region seems to have shifted west toward Lake Victoria in the "middle period" traditions of place-names, the colonial region was oriented around the district town, Musoma, on the lakeshore. During the colonial period the region became an enclosed territory with defined boundaries rather than a space defined by networks of interaction. Yet previously imagined regions remained critical and their narrative maps recited because claims to resources, security and the blessings of the land still adhered in these spaces.

Conclusion

This brief run through a long period of western Serengeti history demonstrates that the definition of region changed over time as different forms of social identity created different ways of constructing social space in different historical contexts. The historian looking for regions defined by political hierarchies and central markets would have missed these other more subtle and complex patterns of interaction. Using oral traditions to identify regions in the past allows the historian to construct locally conceived narrative maps rather than imposing preconceived economic or political maps. Even where written sources are available, oral traditions provide an indispensable tool for identifying locally grounded and culturally sensitive ways of defining "region" and thus the past interactions between diverse peoples over a shifting social landscape.

A spatial analysis of oral traditions in terms of the regions that they define allows the historian to go beyond the histories of individual ethnic groups that may not have appeared in their present form until the late nineteenth century. Although elders today tell origin traditions as the exclusive stories of discrete "tribes," the historian may attribute these traditions to other forms of social organization operating in the past by comparison of the core spatial images of these traditions with other sources of historical knowledge. The social historian can reconstruct the precolonial African past where there were no kingdoms or chiefdoms by undertaking the painstaking process of overlaying various narrative maps from different time periods representing various social networks to produce images of shifting regional networks of interaction over time.

REFERENCES

- Ambrose, Stanley H. 1984. "The Introduction of Pastoral Adaptations to the Highlands of East Africa," in J. Desmond Clark and Steven A. Brandt, eds. *From Hunters to Farmers: The Causes and Consequences of Food Production in Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 222–233.
- Anacleto, A. O. 1975. "Pastoralism and Development: Economic Changes in Pastoral Industry in Serengeti 1750–1961." Master's Thesis, University of Dar es Salaam.
- 1977. "Serengeti: It's People and their Environment." *Tanganyika Notes and Records* 81/82, 23–34.
- Bachelard, Gaston. 1964. *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas. New York: Orion Press, first published Presses Universitaires de France, 1958.
- Barth, Fredrik. 1969. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*. Bergen, Oslo and London: Universitets Forlaget and George Allen and Unwin.
- Basso, Keith H. 1990. *Western Apache Language and Culture: Essays in Linguistic Anthropology*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Baumann, Oscar. 1894. *Durch Massailand zur Nilquelle: Reisen und Forschungen der Massai-Expedition, des deutschen Antisklaverei-Komite in den Jahren 1891–189*. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer.
- Baxter, P. T. W. and Uri Almagor, eds. 1978. "Introduction." *Age, Generation and Time: Some Features of East African Age Organisation*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Beidelman, T. O. 1986. *Moral Imagination in Kaguru Modes of Thought*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, reprinted., Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993.
- Berntsen, John Lawrence. 1979. "Pastoralism, Raiding and Prophets: Maasailand in the Nineteenth Century." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison.
- Braudel, Fernand. 1992. *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*. Sian Reynold, trans, and Richard Ollard, ed. London: Harper Collins, first published in French, 1949.
- Carruthers, Mary J. 1990. *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Choi Ahmed, Christine. 1996. "Before Eve Was Eve: 2200 Years of Gendered History in East-Central Africa." Ph.D. Dissertation, UCLA.
- Connerton, Paul. 1989. *How societies remember*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ehret, Christopher. 1971. *Southern Nilotic History: Linguistic Approaches to the Study of the Past*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Fierman, Steven. 1974. *The Shambaa Kingdom: A History*. Madison: University of Wisconsin.
- 1990. *Peasant Intellectuals: Anthropology and History in Tanzania*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Ford, John. 1971. *The Role of Trypanosomiasis in African Ecology: A Study of the Tsetse Fly Problem*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Galaty, John G. 1993. "Maasai Expansion and the New East African Pastoralism," in Thomas Spear and Richard Waller, eds. *Being Maasai: Ethnicity and Identity in East Africa*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 61–86.
- Giblin, James. 1990. "Trypanosomiasis Control in African History: An Evaded Issue?" *The Journal of African History* 31:1, 59–80.
- Gould, Peter and Rodney White. 1974. *Mental Maps*. Baltimore: Penguin.
- Haimati, P. and P. Houle. 1969. "Mila na Matendo ya Wangoreme," unpublished mimeo, Iramba Mission, Musoma, Tanzania.
- Johnson, George. 1991. *In the Palaces of Memory: How We Build Worlds Inside Our Heads*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Kirwen, Michael. 1987. *The Missionary and the Diviner*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

- Kollmann, Paul. 1899. *The Victoria Nyanza: The Land, the Races and their Customs. With Specimens of some Dialects.* trans. H. A. Nesbitt. London: Swan Sonnenschein and Co. Ltd.
- Lamprey, Richard and Richard Waller. 1990. "The Loita-Mara Region in Historical Times: Patterns of Subsistence, Settlement and Ecological Change," in Peter Robertshaw, ed. *Early Pastoralists of South-western Kenya*. Nairobi: British Institute in East Africa, 16–35.
- Lomnitz-Adler, Claudio. 1991. "Concepts for the Study of Regional Culture," *American Ethnologist* 18:2, 195–214.
- Lord, A. B. 1964 *The Singer of Tales*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Lowenthal, David and Martyn J. Bowden. 1976. *Geographies of the Mind: Essays in Honor of John Kirtland Wright*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Maddox, Gregory, James Giblin and Isaria N. Kimamba, eds. 1996. *Custodians of the Land: Ecology and Culture in the History of Tanzania*. London: James Currey.
- Miller, Joseph. 1980a. "Introduction: Listening for the African Past," in Joseph Miller, ed., *The African Past Speaks: Essays on Oral Tradition and History*, 1–59.
- 1980b. *The African Past Speaks: Essays on Oral Tradition and History*. Folkestone, Kent: Dawson Archon.
- Mitchell, J. Clyde. 1969a. "The Concept and Use of Social Networks," in *Social Networks in Urban Situations: Analyses of Personal Relationships in Central African Towns*.
- ed. 1969b. *Social Networks in Urban Situations: Analyses of Personal Relationships in Central African Towns*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Moore, Henrietta L. 1986. *Space, Text and Gender: An Anthropological Study of the Marakwet of Kenya*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Newbury, David. 1991. *Kings and Clans: Ijivi Island and the Lake Kivu Rift, 1780–1840*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Packard, Randall. 1980. "The Study of Historical Process in African Traditions of Genesis: the Bashu Myth of Muhiyi." In Joseph Miller, ed. *The African Past Speaks: Essays on Oral Tradition and History*, 157–177.
- 1981. *Chiefship and Cosmology: An Historical Study of Political Competition*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Poewe, Karla O. 1981. *Matrilineal Ideology: Male-Female Dynamics in Luapula, Zambia*. London: Academic Press.
- Pred, Allan. 1990. *Making Histories and Constructing Human Geographies: The Local Transformation of Practice, Power Relations, and Consciousness*. Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press.
- Pudup, Mary Beth. 1989. "Arguments within Regional Geography," *Progress in Human Geography* 12:3, 369–391.
- Purseglove, J. W. 1972. *Tropical Crops: Monocotyledons I*. London: Longman.
- Ranger, Terence. 1987. "Taking Hold of the Land: Holy Places and Pilgrimages in Twentieth-Century Zimbabwe." *Past and Present* 117, 158–194.
- Rosaldo, Renato. 1980. *Ilongot Headhunting 1883–1974: A Study in Society and History*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Ruel, Malcolm. 1958. "Piercing." Makerere Institute of Social Research. Conference Papers (1954–1958).
- 1962. "Kuria Generation Classes," *Africa* 32, 14–36.
- Ruel, M. J. 1965. "Religion and Society among the Kuria of East Africa." *Africa* 35:3, 295–306.
- Schmidt, Peter. 1978. *Historical Archaeology: A Structural Approach in an African Culture*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press.
- Schoenbrun, David Lee. 1985. "Early History in Eastern Africa's Great Lakes Region: Linguistic, Ecological, and Archaeological Approaches, ca. 500 B.C. to ca. A.D. 1000." Ph.D. dissertation, University of California Los Angeles.

- Schoenbrun, David L. 1993. "We are what we eat: Ancient agriculture between the Great Lakes," *The Journal of African History* 34:1, 1–31.
- 1997. *The Historical Reconstruction of Great Lakes Bantu Cultural Vocabulary: Etymologies and Distributions*. Koln, Germany: Rudiger Koppe Verlag.
- 1998. *A Green Place, a Good Place: Agrarian Change, Gender, and Social Identity in the Great Lakes to the 15th Century*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- Schoffeleers, J. M. ed. 1978. *Guardians of the Land: Essays on Central African Territorial Cults*. Gwelo, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press.
- Schoffeleers, J. Matthew. 1992. *River of Blood: The Genesis of a Martyr Cult in Southern Malawi, c. A.D. 1600*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Sharpe, Barrie. 1986. "Ethnography and a Regional System: Mental maps and the myth of states and tribes in north-central Nigeria," *Critique of Anthropology* 6:3, 33–65.
- Shetler, Jan Bender. 1995. "A Gift for Generations to Come: A Kiroba Popular History from Tanzania and Identity as Social Capital in the 1980s." *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 28:1, 69–112.
- 1998. "The Landscapes of Memory: A History of Social Identity in the Western Serengeti, Tanzania." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Florida.
- 2003a. *Telling Our Own Stories: Local Histories from South Mara, Tanzania*. Leiden and Boston: Brill.
- 2003b. "The Gendered Spaces of Historical Knowledge: Women's Knowledge and Extraordinary Women in the Serengeti District, Tanzania." *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 36:2, 283–307.
- 2004. "Interpreting Rupture in Oral Memory: The Regional Context for Changes in Western Serengeti Age Organization." *The Journal of African History* 44:3, 385–412.
- Sinclair, A. R. E. and M. Norton-Griffiths, eds. 1979. *Serengeti: Dynamics of an Ecosystem*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Smith, Carol A. 1976. "Regional Economic Systems: Linking Geographical Models and Socioeconomic Problems," *Regional Analysis, Vol. 1: Economic Systems*. New York: Academic Press, 3–63.
- Soja, Edward W. 1989. *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. London: Verso.
- Spear, Thomas. 1981. "Oral Traditions: Whose History?" *History in Africa* 8, 167–172.
- Spence, Jonathan D. 1984. *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*. New York: Viking.
- Vail, Leroy, ed. 1989. *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Van Young, Eric. 1993. "Introduction: Are Regions Good to Think?" in Eric Van Young, ed., *Mexico's Regions: Comparative History and Development*. San Diego: Center for U.S.—Mexican Studies, UCSD, 1–36.
- Yates, Frances A. 1966. *The Art of Memory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Vansina, Jan. 1985. *Oral Tradition as History*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Wagner, Michele. 1991. "Whose History is History? A History of the Baragane People of Buragane, Southern Burundi, 1850–1932," 2 vols. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin.
- Waller, Richard. 1985. "Ecology, Migration and Expansion in East Africa," *African Affairs* 84, 347–370.
- 1990. "Tsetse Fly in Western Narok, Kenya." *The Journal of African History* 31:1, 81–101.
- Wrigley, Christopher. 1996. *Kingship and the State: The Buganda Dynasty*. Cambridge University Press.

MOBILITY, GENEALOGICAL MEMORY, AND
CONSTRUCTIONS OF SOCIAL SPACE IN
NORTHERN GABON

JOHN M. CINNAMON

Introduction

By the 1990s, Africanist historians and anthropologists had grown increasingly weary of the once hallowed segmentary lineage model of African societies. At the same time, many African academics and village oral historians continued blithely to rely on genealogies as well as “lineage-” and “clan-” based migration stories as they sought to narrate African pasts.¹ This contradiction presents an obvious challenge to historical anthropologists working among so-called segmentary societies in equatorial Africa. On the one hand, segmentary lineage societies are said never to have existed, but rather to have been figments of Meyer Fortes’s and Evans-Pritchard’s colonial imaginations.² The lineage model supposedly encapsulated discrete “tribes” in a timeless ethnographic present. According to critics, lineages or

Research for this chapter was funded by a Fulbright pre-dissertation fellowship and by a Yale University International Studies Research Grant. I would like to thank Robert Harms, François Ngolet, Rebecca Hardin, Harold Scheffler, and the late Chris Gray for their comments on early drafts of this paper. I am particularly indebted to Al Howard for his detailed comments and suggestions on a later draft.

¹ According to conventional anthropological wisdom, a lineage is a unilineal kin group whose members recognize a common genealogy and who may see themselves as a corporate group beneath the direction of a lineage elder. A “clan” is a kin group composed of lineages whose members claim descent from a common ancestor whose name may or may not be known. As the present chapter illustrates, “clan” is problematic as an analytical term, in part because it tends to reify social groups and to freeze social identities in a mobile social landscape. I nonetheless use the term, henceforth without quotation marks, as a gloss for the Fang-language term, *ayong*, defined variously as “patriclan” (Nguema 1969:22); “large social group” (Vansina 1990:268); and “tribe, clan, race, people, nation. Species, genre, sort, category” (Galley 1964:57). See Mayer (1992) for an extended comparative and historical discussion of kinship, filiation, and alliance in Gabon.

² See Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (1940), Evans-Pritchard (1940), Fortes (1953), Middleton and Tate (1958). More recent studies of “segmentary societies” in Equatorial Africa include Laburthe-Tolra (1981) and Geschiere (1982, 1997).

descent groups were doomed to ever-repeating functional structures of fission and fusion based on the logic of complementary opposition.³ The use of segmentary models by western academics had led, therefore, to all kinds of obfuscation and distortion. Later, the lineage fallacy was adopted and reconceived by the structural Marxists, who begat the “lineage mode of production.”⁴

On the other hand, however, at least in the regions of northern Gabon and southern Cameroon where this researcher undertook fieldwork (1988–91, 1998, 2002), genealogies and clan migration stories remained central to the ways village elders represented their knowledge of the past. Many elders recited lists of ascending patrilineal ancestors that included up to twenty generations including those of clan founders. Elders also told stories of clan origins and of the itineraries their ancestors had followed in their migrations across the rain forest. These accounts were passed on to university historians and foreign researchers in search of equatorial African pasts.

Do such genealogies and stories operate merely as genealogical and mythical charters (Bohannan 1952, Malinowski 1954),⁵ or do they illuminate paths toward the spatial and temporal pasts of equatorial Africa? Clearly a rethinking of methodologies and interpretive frameworks is necessary, but is outright rejection the order of the day? Why, then, when asked about “affairs of behind” (*mam iya mwur* in the Fang language), did so many elders resort to genealogical memory? What were these elders trying to explain about their visions of pastness?

The present chapter seeks to chart a middle course between disdainful dismissal and uncritical acceptance of genealogical knowledge

³ According to its proponents, complementary opposition pitted members of like social groupings (e.g., “lineage” or “clan segments”) against one another, and thereby helped to neutralize social conflicts and maintain a balance of power in the absence of formal government institutions.

⁴ Structural Marxists used lineage theory to explain how senior men (by right of genealogical precedence) exploited and tyrannized junior men and women, primarily by monopolizing goods necessary for matrimonial compensation. See, for example, Terray (1972), Rey (1976). By the mid-1980s, the lineage mode of production had become largely a “worn-out debate” (Jewsiewicki 1985).

⁵ Malinowski (1954:144) writes, “myth serves principally to establish a sociological charter, or a retrospective moral pattern of behavior, or the primeval supreme miracle of magic. . . .”

in equatorial Africa. Genealogies, foundation accounts, and migration narratives are themselves complex dialogical productions that draw on ethnographic presents and represented pasts. They are, therefore, products of lived and reimagined experiences that refract the social conditions of their production and reproduction. On the surface, one might suspect that genealogies and clan foundation stories provide crucial indicators of temporal processes, of individual and collective biographies arranged sequentially if not chronologically. One might also suppose that migration narratives are primarily about spatial history—about the movement of peoples and groups through the forest. Genealogies and migration stories, taken together, would thus seem to provide the framework for a genealogical and spatial history of equatorial African peoples. The approach taken here, however, is the converse. Instead of yielding life histories of founders and other influential ancestors, genealogical memory recalls shifting alliances of individuals and group across the northern Gabonese landscape, and can thus contribute to *spatial* history. Similarly, migration narratives, while ostensibly about movement across space, have much to do with societal transformations that have taken place in *time*, such as the construction of new social groups and identities.

The main argument of this chapter can be outlined as follows. First, clan traditions (genealogies and stories) contain social memory and are therefore indicators, albeit not transparent ones, of mobility, social alliance formation, and conflict across social landscapes. The term “social landscape” expresses the ways Gabonese have perceived and remembered themselves and others spatially, both past and present. It is also used here, analytically, to refer spatial dimensions of social relations in northern Gabon. It underlines the dialectic between movement across the land and the production of locality as well as the situatedness of places, individuals, and groups into widespread, shifting networks of kindreds, clan members, allies, trading partners, and enemies.

Second, social actors in equatorial Africa invoke a flexible genealogical idiom as they negotiate and renegotiate identities, roles, power, and reciprocal obligations. In the past, genealogical knowledge facilitated not only social orders (elders and juniors, big-men and clients, men and women, agnates, matrikin, and affines or “in-laws”); it was also central to social mobility. In the equatorial rain forest, as elsewhere, social mobility required spatial mobility—the movement of

men and women for marriage and trade, love and war. Such movement and knowledge of shifting social landscapes were crucial to what Jane Guyer and Samuel Eno-Belinga (1995:118) have called processes of *social composition*, by which they mean the fluid, dynamic, contingent, “even anarchic” coalescence of “networks and collectivities of shifting shape and spatial reach.” Genealogies, made and remade over time, provided flexible maps of continually shifting social landscapes in which skills, knowledge, and wealth were spread across space.

Genealogical and Spatial Memory

Before turning to my own case, I first review debates over genealogies and segmentary lineages in anthropology and history and approaches to the spatial history of Gabon and Cameroon.

From the 1940s to the 1980s, social anthropologists relied heavily on segmentary lineages, clans, and complementary opposition to explain the basic organizing principles that enabled many “non-state” societies to cohere and persist in the absence of formal centralized authority. Critics have challenged this approach, which reduces vast social complexities, including strategies and actions of individuals, to superficial variations on the underlying lineage theme.⁶ In the 1980s, Adam Kuper unleashed a full frontal assault on what he called “lineage theory”: Evans-Pritchard, Meyer Fortes, and two generations of British and American anthropologists had been dead wrong about segmentary lineage models of African societies. Lineage theory was “threadbare,” “theoretically unproductive,” and suffered from “long-evident bankruptcy” (Kuper 1982:92).⁷

⁶ Jan Vansina originally laid out his critique of the segmentary lineage model in Vansina (1980:136). This represents an important departure. As late as 1978, in a textbook on African history, Vansina and his co-authors had used the segmentary lineage approach to account for the “spectacular success” of Fang predatory expansion in equatorial Africa (Curtin *et al.* 1978:423–424). In a 1995 second edition of this text, the authors write that the Fang peoples had “displaced or absorbed the original population in this whole area [of northern Gabon]” in the nineteenth century, but there is no longer mention of segmentary lineages (Curtin *et al.* 1995:382).

⁷ Jane Guyer, although less adamant in her treatment of “the lineage concept,” has also questioned its adequacy. She cautiously concludes, “the importance of ideologies of descent, the possibility of descent corporations and the influence of kin-

In his magisterial study of the equatorial African tradition, *Paths in the Rainforest*, Jan Vansina appears to reject lineages and unilinear descent outright:

People did not think or act in terms of unilinear descent. The large number of nineteenth-century cases of kindreds rather than unilinear descent groups is an indication of this. *Hence there were no lineages*, because the definition of lineage requires that the group's descent be 'unilinear,' that is, counted through one gender only. Consequently free men had a wide choice as to the establishment they cared to join. (Vansina 1990:75, emphasis added)

If lineages did not form part of an original equatorial tradition, they were, in some cases, invented later (Vansina 1990:134).⁸ Yet like all cultural inventions, lineages have histories that historians can attempt to reconstruct. Moreover, such histories unfolded at the local and regional levels rather than at a general level. Vansina writes of the invention of lineage ideologies in the Inner Zaire Basin and in the Western Equatorial region, which includes the "Sanaga-Ntem" area that concerns us here. The Sanaga-Ntem region stretches southward from the Sanaga River valley in present-day Cameroon to the Ntem valley that runs along the southern border of Cameroon. Culturally and linguistically, it is possible to extend this region southward to include Rio-Muni (the continental section of Equatorial Guinea) and the northern Ogooué River valley in Gabon.

Vansina coined this hydrographic Sanaga-Ntem label in an effort to avoid the earlier scholarly reliance on ethnonyms (Vansina 1990:337n). The region had previously been characterized as "Pahouin," Fang, or "Beti-Bulu-Fang" after its most prominent ethnolinguistic ensembles. These peoples speak closely related and for the most part mutually intelligible languages classified as A.70 Bantu languages by the British linguist Malcolm Guthrie (1953:45–48). It is important

ship on day to day behavior, from residence to production, are not in dispute." Her chief criticism, then, is that *the* corporate lineage did not mirror the complexity and variability of the rich and nuanced ethnographic data (Guyer 1981:91). Harold Scheffler (2000) has recently contended that the death knell sounded for kinship and descent studies in anthropology has been highly premature.

⁸ Vansina's argument that there were no lineages refers to an older, common equatorial tradition and hence to a period before various lineage ideologies were invented. He confuses the issue somewhat by bringing up nineteenth-century kindreds (Vansina 1990:75), as if "lineage ideologies" and kindreds were mutually exclusive rather than complementary.

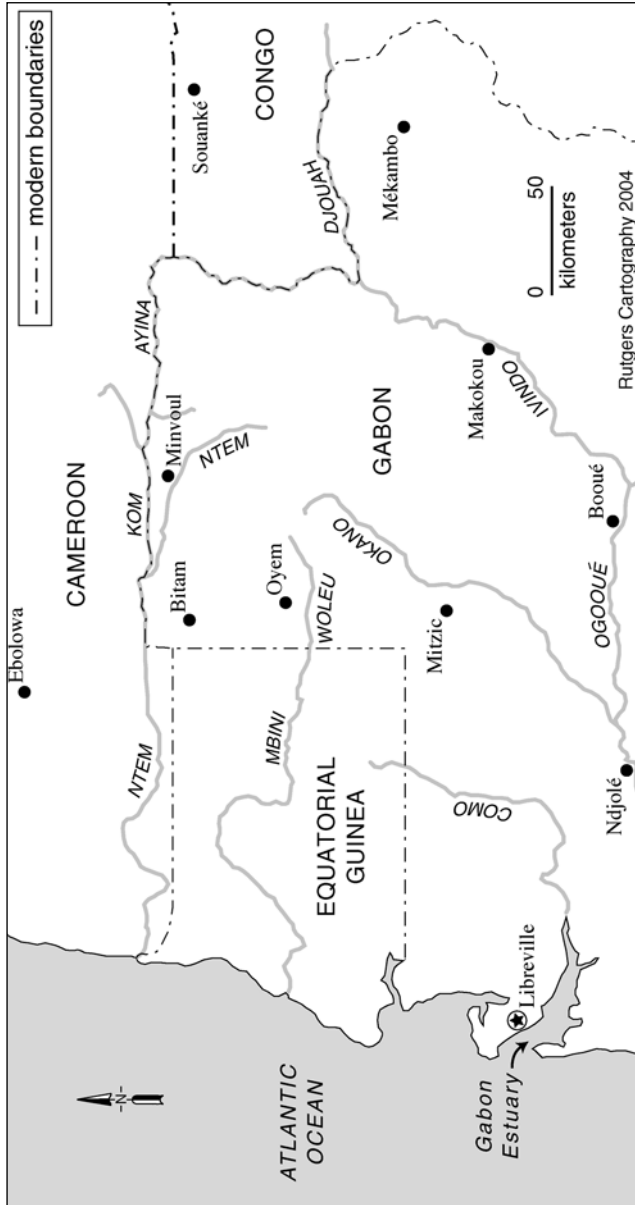


Fig. 10. Northern Gabon region

to note, however, that other Bantu-speakers live throughout the region. From Nanga Eboko on the Sanaga River to Kribi on the coast, and from Lambaréné on the lower Ogooué to Makokou on the Ivindo, A.70 (Beti-Bulu-Fang) speakers live in close association with A.80 (Maka-Njem) speakers; multi-directional processes of linguistic and cultural exchange and assimilation are both very old and ongoing. Linguistic assimilation necessarily required individual and group contacts, and therefore spatial mobility; these processes are embedded in genealogical memory. Rather than living in discrete, mutually exclusive ethnic blocks or tribes, speakers of these distinct languages formed genealogical alliances that served as crucial *points de repère* in a fluid social landscape.⁹ Genealogical evidence that hints at processes of exchange, alliance, and assimilation between Fang-speakers and Chiwa-speakers (Maka-Njem) is examined below.

Due to the persistence of the genealogical idiom in the Sanaga-Ntem region, it is hardly surprising that Vansina finds himself obliged to reintroduce the concept of lineages. As he puts it, high population density in the Sanaga River valley required “more cooperation for defense than elsewhere. The development of a *patrilineal system* in the area followed an ancient increase in population size” (Vansina 1990:132). Using glottochronology,¹⁰ Vansina traces the Sanaga-Ntem “*invention of a full-fledged segmentary system*” to the thirteenth or fourteenth century. “Early Sanaga-Ntem speakers localized in the Sanaga valley . . . [adopted] a *patrilineal ideology*.” Subsequently, they developed “a set of imbricated, hierarchical lineage units, from the household level to a large territorial level.” The “ideology of segmentary patrilinearity,” Vansina concludes, was more highly developed in this region than in neighboring areas. “A special terminology to designate five different levels of lineages (four among the Fang) arose,

⁹ It is helpful here to recall Eric Wolf’s critique of the portrayal of societies as discrete, “bounded objects”: “By endowing nations, societies, or cultures with the qualities of internally homogeneous and externally distinctive and bounded objects, we create a [false] model of the world as a global pool hall in which the entities spin off each other like so many hard and round billiard balls” (Wolf 1982:6).

¹⁰ Glottochronology is a method that uses statistical comparison of word lists (lexicostatistics) to estimate the time elapsed since the separation of languages or dialects. Kairn Klieman has recently drawn heavily on glottochronology to trace the longuedurée history of Bantu-speaking agriculturalists and forest specialists (Batwa or “pygmies”) over the past five thousand years. She situates Proto-Fang speakers in the southern Cameroon rain forest more than four thousand years ago (Klieman 2003:46).

genealogies up to 30 generations were constructed as blueprints for social coordination, and skulls of supposed lineage founders were kept and venerated.” Other types of association were less important amongst Sanaga-Ntem speakers, possibly because they “had lost pride of place to the *segmentary organization*” (Vansina 1990:134–136, emphasis added).

South of the Ntem River, Vansina explains, Ntumu-speakers expanded demographically and ventured into new areas. “First scouts, hunters, or subordinate hunter gatherers identified good settlement sites. Then pioneers, probably younger people, settled there to be joined by the main mass of the residential lineage *mvog* a year or two later” (Vansina 1990:135).¹¹ It should be clear that the residential lineage has become more than mere ideology. In other words, what had begun as patrilineal ideology later became a principle of social organization integral to settlement patterns and migration strategies. Among the peoples of the rain forest, migration (or more aptly, mobility) and settlement, form the basis of the spatial history of society.

At a more general level, Vansina enumerates variations on the theme of the single ancestral Equatorial tradition, including “two kinds of *segmentary lineage societies* (northern inner basin and Sanaga-Ntem)” (Vansina 1990:191; emphasis added). Ideology has somehow become reality; over time the societies of the Sanaga-Ntem became actual segmentary lineage societies. We have almost come full circle, returning to the deep patrilineal structures of yore to explain social adaptation and predatory expansion in certain regions.

As I illustrate below, my principal concern centers not on proving or refuting the existence of segmentary lineages as corporate groups, but on exploring ways that patrilineal genealogies operated and continue to operate as repositories of social memory that provide clues to the contours of spatial history. The extraordinary adaptability of the genealogical idiom has made it highly useful to actors as they cooperate and compete in ever-shifting economic, social, political, and spatial contexts. In the past, genealogies provided social actors with conceptual maps not just of birth order and patrician

¹¹ Vansina (1990:270) links the term *mvog* to the proto-Bantu **-bóga*. In Ewondo, Bulu, Fang, and Ntumu (all closely related A.70 or “Sanaga-Ntem” languages), he glosses this term as “the *lineage* inhabiting a village and the settlement.”

membership, but also of widespread exchange networks and alliances.

Historical memory, encoded in genealogies, stories, and social practice, can also help historians and anthropologists to rethink and rewrite the spatial history of the Sanaga-Ntem region while moving beyond the tribal paradigm that has held sway from the early nineteenth century to the present. Scholars have long argued that oral traditions contain both myth and historical memory and that myth and history are not mutually exclusive. In other words, oral traditions and genealogies both reflect and shape present-day social practices. At the same time, they provide “conceptual receptacles [in] which to order and store social memory” while containing “statements of historical synthesis” (Fentress and Wickham 1992:80).¹² Genealogies represent one genre in which social memory is encoded and transmitted. They may serve simultaneously as mythical “genealogical charters,” components in a system of symbolic classification, and “conceptualized time and space ‘maps’ in which social memory can be organized.” They can include both “real” historical figures and “purely symbolic categories” (Fentress and Wickham 1992:80). With time, historical personalities can become increasingly infused with symbolic and mythical meaning. In this vein, individuals in oral traditions or genealogies often represent groups. Moreover, “lineages and genealogies also situate a group as a clan or kinship group in relation to other such groups” both in the present and in the past (Kopytoff 1987:23). It is as “conceptualized time and space ‘maps’” that I interpret Fang genealogies recorded in the field.¹³

Even to the present, the pre-colonial history of northern Gabon is reduced primarily to accounts of Fang migration and of Fang incorporation into France’s colonizing project. Recent maps continue to represent pre-colonial spatial history as the history of ethnic migrations toward the Gabonese national space.¹⁴ Existing approaches to

¹² See also Harms (1979:85).

¹³ Of course, genealogies are not the only way that peoples of the equatorial African rain forest have conceptualized spatial relations and pastness. In a recent, path breaking environmental history of Mpiemu speakers from the Central African Republic, Tamara Giles-Vernick explores the Mpiemu concept of *doli*, a richly multifaceted term that “encompasses a process of perceiving, characterizing, and interpreting the past and present, as well as a body of knowledge about the past through which Mpiemu people have underscored and debated significant people, events, places, natural-resource exploitation, social and political relations, social categories and self-definitions, and environmental interventions” (Giles-Vernick 2002:47).

¹⁴ In a map of “Historical Migrations,” for example, Avaro and Perrois (1983:43)

the spatial history of northern Gabon fall into two main categories: (1) migration narratives and (2) past forms of spatial organization or what French geographer Roland Pourtier has called the “elementary structures of space.”

At the beginning of the twentieth century, French colonial explorer A. Cottés illustrated the frequent reductionism of colonialist migration narratives when he wrote of the “successive migrations” of “M’Fang hordes” (Cottés 1911:101). Pourtier summarizes a more recent version of Fang ethno-migration: “During the nineteenth century, an ample migratory current conducted [the Fang] to the southwest, toward the Ogooué and the ocean, where they were pulled by the slave trade. It is in fact the French penetration that put an end to the territorial expansion of this group . . .” (Pourtier 1989:21). A number of Cameroonian and Gabonese scholars, building on older accounts by missionaries and colonial administrators, continue to insist that a relatively coherent group of Beti-Fang-Bulu ancestors migrated across Africa from as far away as the Barh-el-Ghazal in Southern Sudan or even Egypt.¹⁵ Such approaches remain rooted in tribal and biblical paradigms, overstate both the magnitude and cohesion of ethnic migrations, and underestimate the rich complexities of the construction of social space prior to colonization.¹⁶ A more nuanced understanding of nineteenth-century spatial history will have to account for other, smaller scale movements across the forested landscape.

A second approach to the spatial history of the equatorial rain forest has focused on identifying and analyzing the basic structures of society. Pourtier’s spatial structures emphasize production and consumption while Vansina’s underline the social and political. For

assign an arrow and a narrowly defined migration path to each named ethnic group. Pourtier (1989:28) also uses arrows to indicate the migrations of large homogeneous ethnic blocks. Vansina (1990:133) shows how the Sanaga-Ntem group moved rapidly southward out of the Sanaga valley, thereby splitting Maka-Njem speakers. The genealogical “maps” I examine here indicate a more complex “migration” history.

¹⁵ See, for example, Ropivia (1981, 1989), who draws on colonial sources, such as Avelot (1905). Other Gabonese scholars have been more skeptical of the Egyptian origins thesis; see, for example, Metegue-N’nah (1974).

¹⁶ A classic example of such an approach is Ondoua Engutu’s *Dulu Bon Be Afri-Kara* (“The Voyage of Afri-Kara’s Children”), published in the Bulu orthography in Cameroon in 1954. This book has in turn exercised formative impact on oral traditions in Cameroon, northern Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea.

Pourtier, the “elementary structures of space” include the village, its surrounding forest swiddens and fallows, and a more extended, less precisely delimited space used for hunting and collection of forest resources (Pourtier 1989:155–163). Vansina has asserted that the basic corporate and territorial units in the equatorial African tradition were the House (established by a big-man and his fluctuating set of dependents), the village (made up of one or more Houses), and the district, a larger territorial unit composed of an alliance of Houses (Vansina 1980:145–147; 1983:83–84, 86–87; 1990:73–83, 99).¹⁷ These alliances provided an underlying flexible framework for solidarity within a district. Common district/clan membership, supported by the belief in descent from a common ancestor, facilitated mutual hospitality, defense and security, and the circulation of goods, knowledge, and people. Yet in the accounts cited below, clans (or districts) are not defined as bounded socio-spatial units but as identities in motion. When people traveled together, or came together through travel, they claimed a common origin and were therefore “brothers.”

In the Sanaga-Ntem region, clans have long been widely dispersed, so it is difficult to link them to well-defined districts.¹⁸ Practices of exogamy, clientship, and spatial mobility in the past suggest constant interspersions even prior to the successive upheavals wrought by nineteenth-century trade, migration, and warfare. Such dispersion and interspersions suggest two complementary spatial processes

¹⁷ Vansina capitalizes “House” to distinguish it from the common noun. I follow his usage here. For an application of Vansina’s House–Village–District model to Southern Gabon, see Gray (2002:11–13, 17–29, 76–83; and this volume).

¹⁸ This dispersion may be a combined product of nineteenth-century warfare, trade, and population movements and of twentieth-century colonial displacements. Yet, even in northern Gabon, districts may have been more stable at the beginning of the colonial era. A series of 1912 German maps notes common clan names and seems to link these to specific territories. Of particular interest here is the map that represents the Western Ivindo basin (Moisel 1912). This map includes the Mvoug and Ivindo Rivers and a number of colonial posts, including Makokou, Angouma, Minkébe, and M’vadhi. The map also situates the names of what appear to be a number of “clans” (pl. *mejong*) whose members live today in the Makokou and Minvoul regions. The first three (or four) listed below figure in this chapter:

Essabum (Isambun or Isobam), Right bank of the Upper Mvoug.

Essinedou (Isindux), Right bank of the Middle Mvoug.

Essansia (Isansia), Upper Wa (Oauh) River.

Ebenan (Ibinel or Ibinyeng or Ibinyam?), Nounah River.

Essisson (Isisung), Left bank, Upper Mvoug. I encountered Isisung in Minvoul and in the Mintom II region of Cameroon.

well-suited to the genealogical idiom: (1) *Separation*: As clan “brothers” separated, they maintained ties with each other for purposes of exchange, mutual hospitality, and aid; (2) *Aggregation*: When trading and marriage alliances persisted over time, members expressed these ties metaphorically by discovering or creating common ancestry. The first process suggests stable districts in the past whose members later dispersed, while the second implies that district and identity formation were perpetually emergent. At the same time, claims of common descent need not always have been linked to particular districts; even over considerable distances, such claims could foster links to make travel, exchange, and social composition possible.

It is crucial to situate these elementary spatial structures within broader regional configurations upon which their existence depended. A dialectical relation existed between mobility (including migration) and the production of locality. As Paul Carter (1989:138) puts it, “The process of settlement, like the process of traveling, depended on continuing tension between mobility and stasis: neither made sense except in terms of the other.”¹⁹ In equatorial Africa, the very construction of “elementary structures” depended on individual and group movement across the landscape: to seek out favorable village sites; form alliances; exchange goods, knowledge, people; wage or flee warfare. This led to the formation of broader social relations both within and beyond so-called districts. By the early nineteenth century, and perhaps before, the orientation of these overland networks turned increasingly toward the northern Gabon coast, where European and American traders and African coastal middlemen introduced new goods. Primary written sources point to the existence of extensive, well-developed overland trade networks in nineteenth-century northern Gabon, and occasionally suggest the economic and

¹⁹ Carter refers of course to a very different context, that of colonizing Australia. Pourtier writes of the interplay between spatial mobility and social dynamics in Gabon. He cites a number of reasons for individual mobility and village displacement, but sees an “essential motor of mobility” in “the contradictory propensity to concentration and dispersion,” especially the tension between family heads and their male dependents who had ambitions of their own. Pourtier concludes that mobility is “much less the result of constraints than an expression of spatial liberty,” itself a product of low population density. “The emptiness,” of the equatorial landscape favors structural reproduction rather than innovation of “the elementary structures of space” (Pourtier 1989:230–33).

military strategies of individual entrepreneurs. These sources provide little direct information, however, about the formation of particular, flexible, inter-clan and even inter-ethnic “alliances” that facilitated the circulation of people, goods, and knowledge so integral to the production of locality.

This is where oral traditions and genealogies come into play. In this chapter, I focus on several types of stories. The first is a version of a widespread primordial migration narrative. Although ostensibly about the migration and separation of social groups, this narrative is primarily about societal transformation, in which the birth of a clan is expressed through migration and dispersal. It also served (and continues to serve) as a powerful metaphor of common identity that enables peoples scattered across the rain forest to posit common origins. The second narrative contains the genealogy of four related clan founders. Although genealogies purport to explain chronology, or at least sequence, this genealogical narrative contains encoded social memories of spatial relations between social groups spread out along shifting 19th-century overland trade routes. Nineteenth-century European explorers’ accounts, examined below, support this interpretation. A third narrative explains the historical transformation of clan identity. In this case, identity transformation required the social and spatial mobility of a “client” (*ntabe*). Clients were persons who, for one reason or another, had left their own House to settle elsewhere, usually under the wing of a “big-man” or “wealthy man” (*ñkunkuma*), who provided protection and a mate in exchange for services. For aspiring big-men, a more violent strategy to building a House—one that circumvented the need to invest in long-distance alliances—was the seizing of “clients” in *uban* raids. Such clients were incorporated into the House and woven into the genealogy of their new “father.” Finally, a last example explores the relation between mobility, biography, and genealogical memory in the ethnographic present. This case illustrates the ongoing dialectic and even confusion between travel and settlement, big-men and clients. Big men also had to sally forth in an effort to compose and maintain their social networks across the land. No one could hope to gain wealth, attract followers, and build locality merely by staying home.

The "Origin" of "Clans" (Meyong)

When asked about Fang origins, most elders do not recite a full-blown creation myth but mention instead the well-known Udzambugha (or Adzombogha) legend, in which primordial ancestors tunnel through a giant *adzo* tree with the help of "pygmies" (*becü*) before dispersing across the forest.²⁰ This narrative remains a central point of departure in stories of "primordial" migrations and the formation of society. Allang Mba Pierre, a former Protestant Evangelist and Mvet player,²¹ recites a version:

To cross Udzambugha, they passed through it. . . .

At that time, Arabs came to wage war and seize people. Everyone sought an escape route. There was a ravine on each side [of the path]. A "pygmy" (*ñcü*) dug through the tree with an *adz*.

The people bowed to go through. The clan (*ayong*) bowed and passed. It was at this moment that *we left our old life behind*. They no longer know the old ways. Then they built a large village, built by [the founding father of my clan]. (Allang-Mba 1988, interview)

This story contains a number of resonant symbolic elements: giant trees, primordial pygmies, iron tools, Arabs (probably a later addition),²² warfare, population movement, sharp separation from the past, metaphors of sexuality and birth, an original village, the invention of clans, and the clan founder himself. Most interpretations of the Udzambugha legend portray it as a story of Fang migration from savanna to rain forest (Largeau 1901:26–7; Balandier 1982:76;

²⁰ The *adzo* or *adzap* is a tall forest hardwood tree (commercial name, *moabi*; scientific name, *Baillonella toxisperma*). Galley (1964:75) glosses the verb *ebux* (*bôkh*) as "to enlarge the hollow of a tree to take what is found there"; hence, *adzo-mbugha*, "the hollowed-out *adzo*."

²¹ The Mvet is a cycle of epics chanted by troubadours, who were important purveyors of knowledge.

²² Vansina cites the case of "the so-called 'Fang' migrations" to "illustrate the misuse of such traditions. In the received scholarship many unrelated traditions have been stitched into a single narrative, and false ethnographic 'clues' have been used to derive a people and its culture from some distant area. . . . References to horsemen were assumed to refer to Hausa ["Arab"] cavalry whose slave raids drove the 'Fang' into the forest. But did these horsemen not gallop into an older tradition as a borrowed marvel? Except in the imagination of the savants, there were never far-flung 'Fang' migrations. The unified mirage vanishes when the accounts of each group are examined individually. The traditions are, in part, cosmological explanations and tales of short-range movements, without a single area of origin" (Vansina 1983:82).

Fernandez 1982:57). I prefer Pierre Alexandre's (1965:552–553) view of the legend as a “myth of emergence.” The legend clearly represents social transformation, perhaps even the “birth” of society itself. Others see the myth as a statement of Fang ethnic identity, but this reflects the twentieth-century expansion of ethnic consciousness. Gabonese anthropologist, Jean-Emile Mbot, cites the following statement made in Minvoul in 1963 by a Fang elder to a Hausa (Muslim) merchant who had been teasing him:

<i>Fang bese bengal lor</i>	All the Fang passed through
<i>adzo mbogha;</i>	adzo mbogha;
<i>man fang ase a kobe</i>	Every Fang child speaks
<i>atare na: ma dzo na.</i>	beginning with: <i>ma dzo na</i> (I say that).
	(Mbot 1975:23–24)

Yet if “All the Fang passed through,” this does not mean that *only* Fang passed through. Bayaga pygmies in Minvoul (clients of Fang-speakers) claim that they led the Fang through Udzambugha (Amaya Azombo 1990, Interview).²³ The legend is also cited by Kwélé (Bekwil) speakers in Makokou and by Chiwa speakers in Booué.²⁴ Zembote Paul, Kwélé from Makokou, speaks of the “*Odjo-si*” legend:

There was a large mountain, on which there was a large *Odjo* (*adzo*); it was impossible to arrive at the Ivindo or other rivers. A giant tree, surrounded by ravines. They took an ax; they cut a tunnel to pass through. (Zembote 1988, interview)

And Boga-Byang Lazare, a Chiwa-speaker from Atsongbial village on the Ogooué (Booué), recounts:

The Bineli [a clan, or *yùŋ* in Chiwa],²⁵ came from *Dzà Mbùghá*. We left following along the Ivindo. All the Chiwa come from *Dzà Mbùghá*.

²³ A pygmy also plays an important role in one version of the Isambun foundation story. The standard explanation is that forest foragers introduced Bantu-speakers to the rigors of forest life. Klieman (2003) explores the long-term history of Batwa “pygmies” whom Bantu “immigrants” have regarded as first comers in the rain forest.

²⁴ I adopt here the spelling used by Deschamps (1962:78–81). The “ch” in Chiwa is pronounced as an English “sh.” Because of the cohabitation and linguistic assimilation, considerable confusion exists in the literature. Chamberlin (1977, 1978) clarifies this imbricated history.

²⁵ Like the Fang term *ayong*, the morphologically similar Chiwa term *yùŋ* can be glossed as “ethnic group,” “tribe,” or “clan.” Fang speakers refer to the Bineli clan as Ibinel.

They passed through the tree, toward the sources of the Ntem and of the Ivindo. The pygmies passed.

Then there were disputes between the different groups. Each group claimed to have dug [through] the tree. People killed each other. The Fang followed the Ntem into Cameroon. The Chiwa followed the Ivindo. They built rafts of lightweight wood. They crossed the Ivindo on these rafts using wooden paddles. (Boga-Byang 1990, interview)

Under the guise of conflict and separation, the version above states the theme of common origin so central to genealogical consciousness. Udzambugha (*Odjo-si* in Bekwil, *Dzà Mbùghá* in Chiwa) is an equatorial African tower of Babel that enables social groups, in this case clans and ethnic groups, to claim a common past. It is difficult to tell from this version whether clanship or ethnicity is the more important identity marker. By tracing his own Chiwa people, as well as Fang and pygmies, to Dzà Mbùghá, the speaker points to the importance of historical co-existence. As argued below, much of the social and spatial history of northern Gabon, over at least the past two centuries, comprises the history of Fang-speakers and their Maka-Njem neighbors, allies, and affines. The movement across ethnic and linguistic landscapes also underlines the permeability of ethnic boundaries. The Udzambugha legends cited above thus express both clan and ethnic social composition.

The next section examines a multi-clan alliance and how the genealogical underpinnings of that alliance provide a sketch map of northern Gabon's late 19th-century social landscape.

One Father, Four Clans, Three "Ethnic Groups"

When I began fieldwork in northeastern Gabon in 1988, I interviewed elders asking them to tell me about Fang history. After mentioning the Udzambugha myth, many elders launched into detailed clan and lineage genealogies. The following genealogy, one of the first I recorded in the field, begins with migration, and then turns to the foundation of a set of related clans:

Abale Ngue came from the lower Nyong [a river in Southern Cameroon]; a river the whites call the Nile. The Fang also call it the Nile.

When he came from the Nile, together with the Fang, he engendered Iyue Abale. Iyue Abale fathered three sons and a daughter: Mbun Iyue, Ndung Iyue, Sube Iyue, and Ngone Iyue. Then these children separated [Fig. 11]. (Nang-Mveña 1988, interview)

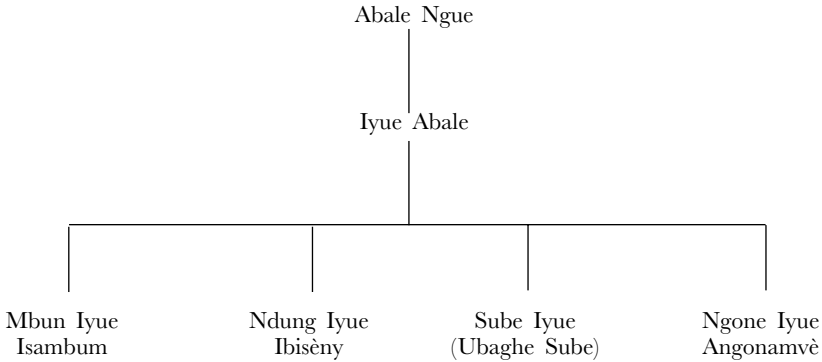


Fig. 11. Genealogy of the founders of Isambun and related clans (*meyong*)

The above passage combines genealogical and a migration accounts. It attests to the importance of rivers as key markers of geographical memory.²⁶ When speaking of past migration and settlement, elders frequently mention river systems. The conflation of the Nyong and the Nile (and later in the same interview of the Dja and the Congo) may well be a twentieth-century innovation. It also suggests, as James Fernandez has argued, a slippage between “fact and fiction,” or, for our purposes, between historical and mythic spaces (Fernandez 1982:50). Imagined geographies and primordial migrations figure prominently in historical consciousness; they express group identity and societal transformation as well as movement across the landscape. The reference to the Nile evokes the ever-popular Hamitic hypothesis, introduced by nineteenth-century missionaries. According to this view, many peoples of West Africa, Cameroon, and southern Gabon came from as far away as Egypt.

In the clan genealogy (*indan ayong*) above, each of the four children founded a distinct clan. In this and other interviews, the following information emerged about the four children of Iyue Abale:

²⁶ Fernandez has attempted to capture the symbolic import of the shift in social space from the forest and rivers to the road. He notes that Fang-speaking elders in Woleu-Ntem province used rivers and their tributaries to map the relations of “clans.” Yet by the late 1950s, younger men, “when asked to draw maps of clan lands, almost always drew them in reference to the colonial road system running through Fang country. They strung villages and clans along these roadways. While the rivers led to the sea, these roadways had as their focus and destination ‘towns and trading centers of the colonial and modern world’” (Fernandez 1982: 102–3).

(1) Mbun Iyue founded the Isambun *ayong*, well represented today in Makokou, Minvoul, and Ndjolé.²⁷ Members of this clan speak Fang.

(2) After one of the brothers killed the other's "pygmy" (*ncii*) out of spite, Ndung Iyue left to go live with his mother's brothers, where he founded the Ibisèny clan. In Ogooué-Ivindo province today, the Ibisèny are sometimes called "Mekè," the Fang term for Chiwa-speakers. As already noted, the Chiwa language is distinct from Fang. Today most Mekè in the Makokou region speak only Fang, and hence refer to themselves as Mekè rather than Chiwa. There are still Chiwa-speakers around the Ogooué River towns of Boooué, Ndjolé, and Lambaréné. In Minvoul, Ibisèny live in close association with their Isambun "brothers," but claim Njem rather than Mekè origins.²⁸ This suggests the relative permeability of supposed ethnic boundaries in the past.

(3) Sube fled to present-day Congo-Brazzaville during *uban*, a cycle of warfare, where he became Njem. Njem-speakers live today in northern Congo Republic in the region of Souanké, as well as in the Lomié region of southern Cameroon.²⁹

(4) Finally, there is Ngone the daughter. According to Nang Mveiña, "She is an *ayong* among the Betsi." "Betsi" refers to Fang-speaking inhabitants who live in the region of Mitzié, Ndjolé, and parts of Estuary province—hence, to the west of the Ivindo basin. According to Nang, she gave birth out of wedlock. This child would have belonged to Ngone's father or brothers. According to another source, "She left and gave birth to the Angonamvè, the children of Iyue

²⁷ In using administrative centers created by the colonial administration to refer both to the towns and surrounding villages, I follow local usage here. Hence, Makokou refers to the commune of Makokou as well as to the Department of the Ivindo of which Makokou is the *chef-lieu*. Makokou is also the *chef-lieu* of Ogooué-Ivindo Province. The creation of administrative centers and the resulting shift of spatial consciousness are significant twentieth-century changes.

²⁸ Njem and Chiwa (Mekè) are (or were) speakers of "Maka-Njem" (A.80) languages.

²⁹ Robineau (1971:69–81) notes the presence of Baaswop (Bassouop) and Baandjoha (Banzoua) "clans" (*mbi* in Njem or Djem) in the Souanké region. Allys (1930:18–19) remarks, "All the Bassouop are in the Middle-Congo," and provides genealogies of up to eight generations for various Njem chiefs. None of these names correspond to Baghe-Sube, but it is possible that Nang-Mveiña has here personified the clan name. The vagueness of his remarks on Baghe-Sube suggests that direct ties between Makokou and Souanké have weakened over time. This rupture is a result of the colonial and postcolonial reconfigurations of national spaces.

Abale.”³⁰ The link between Isambun and Angonamvè, expressed here as descent from a common ancestor, may very well have begun as a marriage alliance.

By claiming descent from one common father, members of these four patrilineages (Isambun, Ibisèny, Ubaghe-Sube, Angonamvè) remain siblings. This informs how they are to treat each other. One Isambun elder, Charles Meyong, explained rules of mutual hospitality between visiting brothers:

[Today], as soon as I arrive, an Ibisèny hears an Isambun arrive and he says, “. . . My brother.” If I arrive in an Angonamvè village, where Angonamvè went to give birth. The Angonamvè are everywhere—*my brothers, my people*. This is how we are. (Meyong-Me-Mvé 1989, interview)

The above remark provides crucial insight into the creation and maintenance of dispersed social networks both in the present and the past. When Meyong arrives in an Angonamvè village, *his* people welcome him as a brother. In the past, as soon as a stranger (*nneng*) arrived, his hosts would ask his name and clan affiliation (*On ne mon nza ayong?* “You are a child of which clan?”). This enabled the hosts to distinguish clan members from potential sons-in-law; these latter might establish sexual liaisons that could culminate in marriage and matrimonial compensation. Both agnatic and affinal relations were crucial to spatial and social mobility. Ekwaghe Mebiam (1990, interview) explains, for example, that at the beginning of the twentieth century his father’s father-in-law moved downriver to settle closer to European trading houses. En route, he sought hospitality in the village of a clan brother. Such fraternal ties made it

³⁰ There are also Ewondo-speaking Angonamvè in the Lolodorf region of southern Cameroon; they trace their origin to the upper Mvoug River. These populations moved northward in the late 19th century to follow trade routes toward German trading houses on the Batanga coast. While in Cameroon in 1990, I encountered Fang-speaking Angonamvè (or Ngonave) in the village of Ngovayang II (near Lolodorf). Elders from this village trace their origins to the upper Mvoug River. It is difficult, however, to trace any firm historical connections or even to know if this *ayong* name is related or has a common source. Amat and Cortadellas include a map showing the provenance of Fang- and Ngumba- (Mbvumbo-) speakers from the headwaters of the Ntem river, which are only a short distance from the sources of the Mvoug. They even refer to an Mvoug River, but, following “local myth,” confuse it with the Dja (Amat & Cortadellas 1972:73, 92); see also Laburthe-Tolra (1981:98–99).

possible for people to travel long distances on foot, without money, through enemy districts.

If according to the genealogical-migration narrative, we plot the approximate placement of the four above-named clans on a map, a northeast–southwest alignment is revealed. This corresponds to nineteenth-century overland trade routes and lends support to the argument that genealogies served as maps of shifting social landscapes. In other words, the narrative of common birth and dispersal may actually reflect the composition of long-distance, inter-ethnic trading network (see Figs. 12 and 13). Nineteenth-century explorers’ accounts lend support to this interpretation.

Nineteenth-Century Commerce and Spatial Restructuring

In 1818, the British traveler, T. Edward Bowdich, visited the Gaboon Estuary. During his seven-week visit, he reconstructed an “interior geography” of the “countries” and “kingdoms” in the hinterland of the Gaboon Estuary. Bowdich (1819:427–428) traced two principal routes: To the northeast, he identified a string of countries, including the “Paämway” (Fang, called Pangwe by coastal people) and the “Shaybee” (Chiwa) as far as the Woleu River.³¹ This suggests that

Founder	<i>Ayong</i> (clan)	Language	Geographic location at the end of the 19th century
Mbun Iyue,	Isambun	Fang	Mvoug Basin
Ndung Iyue,	Ibisèny	Chiwa (the Fang)	Ivindo Basin
Sube Iyue,	(Ubaghe Sube)	Njem (Djem)	Congo (Souanké)
Ngone Iyue	Angonamvè	Fang (Betsi)	Mitzic–Ndjolè–Estuary

Fig. 12. Founders, Clans, Languages, and Locations of Isambun and related clans.

³¹ Bowdich (1819:427) even hinted at local and regional specialization, which may have contributed to the coalescence of ethnic identities. For example, Mpongwe coastal traders sought to prevent interior peoples from entering into direct contact with European traders. Kèlè (or “Kaylees” as Bowdich called them), who lived in the hinterland of the Gaboon Estuary, sought to protect their own forms of knowledge, including iron metallurgy.

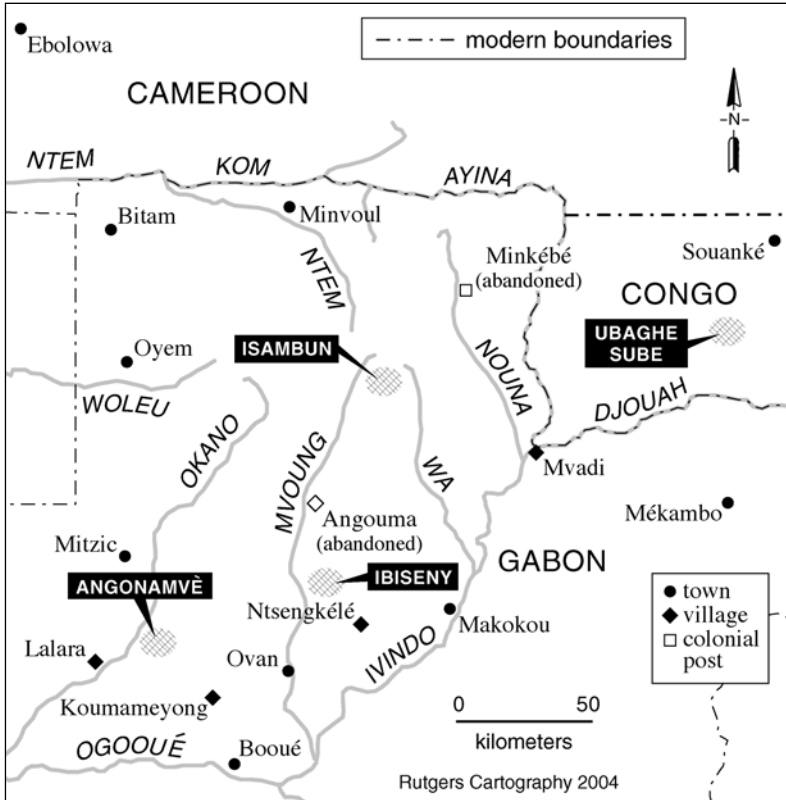


Fig. 13. Rivers and Clans, Northern Gabon Region

Chiwa-speakers and Fang-speakers were already living in close proximity in present-day northern Gabon by the early nineteenth century at the latest. In the 1850s, explorer Paul Du Chaillu traveled eastward from the Mondah River into the *Monts de Crystal*, where he encountered Fang (“Fans”) and their Chiwa (“Osheba”) neighbors. He found these two “tribes” difficult to distinguish visually, but noted that the languages were distinct: Fang “is such a collection of throat sounds that I could not get to understand it. . . . Osheba, however, is yet worse; and harsher, ruder, or more guttural sounds I never heard made” (Du Chaillu 1861:94–95).³²

Bowdich had also outlined a succession of “countries” to the Southeast along the Ogooué River as far eastward as Okandee,³³ in the region of present-day Lopé. Most sources have used Bowdich’s account to retrace ethnic alignment and migration patterns. Yet these sources overlook the obvious point that Bowdich was outlining two extensive trade networks that stretched from the coast several hundred kilometers into the interior. Bowdich gathered his information from slaves and especially from coastal middlemen who ventured inland to conduct trade.

Seventy years after Bowdich, the French explorers Crampel and Fourneau made separate voyages through the region north of the Ogooué. Their fascinating accounts indicate shifting alliances, warfare, population movement, and a social landscape in flux (Cinnamon 1994, 1998, 2003). Crampel, who traveled in 1888–1889, learned that the entire Ivindo basin was in contact with various points along the coast (from Batanga in present-day Cameroon to the Gaboon Estuary) via long-distance trading networks. He noted that ivory came from east of the Ivindo and eventually arrived at the coast (Mizon 1890).³⁴ It was by these same networks that guns flowed from the

³² Nineteenth-century stereotypes aside, Du Chaillu may have been referring to the glottal fricative that gives Chiwa a “guttural” sound. It is also worth noting that Du Chaillu spoke fluent Mpongwe.

³³ Okandé middlemen sold slaves to Galwa and Enenga traders on the Ogooué River into the late 1870s; see, for example, Brazza (1883:537, 556).

³⁴ In 1888, Crampel visited, for example, the “Ossyeba” village of Elloumendezoco on the lower Nounah River (a right bank Ivindo tributary). He noted, “From Elloumendezoco leave three roads, one to the west by which arrives European merchandise, one that crosses the Ivindo and leads to the place of the Djandjams. The ivory that passes through Elloumendezoco comes from the east and north” (Mizon 1890:542). At a certain point, this ivory would have been diverted eastward toward the Zaire River rather than westward toward the coast.

coast into the interior in the late 19th century. A century later, the memory of these exchange networks was embedded in genealogies.

Fourneau traveled northward from the Ogooué post of Achouka on August 4, 1889. On August 10, he arrived at the large “Betchi” (Betsi) trading village of Zouameïong. The “chief” of this village, Békale, showed him several cases stocked with rubber and ivory awaiting evacuation toward the coast. Fourneau (1891:200) notes that these trade routes did not descend to the trading houses on the Ogooué, but directly overland to the Upper Como and Bokoué, both tributaries of the Gaboon Estuary.³⁵ While at Zouameïong, which he calls the ivory *entrepôt* for the entire region, Fourneau met a trader who regularly made the journey from the Bokoué (Fourneau 1891: 200–201).³⁶ Unfortunately, the explorer does not speculate here about trade routes or commercial and social relations with peoples to the east and northeast. We can presume, nonetheless, that much of Zouameïong’s ivory and rubber came from, or passed through, the Ivindo River basin.

As Fourneau left Zouameïong on August 13, 1890, heading to the north, Chief Békale accompanied him for only a few hundred meters, because of war between the chief and the village where the expedition would arrive that evening. Movement across the social landscape was impeded by conflict and big-man rivalry. Fourneau arrived in the village of Azombé, approximately ten kilometers to the north, where he met a Fang chief named Kogo and his son, Ionoun-Kogo. Although “they had traveled a good deal and in all directions, it was the first time they had seen whites. . . . They knew, however, that we existed and that the most curious legends circulated about our race” (Fourneau 1891:201). Kogo and Ionoun-Kogo had come to engage in commerce and, as Fourneau put it, to buy women.

³⁵ The preference for overland routes toward the coast rather than toward the Ogooué may have been due to a state of endemic small-scale warfare in the region or to simple desire to increase profits by trading directly with the upper Estuary trading houses. It may also indicate more stable long-term trading alliances.

³⁶ Zouameïong was what Allen Howard (Introduction, this volume) and Christopher Gray (this volume) call a “nodal point.” In the Gabonese forest, nodal points were not permanent markets, but rather villages that saw a “high volume of commercial traffic” due to their strategic location near rivers or trade routes. Zouameïong appears about 50 km. NW of Bououé in a 1900 French concessionary company map, reproduced in Coquery-Vidrovitch (1972:56–57). This region was decimated by famine during the 1920s.

This chance encounter illustrates links between, travel, trade, and marriage; middleman traders frequently sought both wives and ivory inland. Although, according to Fourneau's map, Kogo's village was north or even northeast of Azombé, his mobility and extensive geographical knowledge could have conferred upon him a coastward position vis-à-vis less mobile ivory producers.

Fourneau's account of their meeting also suggests an alternate reading of the Big-Man model, according to which big men lorded it over their dependents. Kogo, "one of the richest chiefs" of his "grand village", and his son, biological or social, traveled together to obtain trade goods and to establish marriage alliances. In this case, both stood to benefit; the father's interests did not necessarily rule out those of his son. If the son was able to bring back a wife, the father would gain an additional daughter-in-law. They were also able to cement potentially lucrative trade with new affines, thereby gaining access to ivory and rubber that they could in turn exchange with trading partners closer to the coast. Inland producers also stood to benefit by placing daughters in strategic marriages to traders who could provide European merchandise and salt. It is through such alliances that a significant number of flintlock and percussion rifles traveled inland from trading posts on the coast, the Gaboon Estuary, and the Ogooué River in the second half of the nineteenth century. Women's mobility, through marriage, was also integral to the formation of broader social and political-economic landscapes.

When the reports of Crampel's and Fourneau's voyages are placed alongside that of Bowdich, it is apparent that the nineteenth-century "migration" that has so fascinated scholars took place along the axes of trade, rather than in the great equatorial emptiness or through monolithic ethnic territories.³⁷ To maintain trade networks, it was necessary to build and maintain inter-ethnic alliances. Bowdich, as well as Crampel and Fourneau, thus indicate that much of the region north of the Ogooué had actively participated in local, regional, and long distance trade throughout the nineteenth century. I am not of course arguing for a sort of timeless set of stable, static trade

³⁷ We know much more about precolonial trade alliances south of the Ogooué River. Georges Dupré (1972:628), for example, writes of extensive "clan correspondences" south of the Ogooué that facilitated inter-ethnic commerce between Nzabi, Téké-Tsaayi, Tsaangi, Punu, and Kunyi. See also Gray (this volume).

relations. On the contrary, throughout the 19th century and almost certainly before, such alliances were constantly being made, unmade, and remade under widely varying conditions of social production, reproduction, and exchange. The genealogical idiom enabled individuals and groups to navigate the shifting terrain of alliance and cooperation so vital to commercial relations.

Aspiring big-men sought to cement trading alliances by placing their daughters in marriage to potential allies or by contracting strategic marriages, both of which could foster relatively stable exchange relations. Kogo's travels to trade and marry illustrate the latter. During Crampel's travels, the explorer actually accepted a young "wife" from a Fang-speaking elder, who hoped that his exotic son-in-law would bring him wealth and prestige. Clan genealogies could eventually come to formalize alliances that persisted over time. It is difficult to date such ongoing processes, but in many cases, marital alliances, especially those formed in clientship, gradually came to be expressed as descent relations. Over time, brothers-in-law and trading partners could become, in effect, "brothers."

The Isambun-Ibisèny genealogy cited above tells a story of separation. It purportedly explains how the four siblings dispersed through the rain forest until they came to speak three distinct languages (Fang, Chiwa, and Njem) and two regional variations of Fang (Betsi and "Nzaman"). In all probability, however, this genealogy expressed processes of aggregation, alliance, and social composition in the idiom of common descent. Mechanical application of lineage theory discussed above would indeed mask the richness and complexity of these shifting social and spatial alliances. Yet dismissing the genealogical idiom would preempt exploration of the ways agents negotiated permeable ethnic boundaries prior to the colonial fixing of ethnicity. French explorer A. Cottes, who traveled through the northern French Congo from 1905 to 1908, sought to classify discrete tribes, but also noted strong similarities between groups. He considered the "Sangha-Sangha" and the Njem part of the "great family of the M'Fang . . . differing only by a few customs and practices" (Cottes 1911:101). In spite of the volatility and political fragmentation of big-man systems, alliance and trade networks throughout the region had contributed to strong cultural interconnectedness.

It will not do, however, to stress the flexibility and permeability of "ethnic" boundaries only to reify clan (*ayong*) boundaries. Clan traditions show that clans, too, were flexible, changing, and composite.

This becomes especially apparent when one considers the widespread institution of clientship. A client (*ntabe*) was, literally, “one who sits” or “one who stays,” (from the verb, *etabe*, “to sit,” “to stay”).³⁸ Clients were thus those who, ironically, had to leave home in order to stay. In the past, the client acknowledged his own subordinate status and provided a number of valuable services to his patron. The *ntabe* cleared fields, hunted and trapped, worked iron, performed rituals, fought in feuds, and fathered children for his patron. Clients and others who had moved away did not necessarily make a clean break with those they had left behind. “Strategically,” notes Igor Kopytoff (1987:19), “the relation was held in . . . reserve out of which it could be resurrected when circumstances demanded it.”

My point is to suggest how social actors used genealogies and clientship creatively to forge social alliances across the forest landscape. For their own protection, clients had an interest in adopting the clan and lineage identity of their patron. This also served the interests of big-men (pl. *minkuñkuma*) who sought to increase their loyal dependents. Clients were vulnerable, especially if they lost the favor of their patron or his sons. Yet in certain cases, a particularly entrepreneurial *ntabe* could form his own sub-clan. The following section examines such a case.

Becoming Isambun

Thus far I have focused primarily on the *ayong* or clan and how inter-ethnic clans facilitated mobility and exchange across the landscape. In this section, I explore one case of *ayong* composition through movement, clientship, and shifting identity. Traditions surrounding certain Isambun subgroups illustrate how over time affinal ties could become agnatic—thus, how non-genealogical ties could become genealogical. Throughout northern Gabon, most Fang-speakers claim membership in an *ayong* division, called *aval* (pl. *meval*).³⁹ These are not corporate groups, and in the present and the past, *aval* members frequently settled at considerable distances from one another.

³⁸ Galley (1964:245) glosses *ntabe* as “Adoptive son; implanted man; stranger fixed in the village.”

³⁹ Galley (1964:52) glosses *àval* (*aval*, pl. *meval*) as “tribe, clan” or “type of thing or man.”

They nonetheless considered themselves brothers and sisters more closely related than ayong members from different *meval*.⁴⁰

Bobe Mimbang Simon of Minvoul recited a version of the Isambun slogan, a list of names of the “founders” of various Isambun *meval*:

My fathers spoke to me of the beginnings of the *ayong* of Mbune:

Esua, Minse, Mba-Edzo.
 Odue, Ndaghe, Sughe-Mvianga, Mvianga-Mba.
 Those of Bindebe: Sèny, Mbune, Baghe-Sube.

These are the diverse *meval* of Mbune. (Bobe Mimbang 1990, interview)

The first two lines of this slogan list the names of seven purported *aval* founders; additional Isambun *meval* are not listed here. In the third line, we recognize the names of the clan founders discussed above. Ndung Iyue has become Sèny; Ngone is absent. (Fig. 14 summarizes this information.)

Members of several Isambun *meval* live today in the *regroupement* village of Ntsengkélé, on the main Ovan-Makokou road in Ogooué-Ivindo province. I focus here on the history of the Isa-Mbidzo (the *aval* founded by Mba-Edzo). The Isa-Mbidzo of Ntsengkélé live in close association with the Isa-Ngba *aval*, not named in the above slogan. The Isa-Ngba, relatively recent arrivals, are in an unfinished process of assimilation into the Isa-Mbidzo *aval* and, by extension, into the Isambun *ayong*. The following origin narrative by Mengue-

FOUNDER	NAME OF AVAL	FOUNDER	NAME OF AYONG
LINE 1: Esua Minse MBA EDZO	Isi-Isua Isa-Minseng ISA-MBIDZO	LINE 3: Bindebe Sèny MBUNE	[?] Ibisèny ISAMBUN
LINE 2: Odue Ndaghe Sughe- Mvianga	Isa-Udu Isi-Ndax Isi-Sughe Isi-Mvianga	Baghe-Suba	(In Congo, Baaswop?)

Fig. 14. Isambun Sub-Clans

⁴⁰ According to elders, in some cases Isambun of different *meval* can intermarry; in others, they cannot. Within an *aval*, intermarriage is strictly forbidden.

Me-Seh Marie, Isa-Ngba of Ntsengkélé, sheds light on a number of intersecting spatial processes—social composition, clientship, village settlement and displacement, post-marital residence and its implication for social identity, and the movement across ethnic and clan boundaries. The narrator explains that a woman's brother did not want her to leave in marriage, and therefore prevailed upon her Isa-Ngba brother-in-law to stay with his wife's people. In so doing, the brother-in-law became a client:

Thus, I am Sè-Udume. Udume-Sè and Nno-Sè were born with their sister, Bikè-Bi-Sè, who did not leave in marriage. An Isa-Ngba came to desire her and became her lover. Three sons were born of this union.

Nno-Sè did not want his sister to leave in marriage in spite of the children. He asked his brother-in-law to come live with them, among the Isa-Mbidzo. They had more children. These children also had their children and the family had to separate. Some were at Iyem and others at Minsegha. From these villages, everyone reunited at Foli.

Then, my grandfather asked that they no longer call Bikè's sons Isa-Ngba but rather Isa-Mbidzo. But they had been Isa-Ngba—[of the] Ibinyam [*ayong*].⁴¹

In this way, their sons could not marry the Isa-Mbidzo, and an Isa-Mbidzo son could not marry their daughters. But they did marry each other's widows according to "custom."

Once they arrived on the main road [in Ntsengkélé, c. 1953], the Isa-Ngba considered themselves Isa-Mbidzo. According to what my father taught me, I am of Isa-Mbidzo blood as are my sons and grandsons. No one is a *notable* [influential village elder or village official], because my father's sister gave birth to them outside of marriage.⁴²

They were born at Ifung-Mengbang. My father's sister was at Ifung, while the Isa-Ngba were at Iyem. The Mekè were down-river and we the [Fang] Nzaman were upriver; for my ancestors came from Minlue and Myene [Rivers] at the sources of the Mvoug. (Mengue-Me-Seh 1991, interview)

The above narrative underlines the close connection between the genealogical imagination and conceptualizations of social space. First, identifiable geographical markers, here villages and rivers, repopu-

⁴¹ Ibinyam is a Mekè or Chiwa clan. Deschamps (1962:80) lists the "Binyambi" as a Chiwa clan.

⁴² The narrator implies that natural children retained inferior status throughout their lives, but there are many exceptions to this "norm." Sisters' sons were often favored by their mothers' brothers.

late the history of the now depopulated Minkébé forest to the north of Makokou. Mvoung River tributaries (whence the narrator's ancestors came) figure prominently in Isambun migration narratives. The village of Foli, where "everyone united," was on the old Makokou-Mitzic road abandoned in the early 1950s. Fang-speakers call this road Ndzong-Angouma (lit. the Angouma road), after a colonial post on the Mvoung River abandoned by the French in 1919. These references to old villages and colonial posts provide crucial markers in the history of bygone landscapes, whose residues nonetheless continue to inform social relations in the present. Elders can often name a half-dozen or more villages and associated rivers where they and their immediate forebears lived before relocating to the main road. Their accounts, such as the one cited above, emphasize processes not only of separation, but also of reuniting.

It is significant perhaps that the Isa-Ngba ancestor remains unnamed; his offspring have adopted the identities of their mother's brothers (the Isa-Mbidzo). This Isa-Ngba left his own people to settle in the village of his lover (*ibòn*), which would have made him a client. His story provides a counter-narrative of social and spatial mobility in this predominantly virilocal region. A number of factors may have influenced his change of residence: warfare, sorcery or adultery accusations, trade or marriage opportunities.

Mengue-Me-Seh's narrative provides a microhistory of shifting social landscapes and points toward broader processes of intergenerational identity shifts that could take place when men settled with their in-laws. Such shifts in identity, though partially disguised by genealogical fictions, were not exceptional, but ordinary. Similar stories can be heard in every village and in many Houses. Social actors, including big-men who competed for dependents, resorted to genealogies to recompose localities in response to the social opportunity, volatility, and mobility that existed in nineteenth- and twentieth-century northern Gabon.

The Isa-Ngba case is particularly revealing because past social affiliations remain in living memory. The client-founder of the Isa-Ngba seems to have come from the Ibinyam *ayong* (former Chiwa-speakers). Mengue-Me-Se expresses the shift in identity by referring to her people as "Nzaman," hence Fang, rather than Mekè. Over several generations, the descendants of the original uxorilocal marriage have begun to shed their former identity, largely adopting that of their mother's brothers (Isa-Mbidzo). Hence, in this case, "sister's

sons” (pl. *bobekal*) have gradually become “sons” (*bon*). When I undertook a census in Ntsengkélé in 1988, some Isa-Ngba called themselves by that name while others declared that they were Isa-Mbidzo. Maintaining such ambiguity affords individuals room to maneuver in different contexts. In any case, both Isa-Ngba and Isa-Mbidzo call each other brother and sister, no longer intermarry, and claim membership in the larger Isambun *ayong*.

But why through the years has Isa-Ngba identity not completely merged with that of the Isa-Mbidzo? Mengue-Me-Seh underlines the strong ties with the Isa-Mbidzo, but openly acknowledges her Ibinyam origins. Similarly, most Isa-Mbidzo in Ntsengkélé claim the Isa-Ngba as theirs, while recognizing their distinct provenance. Yet as far as I could tell, Isa-Mbidzo did not consider the Isa-Ngba as clients or social inferiors in any way. Finally, Isansia clan elder and *notable*, Ekwaghe-Mebiam François, recalled the former affiliation between the Isa-Ngba and *his* clan. When asked about relations between Isansia and Mekè, Ekwaghe replied, “The Ibinyam, . . . the Isa-Ngba who are at Ntsengkélé are in the place of their mother’s brothers (*benyandume*) . . ., but are of Isansia origin” (Ekwaghe-Mebiam 1990, interview).⁴³ In Ekwaghe’s eyes, the Isa-Ngba at Ntsengkélé are *his* people, *his* brothers. He sees them as lapsed Isansia, who have left one set of alliances for another (with Isambun). His account reflects an earlier process of social composition, in which Isansia and Ibinyam formed an alliance and came to see one another as genealogically related. Very possibly, various individuals—Isa-Ngba, Isambun, Ibinyam, Isansia and others—have all employed the ambiguous and shifting Isa-Ngba identity to make claims in particular situations. Ekwaghe speaks as an aging Isansia big-man; in effect, his claims suggest that the Isa-Ngba could move back “home” should the need arise.

These expressions of shifting clan affiliation illustrate the flexibility and power of the genealogical idiom in action. Big-men surely used the idiom as they sought to attract clients; but there was much more to it than that. Technically, the Isa-Ngba were clients, but there

⁴³ The Isansia are an important *ayong* in Makokou and Minvoul and claim genealogical ties with a number of *meyong* in other areas.

seems to be no memory of subordinate status.⁴⁴ Is this because genealogical memory has successfully masked past inequalities? Or can one infer that not only big-men but all social actors constantly used the idiom to negotiate mobility and shifting identities in a fluid landscape?⁴⁵

Negotiating Social Inequalities: Clients and Social Mobility

The ambiguous status of clients vis-à-vis big-men enables us to examine the negotiation of social equality and inequality. Like slaves elsewhere in equatorial Africa, the *ntabe* owed loyalty and labor to his benefactor and may have been compelled to make displays of submission. His own children belonged to his adoptive father's House and clan. If he left, his children usually stayed behind. Isaac Nguema (1969:259–63) contends that Ntumu clients remained permanent sons and younger brothers who could not accede to elder status. Clients were also vulnerable to sorcery and adultery accusations (made by jealous adoptive agnates) for which they could be killed or expelled. The social and spatial mobility of clients thus carried risks.

Yet unlike slaves, the *ntabe* retained his former identity and enjoyed, at least in theory, the possibility of returning to his people, moving to a better situation, or even establishing his own House. (As suggested above, this may have been true in the Isa-Ngba case.) The very ambiguity of *ntabe* status as son (insider) and stranger (outsider) could lead to opportunities for the enterprising. The above-mentioned vulnerability to sorcery accusations indicates that clients could inspire fear; they possessed special knowledge that made them both useful and potentially dangerous to their patrons. A *ntabe* contributed to the strength of his patron, whom he called father, and to that of the House, village, and clan. He could make himself indispensable, not only to his father, but to his adoptive brothers, thereby affirming

⁴⁴ The first chief of Ntsengkélé when it was founded in 1953 was Ngoung-Memiaghe, an Isa-Ngba. Mengue-Me-Sch's comment about lack of "notable" status seems to refer to more recent births of children born out of wedlock.

⁴⁵ Vansina (1983:85) argues that the lineage ideology masked inequalities between big men and their dependents: "The lineage model tended to hide the fact that the full members of the core line were a minority, lording it over clients and pawns, over slaves and women." Social inequalities surely existed, but both Vansina and French Marxists may understate the social mobility of "dependent" males.

his identity as a loyal adopted son and brother-in-law. In this sense, his responsibilities were scarcely different from those of his “brothers.” With the passage of time, he could marry additional wives, have children, accede to elder status, and perhaps even work his way into a genealogy. In the Isindux clan foundation story, it is an outsider (a smith and warrior), who vindicates his patron by killing the patron’s archenemy. In some versions, this talented outsider has murdered his wife and been ostracized by his own brothers, and is therefore available for incorporation elsewhere. He replaces his patron’s slain son and goes on to found a number of related Isindux *meval*. This legend is clearly mythical, but implies that skillful clients could aspire to social success as big-men and ancestors in their own right.

In *Games Against Nature*, Robert Harms demonstrates the dynamic interaction of matrilineal lineage ideologies, big-man competition, and the maneuvers of shrewd subordinates. Big-men in the swamps of the Ngiri River valley manipulated a lineage ideology both to legitimize achieved social eldership and to consolidate power over a variety of dependents, including affines, slaves, and clients. At the same time, trusted slaves of Zaire River fishermen and traders could gain considerable wealth and influence, ultimately succeeding their masters as trading big-men. Members of Nunu composite matrilineages did not passively accept the power of elder brothers and mother’s brothers. Instead, they constantly competed with one another for access to wealth and power. “Because the inheritance and distribution of wealth were carried out primarily within the extended matrilineal family, the matrilineage was a major arena of conflict between uncles and their nephews, and between elder brothers and their siblings” (Harms 1987:121–122). Within these systems, slaves and clients also sought to use lineages to legitimize their own claims. Thus, in the Middle Zaire River basin, as in northern Gabon, genealogical (or descent) idioms reflected and shaped bigmanship and clientship, social competition, as well as social and spatial mobility linked to commerce.

In Northern Gabon, not only big-men seeking dependents, but also clients and other subordinate social actors had recourse to a spatialized genealogical idiom. Thus, big-men sought to provide ideological support to their efforts to build localities (Houses and villages in Vansina’s terminology) by grafting mobile clients and clients’ offspring onto the family tree. Conversely, clients might hope to put

down roots by learning their patron's genealogy. The genealogical idiom fostered mobility, exchange, and social composition over considerable distances.

For aspiring big-men, a shortcut to building up a House was through the "seizing of people" (*ebyi bur*), usually women and children. This in turn might force the bereft, impoverished men to venture out as potential clients. In a discussion of the generalized state of warfare called *uban* or *ifufue*, Ekoume-Mebale Pierre shows how the genealogical idiom was used to socialize incoming clients. Ekoume-Mebale speaks here in general terms, so it is difficult to situate his discussion in a particular time and place. It is nonetheless clear that *uban* raids constituted another, more violent form of social mobility and locality building:

They took only children not adults. If they arrived in a village they considered large, they might take four children, two girls and two boys. They would pass them to the rear.

They would continue in this way until they reached the place where they knew they would have to stop. Then they would make their getaway. Upon their return to the village, they gave people to those who had helped them—to each village they might give two children.

When they come with these people, they line them up and change their names. They give them names from our *meyong*. They make them undergo the "fetish test" (*minkal*). They give them medicines (*mebyang*).

They said, "Think no longer of your [old] village."

[Then they would address their own villagers:] "You, child, if you quarrel with one of these people, do not tell him that we've taken him as a *ntabe* (client), or that we seized him in *ifufue*." (Ekoume-Mebale 1989, interview)

Uban raids follow the dialectic between mobility and settlement, and represent a distinct but parallel form of social composition and locality building. As in long-distance trade, raiders move across the forest in search of the social capital they needed to make their House a viable unit of production, reproduction, and defense. Raiders surely drew on geographical and social knowledge gained in trading voyages, which suggests that raiding and trading were not mutually exclusive. In *uban* raids, however, there was no effort to invest in long-distance alliances necessary for commerce. Instead, neighboring villages assembled raiding parties that moved rapidly over the landscape to replenish their own villages by seizing the wives and children of distant enemies. Long-distance raids clearly

differ from more localized feuds in which disputants perforce knew one another.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, local feuds were also connected to the production of locality. They frequently arose from disputes over women or matrimonial compensation so central to ambitious men's best-laid schemes.

It is evident from Ekoume-Mebale's account of *uban* that the violent social and geographical uprooting of captives required elaborate rites of incorporation. These included name changing ceremonies, consumption of medicines, and the warning to others not to reveal the outsider origins of their client-siblings. Collective collusion was necessary to maintain genealogical fictions, which provided the framework for social relations and building localities. Not only did the big-man benefit by increasing the number of his dependents; the entire group was strengthened at a time of great insecurity. The converse was also true: demystifying such necessary fictions in situations of local conflict could undermine social cohesion and lead to the collapse and dispersal of a House.

The use of genealogical fictions recalls Pierre Bourdieu's discussion of ambiguous kinship ties that result from the endogamous marriage preferences of Kabyle (Algeria):

The true status of kin relationships, principles of structuration of the social world which, as such, always fulfill a political function, is most clearly seen in the different uses which men and women can make of the same field of genealogical relationships, and in particular in their different 'readings' and 'uses' of genealogically ambiguous kinship ties . . . (Bourdieu 1977:41)

Bourdieu refers to official and heretical accounts of the multiple kin ties that result from Kabyle endogamous marriage practices (Bourdieu 1977:41, 43),⁴⁷ but the implications of his observations help to elucidate the northern Gabon case. Although the patrilineal ideology may have served to uphold a big-man dominated political and

⁴⁶ Vansina identifies two types of warfare in the "equatorial tradition," restricted and destructive. In restricted war elders of either side controlled the fighting to limit casualties. Destructive war was "intended to chase away the enemy, to take his lands, to plunder his wealth, *often to take captives*. . . . Destructive wars often involved sets of villages, and even sets of districts" (Vansina 1990:80, emphasis added).

⁴⁷ In the Kabyle case, a husband can be related to his wife both patrilineally through his father and matrilineally through his mother; in public the patrilineal tie is emphasized.

economic order, other social actors (non-big-men), also used this ideology to pursue their own strategies in ways that both affirmed and undercut the power of big-men. This provides for a more nuanced and balanced understanding of how genealogical idioms operated in the past. As Bourdieu puts it, “the ideological trap works in both ways: too much faith in native accounts can lead one to present a mere ideological screen as the norm of practice . . .” It is necessary, therefore, to question not only village genealogies, but also British structural-functionalists’ and structural Marxists’ reliance on lineage theory. Yet as Bourdieu goes on to point out, that is only half the story. At the same time, “too much distrust of [‘native’ accounts] may cause one to neglect the social function of a lie socially devised and encouraged, one of the means agents have of correcting the symbolic effects of strategies imposed by other necessities” (Bourdieu 1977:43). In northern Gabon, such social “lies” were not invented out of thin air; they reflected shifting social alliances in a volatile, fragmented, segmentary social landscape. In the nineteenth century and to an extent even today, genealogical fictions contained the flexible truths without which individual movement and shifting group membership would have been impossible.

I have focused on clients here because their social and spatial mobility illustrates the useful ambiguity of kinship and clan affiliation as well as the dialectic between movement and settlement. The creative though not infinitely flexible manipulation of the genealogical idiom persists in the ethnographic present. Evidence of such manipulation emerges during interpersonal conflict, when people blurt out poorly kept secrets (e.g., sorcery accusations or genealogical fictions). When I was in the field, a local regroupment chief (administratively above the village chief) claimed to be of the Isambun clan and the Isu-Utsax *aval*. He nicknamed himself “Dynamique” because of his enthusiastic support (at least until the advent of multi-partyism in 1990) for the ruling *Parti Démocratique Gabonais* (PDG).⁴⁸ Prior to being named regroupment chief, he had been president of the village PDG committee. Dynamique worked hard. He planted sugar cane, for

⁴⁸ In 1990, with the reintroduction of multi-party “democracy,” the region shifted en masse to the opposition *Rassemblement National des Bûcherons* (RNB), led by Father Paul Mba-Abessole. By the late 1990s, as the PDG reconsolidated power in the region, Dynamique shifted his loyalties back to the ruling party.

example, that three of his four wives made into sugar cane wine (*melama*) to earn money.⁴⁹ In former years, he had also earned money by working in downriver logging camps and by growing cocoa as a cash crop. Although he had no children of his own and lacked public speaking skills, Dynamique clearly sought big-man recognition. His youngest wife, in her twenties, gave birth to a son in 1989. She had been away from the village for long periods of time, and people whispered that the chief had not fathered the child. Nonetheless, he had paid matrimonial compensation, and was recognized as the father.

In addition to having four wives, Dynamique also kept a *ntabe* of sorts. A young man from Mitzic had come to the village ostensibly to look for alluvial gold. He lived with Dynamique and contributed to the House economy by clearing fields and hunting. He had also brought two young hunters from Equatorial Guinea, who provided game to Dynamique's household and sold surplus meat in the village.⁵⁰ All three took lovers (pl. *bibon*) from the village. Although motivated by the allure of a cash economy, the temporary residence of all three *mintabe* replicated older patterns of social mobility.

When I had asked Dynamique for information about the history and genealogy of the Isu-Utsax and Isambun, he declared himself unable to reply. This was surprising for an elder, because such knowledge remained important to those who sought to mobilize *ayong* support for their endeavors. One day I learned why Dynamique had not answered my questions. Because of his temper and lack of diplomatic skills, his relations with other villagers were often strained.⁵¹ On the day in question, he had had an argument with one of his Isu-Utsax brothers. The brother, a man who himself possessed few leadership skills, had told Dynamique that he would take no orders

⁴⁹ Until the very recent introduction of imported cane presses, crushing sugar cane was an extremely labor-intensive operation. People used a simple wooden hand press to squeeze the juice from cane. It usually took two days of tedious work to fill a twenty-liter demijohn.

⁵⁰ Although these men made no pretenses of adopting local lineage identities, any children they fathered would belong to the mother's family.

⁵¹ Genealogical knowledge and speaking skills were primary attributes of effective big-men or chiefs. People were also jealous of Dynamique's social successes and perhaps suspicious of his self-interested loyalties to the authoritarian PDG. He had built a stockade of saplings around the front of his house, the only such barrier in the village; villagers occasionally grumbled about this.

from a *ntabe*! It turned out that Dynamique was a sister's son (*mankal*). He had been born in his father's village but had lost his parents at an early age—perhaps in the great famine of 1925—and come to live with his mother's brothers, the Isu-Utsax. One might conclude that, even at present, no *ntabe* or sister's son can pretend to big-man status or genuine authority, but such is not the case. Authority within this society has always been conditional and open to dispute. Dynamique attempted to impose himself, but lacked the necessary diplomatic skills to bring people around to his point of view. Although he had succeeded on many fronts and had claimed Isambun (Isu-Utsax) identity—an identity normally accepted—his much less successful brother had later used this same ideology to challenge Dynamique's claim to authority. “And you call yourself an Isu-Utsax?”

Dynamique's own biography illustrates the ongoing importance of the genealogical idiom, social mobility, as well as the spatial ruptures of colonization. The early decades of the twentieth century were characterized by colonial penetration, labor recruitment, forced relocation, and a serious famine in 1925. As an orphaned child, Dynamique moved to his mothers' brothers' village, a village that was also displaced according to the needs of the new colonial order. As a young man, Dynamique could no longer participate in long-distance trade or warfare, but he was able to enter the colonial wage economy by traveling downriver to work in the logging camps.

The 1920s, the period when Dynamique lost his parents, marked what Vansina has called the “death” of the “Equatorial African Tradition” (Vansina 1990:239–248).⁵² Dynamique's big-man aspirations remain partly rooted in that tradition, but his loss of genealogical knowledge is a product of the physical dislocation and the reconfiguration of social geography in the western Ivindo basin. In spite of his limitations, Dynamique had been relatively successful in

⁵² Vansina argues that the equatorial tradition was brought to an end by two related developments of the early colonial period. First, colonial governments created new challenges to equatorial Africans, but in imposing colonial solutions, prevented Africans from drawing on their own two-thousand-year-old tradition. Secondly, colonialism undermined the equatorial African “cognitive order,” using force and ideology to impose its own “cognitive reality” (Vansina 1990:247). Guyer and Eno-Belinga (1995:118) summarize Vansina's argument by noting simply that “people lost control of the reproduction of their own societies. . . .”

attaining local big-man status and building his House through his strategic investment in matrimonial compensation and his collaboration with the Gabonese state. Like other victorious clients, he had scrambled to take advantage of available opportunities, becoming regroupment chief of the large village dominated by his mother's brothers.⁵³ His position was nonetheless weakened by his inability to draw on genealogical knowledge to support his ambitions and by the fact that he had fathered few children.

Conclusion

Over the past decade, Arjun Appadurai has written perceptively about the interaction of "global cultural flows," the nation-state, and the production of locality in the "dramatically delocalized world" of the late twentieth century. Although concerned primarily about the ethnographic present, he nonetheless refers to the production of locality in "the societies historically studied by anthropologists (in islands and forests, agricultural villages and hunting camps). . . ." He argues, "small-scale societies do not and cannot take locality as given. Rather they seem to assume that locality is ephemeral unless hard and regular work is undertaken to produce and maintain its materiality" (Appadurai 1995:204–06). In nineteenth-century northern Gabon, global cultural flows, central to the production of locality, were actualized in long-distance trade; incorporated into patterns of mobility, alliance-building, and conflict; and expressed genealogically.

In present-day northern Gabon, genealogical memory is spatial memory. The examples cited above, from Isambun oral traditions and from the contemporary ethnographic setting, suggest how the ambiguities built into the genealogical idiom have rendered it a vital and historically flexible tool used by social actors as they cooperate, compete, and struggle with one another in ever-shifting social, political, economic, and spatial terrains. Those who would follow paths toward northern Gabonese pasts can dismiss neither clan ideologies nor related idioms of kinship and marital alliance. Genealogical mem-

⁵³ In principle, sisters' sons have an ambiguous status when residing with their mother's brothers. On the one hand, they must be protected and can even outdo their mother's brother's sons (which provokes jealousy). On the other, they may be treated as clients.

ory provides crucial clues to the dialectic between mobility and the production of locality; social composition of multilingual, inter-ethnic social landscapes; long-distance alliances and raiding as alternative paths to social mobility; the interplay of commerce and matrimony; and reciprocal (and competing) strategies of mobile big-men and clients.

In the past, big-men used the genealogical idiom to assert their social seniority over both lineage and non-lineage dependents. They also used and expanded the clan idiom to foster local, regional, and even long-distance alliances. Social memories of such alliances are encoded in individual and *ayong* genealogies. Such genealogies continue, albeit in modified form, to reflect and inform ongoing social composition and mobility. Evidently, genealogical memory does not serve, as Carlo Ginzburg puts it, “as a transparent medium—as an open window that gives us direct access to [historical] reality,” but neither does it form “a wall, which by definition precludes any access to reality.” Rather, genealogical knowledge, like other historical sources, constitutes “a distorted glass.” Ginzburg aptly concludes, “Without a thorough analysis of its inherent distortions (the codes according to which it has been constructed and/or it must be perceived), a sound historical reconstruction is impossible” (Ginzburg 1991:83–4, 87). It is in the blurred area between history and fiction that we have sought the interplay between genealogical memory, social composition, and social space in the northern Gabonese landscape.

This chapter began with an evaluation of anthropology’s recent critique of lineage theory, especially as it relates to the Sanaga-Ntem region. The peremptory dismissal of lineages and clans as anthropological false consciousness is less useful than the exploration of genealogical knowledge as it reflects but also distorts elusive social reality. Genealogical knowledge and clan origin narratives provide crucial insights into the spatial history and social composition of Isambun and Ibisèny clans along nineteenth-century axes of trade. Numerous other long-distance alliances crisscrossed the rain forest, forming a dense social landscape in this sparsely populated region. Because commerce in the equatorial rain forest could not be decoupled from bridewealth exchange and marriage, it is hardly surprising that these spatial relationships came to be expressed in genealogical terms.

The clan concept has served here to show the relative fluidity of ethnicity in light of nineteenth-century long-distance trade and alliance networks. This is not to deny the existence ethnic identity, even as early as 1818 when Bowdich visited the Gaboon coast. Ethnic groups were not merely colonial invented traditions. Yet the composition of inter-ethnic clans, whose members claimed descent from a common ancestor, underlines the plasticity of ethnicity in light of long-distance trade networks. The spatial history of northern Gabon need not, therefore, be reduced to the history of discrete ethnic groups in space. The sub-clan (*aval* or *ndá-i-bùr* in Fang) highlights, in turn, the historical flexibility of clan identities. Individual biographies, especially of clients who were necessarily mobile, show the permeability of sub-clans. In the northern Gabon case, these processes add subtlety and dynamism to abstract models of group membership based on patrification in patrilineal societies.⁵⁴ Social actors internalized the structures of the clan model, and then used these creatively to navigate their way across a perpetually incipient social landscape.

Of course, genealogical memory is only one type of source—and a relatively opaque one at that—upon which to base a history of social space and time in the Ivindo River Basin. I have argued here that a careful analysis of genealogies can nonetheless yield crucial insights into how social actors have used the genealogical idiom to express, manipulate, negotiate, create, and conceal ever-shifting individual, local, regional, and even inter-ethnic identities in the present and in the past. In the genealogical memory of village elders, the rain forest of northern Gabon thereby emerges as a social landscape in motion.

INTERVIEWS

ALLANG MBA Pierre. 1988. Simintang (Makokou), December 14.

AMAYA AZOMBO David. 1990. Mfè-Mfè Nlam (Minvoul), August 26.

⁵⁴ In a more formal comparative study of kinship, descent, and jural structures, Scheffler (2000) argues that for genuine patrilineal descent groups to exist, patrification must be the necessary and sufficient condition for descent group membership. This makes logical sense; if recruitment occurs via non-descent criteria, then one cannot speak of descent groups *per se*. The case examined in the present chapter is much messier. In northern Gabon, patrification is surely a primary principle of recruitment into the House (*ndá-i-bùr*), sub-clan (*aval*), and clan (*ayong*), but in a fluid social landscape, clients and sister's sons were frequent exceptions to the rule.

- BOBE MIMBANG Simon. 1990. Andoume II (Minvoul), August 22.
 BOGA BYANG Lazare. 1990. Atsongbial (Booué), March 16.
 EKOUME MEBALE Pierre. 1989. Bissobinlam (Booué), March 4.
 EKWAGHE MEBIAM François. 1990. Chic-à-Voir (Makokou), April 13.
 MENGUE ME SEH Marie. 1991. Ntsengkélé (Makokou), August 25.
 MEYONG ME MVE Charles. 1989. Ekarnlong (Booué), March 5–6.
 NANG-MVEIÑA Etienne. 1988. Chic-à-Voir (Makokou), August 14.
 OYUNE AKAME Jean. 1990. Nylon (Minvoul), August 21.
 ZEMBOTE Paul. 1988. Zoatab (Makokou), December 5.

REFERENCES

- Alexandre, Pierre. 1965. "Proto-histoire du groupe beti-bulu-fang: essai de synthèse provisoire," *Cahier d'études africaines* 20, 503–560.
- Allys, M. 1930. "Monographie de la tribu des Dzems (N'Goko-Sangha)," *Bulletin de la société des recherches congolaises* 11, 3–21.
- Amat, Bathélemy & Tonia Cortadellas. 1972. "Ngovayang II: Un village du sud-Cameroun." Mémoire, Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes.
- Appadurai, Arjun. 1995. "The Production of Locality," in Richard Fardon, ed. *Counterworks: Managing the Diversity of Knowledge*. London: Routledge, 204–225.
- Avaro, A. & L. Perrois. 1983. "Les migrations historiques" [map]. In *Géographie et cartographie du Gabon: Atlas illustré*. Ministère de l'Education Nationale de la République Gabonaise. Paris: EDICEF, 43.
- Avelot, R. 1905. "Recherches sur l'histoire des migrations dans le bassin de l'Ogooué et la région littorale adjacente," *Bulletin de géographie historique et descriptive* 20:3, 357–412.
- Balandier, Georges. 1982 [1955]. *Sociologie actuelle de l'Afrique Noire: Dynamique sociale en Afrique Centrale*. 4^e edition. Paris: Presses Universitaires de Paris.
- Bohannan, Laura. 1952. "A Genealogical Charter," *Africa* 24:4, 301–315.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bowdich, T. Edward. 1819. *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee, with a Statistical Account of that Kingdom, and Geographical Notices of Other Parts of the Interior of Africa*. London: John Murray.
- Brazza, Savorgnan de. 1883. "Voyages d'exploration de M. Savorgnan de Brazza: Ogooué et Congo (Première partie)," *Revue maritime et coloniale* 76, 509–564.
- Carter, Paul. 1989 [1987]. *The Road to Botany Bay: An Exploration of Landscape and History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Chamberlain, Christopher. 1977. "Competition and Conflict: The Development of the Bulk Export Trade in Central Gabon during the 19th Century." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California at Los Angeles.
- 1978. "The Migration of the Fang into Central Gabon in the Nineteenth Century: A New Interpretation," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 11:3, 429–456.
- Cinnamon, John M. 1994–95. "Of Mice and Big-Men: Women, Warfare, and War Stories in Equatorial Africa," *Yale Graduate Journal of Anthropology* VI, 62–77.
- 1998. "The Long March of the Fang: Anthropology and History in Equatorial Africa." Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University.
- 2003. "Landscapes of Mobility, Violence, and Exchange in Nineteenth-Century Gabon." Paper presented at the Annual Meetings of the African Studies Association, Boston, October 30–November 2.

- Coquery-Vidrovitch, Catherine. 1972. *Le Congo au temps des grandes compagnies concessionnaires: 1898-1930*. Paris: Mouton.
- Cottes, A. (Le Capitaine). 1911. *La Mission Cottes au Sud-Cameroun (1905-1908)*. Paris: Ernest Leroux.
- Curtin, Philip, Steven Feierman, Leonard Thompson, Jan Vansina. 1978. *African History*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company. (Second edition 1995, London: Longman.)
- Dieu, Michel & Patrick Renaud, eds. 1983. *Atlas linguistique de l'Afrique Centrale: Atlas linguistique du Cameroun*. Yaoundé: DGRST/ACCT/CERDOTOLA.
- Du Chaillu, Paul Belloni. 1861. *Exploration and Adventures in Equatorial Africa*. New York: Harper.
- Dugast, Idelette. 1949. *Inventaire ethnique du Sud Cameroun*. n.p.: Mémoires de l'Institut Français d'Afrique noire, Centre du Cameroun.
- Dupré, Georges. 1972. "Le commerce dans les sociétés lignagères: Les Nzabi dans la traite à la fin du XIX^e siècle," *Cahier d'études africaines* 48, 616-658.
- Evans-Pritchard, E.E. 1940. *The Nuer: A description of the modes of livelihood and political institutions of a Nilotic People*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fentress, James and Chris Wickham. 1992. *Social Memory*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Fernandez, James. 1982. *Bwiti: An Ethnography of the Religious Imagination in Africa*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Fortes, Meyer. 1953. "The Structure of Unilineal Descent Groups," *American Anthropologist* 55:1, 17-41.
- Fortes, M. and E.E. Evans-Pritchard. 1940. "Introduction," in M. Fortes and E.E. Evans-Pritchard, eds. *African Political Systems*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1-23.
- Fourneau, Alfred. 1891. "De l'Ogooué au Campo," *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie de Paris* 7^e série: XII, 191-215.
- Galley, Samuel. 1964. *Dictionnaire fang-français et français-fang, suivi d'une grammaire fang*. Neuchâtel: Editions Henri Messeiller.
- Geschiere, Peter. 1982. *Village Communities and the State: Changing Relations among the Maka of south-eastern Cameroon since the Colonial Conquest*. London: Kegan Paul International.
- 1997. *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.
- Giles-Vernick, Tamara. 2002. *Cutting the Vines of the Past: Environmental Histories of the Central African Rain Forest*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.
- Ginzburg, Carlo. 1991. "Checking the Evidence: The Judge and the Historian," *Critical Inquiry* 18, 79-93.
- Gray, Christopher J. 2002. *Colonial Rule and Crisis in Equatorial Africa: Southern Gabon CA. 1850-1940*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press.
- Guthrie, Malcolm. 1953. *The Bantu Languages of Western Equatorial Africa*. London: International African Institute/Oxford University Press.
- Guyer, Jane. 1981. "Household and Community in African Studies," *African Studies Review* 24:2/3, 87-137.
- Guyer, Jane and Eno-Belinga. 1995. "Wealth in People as Wealth in Knowledge: Accumulation and Composition in Equatorial Africa," *Journal of African History* 36, 91-120.
- Harms, Robert. 1979. "Oral Tradition and Ethnicity," *Journal of Independent History* X:1, 61-85.
- 1987. *Games Against Nature*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Jewsiewicki, Bogumil, ed. 1985. *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 19:1, Special issue: "Modes of Production: A worn out debate?"
- Klieman, Kairn A. 2003. *"Pygmies Were Our Compass": Bantu and Batwa in the History of West Central Africa, Early Times to c. 1900 C.E.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

- Kopytoff, Igor. 1987. "The Internal African Frontier: The Making of Political Culture," in Igor Kopytoff, ed. *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 3–84.
- Kuper, Adam. 1982. "Lineage Theory: A Critical Retrospect," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 11, 71–95.
- Laburthe-Tolra, Philippe. 1981. *Les seigneurs de la forêt*. Paris: Editions de la Sorbonne.
- Largeau, Vincent. 1901. *L'encyclopédie pahouine*. Paris: E. Leroux.
- Malinowski, Bronislaw. 1954 [1948]. "Myth in Primitive Psychology" in *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor, 93–148.
- Mayer, Raymond. 1992. *Histoire de la famille gabonaise*. Libreville: Centre Culturel Français.
- Mbot, Jean Emile. 1975. *Ebughi Bifia—“Démonter les expressions”: Enonciation et situations sociales chez les Fang du Gabon*. Paris: Musée de l'Homme, Institut d'Ethnologie.
- Metegue-N'nah, Nicolas. 1974. "Le Gabon de 1854 à 1886: 'Presence' française et peuples autochtones." Thèse de 3e Cycle. Univ. de Paris 1 (Sorbonne).
- Middleton, John and David Tait, eds. 1958. *Tribes without Rulers: Studies in African Segmentary Systems*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Mizon, L. 1890. "Voyage de Paul Crampel au nord du Congo Français," *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie de Paris*, 534–552.
- Moisel, M. 1912. *Carte von Kamerun*. Berlin: Geographische Verlagshandlung. (*Carte 13 Mwine*, 1:300,000 scale).
- Nguema, Isaac. 1969. "Le nom dans la tradition et la législation gabonaise (Essai de droit coutumier Ntumu)." Thèse pour le doctorat en droit. Université de Paris, Faculté de droit et des sciences économiques.
- Ondoua Engutu. 1954. *Dulu Bon be Afrikara*. Elat, Cameroon: Halsey Memorial Press.
- Pourtier, Roland. 1989. *Le Gabon (Tome 1) Espace, Histoire, Société*. Paris: Harmattan.
- Rey, Pierre Philippe. 1976. "The Lineage Mode of Production," *Critique of Anthropology* 3, 27–79.
- Robineau, Claude. 1971. *Evolution économique et sociale en Afrique Centrale: L'exemple de Souanké (République populaire du Congo)*. Paris: ORSTOM.
- Ropivia, Marc. 1981. "Les Fang dans les Grands Lacs et la Vallée du Nil: Esquisse d'une géographie historique à partir du Mvett," *Présence africaine* 120, 46–58.
- 1989. "Mvett et Bantuistique: la métallurgie du cuivre come critère de Bantuité et son incidence sur les hypothèses migratoires connues," in Théophile Obenga, ed. *Les peuples bantu: migrations, expansion et identité culturelle, Libreville 1–6 Avril 1985*, Tome II. Paris: Harmattan, 317–335.
- Scheffler, Harold. 2000. *Filiation and Affiliation*. Boulder: Westview.
- Terray, Emmanuel. 1972. *Marxism and "Primitive" Societies: Two Studies*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Vansina, Jan. 1980. "Lignage, idéologie et histoire en Afrique équatoriale," *Enquetes et Documents d'Histoire Africaine* 4, 133–155.
- 1983. "The Peoples of the Forest." In David Birmingham and Phyllis Martin, eds. *History of Central Africa*, vol. 1. London: Longman, 75–117.
- 1990. *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of the Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Wolf, Eric R. 1982. *Europe and the People without History*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

THE DISAPPEARING DISTRICT? TERRITORIAL TRANSFORMATION IN SOUTHERN GABON 1850–1950

CHRISTOPHER GRAY

Districts in Equatorial Political Tradition

This chapter examines the transformation of “districts” located in southern Gabon in the latter half of the nineteenth and early years of the twentieth centuries prior to the effective establishment of French colonial rule in the 1920’s. It also raises the issue of the disappearance of districts during the 1930’s and 1940’s under a colonial administration more able to impose the practices of modern territoriality. In Jan Vansina’s masterful reconstruction of the pre-colonial political tradition of equatorial Africa, the “district was the largest institutional organization of space known” (Vansina 1990:81). Vansina uses the term “district” to translate a root meaning “ground” or “territory” in Western Bantu languages.¹ Precolonial districts were rather different than what geographers in more modern or urban settings have generally described as “formal regions.” Indeed, the French geographer Gilles Sautter remarked in his massive study that:

Neither Gabon nor Congo contain “regions” in the full sense of the word where “regions” are consecrated by a traditional name, historical antecedents, solid economic structures, or long term historical domination by an urban center. Where, then, are we to mark down the necessary articulations without falling into the arbitrary? (Sautter 1966:118)²

To respond to Sautter’s rhetorical question, in the mid-nineteenth century and for centuries previous districts provided the necessary

¹ In the “Comparative Lexical Data” appendix, Vansina notes that words for “District territory” are drawn from a single reflex “*-cé” (Vansina, 1990:274). The Tsogo word is *mabiya*; the Apindji *asi*; and the Eshira *bisa*. The terms are found in Gollnhofer (1967:1); Togo (1988:26); and Raponda-Walker (1960:103).

² Geographers’ use of the term “region” seems more appropriate to societies with urban centers or those having experienced the full force of modernity; neither of these was the case with the forest societies in mid-nineteenth century Gabon. For the debate over what constitutes a “region” in geography, see Entrikin (1989:30–43) and Pudup (1989:369–391).

articulations. Indeed, the geographer's query betrays a fundamental colonial misunderstanding of how Gabonese ordered their physical and social space. Explorers and administrators often thought the names of districts corresponded to "tribes" or "clans." Anthropologists sometimes made the error of employing kinship terms like "maximal lineage" or "subtribe" to describe what was at bottom a spatial reality (Vansina 1990:81).³

A precolonial district in mid-nineteenth century southern Gabon shared many of the attributes of what in spatial analysis is called a "functional region."⁴ Districts were informal clusters of villages within a loosely defined geographical area whose inhabitants practiced inter-marriage and exchanged trade and prestige goods but where authority was usually decentralized and only intermittently exercised. Districts were also ideological expressions of the alliance between their founding Houses.⁵ These relations between the various Houses residing in the cluster of villages became formalized with the creation of clans. Residence within the boundaries of a district was not limited to members of single clan; in fact representatives from virtually all the clans of a particular people could be found within a district. However, descendants from the Houses that first arrived in the district, or were said to be the first to have arrived, usually claimed certain privileges regarding access to resources and land distribution (Vansina 1990: 82–83).⁶

Clan ideology also served to facilitate the creation of long-distance kin and trade relationships between the village leaders of districts separated in physical space. In the mid-nineteenth century, a network of inter-connecting clans linked the peoples of the southern Gabon coast to those in the interior; this network effectively formed the southern Gabon functional region. In the 1860's, a powerful

³ A clear example is Deschamps who refers to a list of Massango districts as "clans" (Deschamps 1962:48).

⁴ I have benefited from Allen Howard's use of spatial analysis to understand the workings of precolonial West African economies; for Howard functional regions are:

determined by the interaction among elements, or the movement of persons, goods, services and information. The boundaries of a functional region are not fixed, but vary over time. (Howard 1976:369).

⁵ Vansina employs the term "House" to refer to "the establishment of the big man," the basic unit of social organization in the equatorial political tradition (Vansina 1990:74–77).

⁶ For a discussion of the authority of "firstcomers," see Kopytoff (1987:52–61).

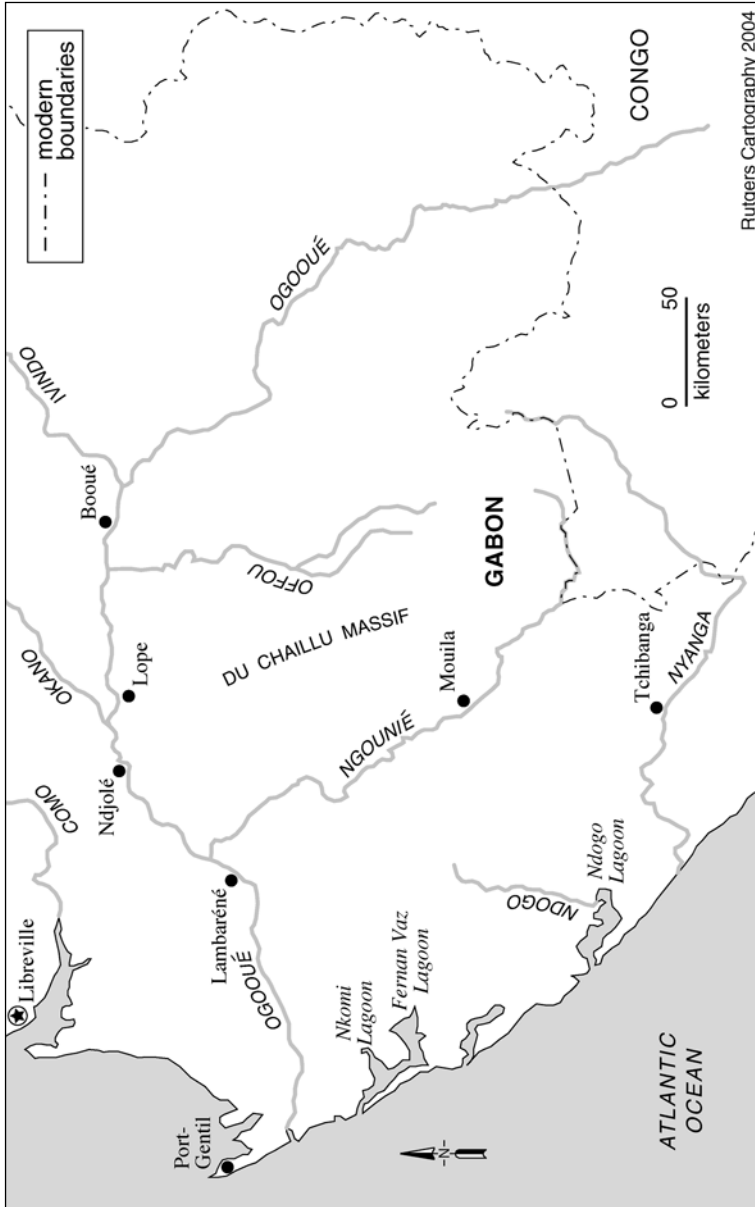


Fig. 15. Southern Gabon Region

leader and trader like Ranoké of the Enenga-speaking Azyondo clan traveled twice a year some 200 kilometers up the Ogooué from Lambaréné to purchase bananas, goats, slaves and ivory from clan and trading friends in the Okandé-speaking districts. In exchange, Ranoké's entourage traded salt purchased from Orungu clans based on the coast at Cape Lopez.⁷ The Ogooué and its tributaries had for centuries facilitated the movement of goods and people across the southern Gabon functional region. The forest was never really an obstacle as networks of paths were also exploited; for example the clan leaders of Kele-speaking Samkita district along the right bank of the Ogooué tapped paths in the hinterland which connected them to trading and clan partners in the Gabon Estuary some 100 kilometers away.⁸ The overall network was fluid, its boundaries and membership continually shifting in the rapidly changing economic conditions of the second half of the nineteenth century. The unboundedness of possible clan relations is expressed in a number of proverbs common to the peoples in this functional region; an example from Nzabi is "*Ibanda pange vé*" or "The clan has no boundary" (Dupré 1982:169).

Long-distance clan kinships or trading relationships drew upon a common Western Bantu cultural tradition where a finite number of totemic symbols—often animals around which were centered a series of taboos—provided identification markers. If a caravan leader whose clan claimed the parrot as a totem arrived for the first time in a foreign village, he would only have to ask for his "relatives," the members of the parrot clan in that village, and he would indeed be received as a clan member. In this way, clan members separated in space living in different districts and sporting different names were able to identify one another as *kin* through a shared totemic animal and thus facilitate the movements in a functional region. For example, generations of exchange among Tsogo and Sango speakers have resulted in the close relationship between the Pogheo and Sima (both *parrot* clans), a relationship that was first stimulated by the trade in slaves according to Tsogo tradition (Gollnhofer 1967: 193–195).

⁷ See discussion in Christopher Gray, "Territoriality, Ethnicity, and Colonial Rule in Southern Gabon, 1850–1960" (Ph.D. Thesis, Indiana University, 1995), 115–117.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 131–133.

To analyze the transformation of districts from the precolonial to the colonial periods, I have employed a theory of human territoriality developed by the geographer Robert David Sack (Sack 1986; Sack 1997; Gray 1995). Territoriality is defined

as the attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence, or control people, phenomena and relationships by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area. This area will be called "territory" (Sack 1986:19).

A "territory," then, is not the same as "space" but rather an aspect of space; it represents a spatial strategy and a spatial expression of social power. Thus, a description of how the peoples of southern Gabon organized their districts or functional regions in the mid-nineteenth century need not necessarily refer to territoriality. Sack notes that

Unlike many ordinary places, territories require constant effort to establish and maintain . . . What geographers call nodal regions, market areas, or central place hinterlands are not necessarily territories. They can be simply descriptions of the geographic extent of activities in space. They become territories though if the boundaries are used by some authority to mold, influence or control activities (Sack 1986:19).

A district only functioned as a territory under certain conditions, most notably in grouping together for self-defense in the face of an outside aggressor and in regulating the movements of trade caravans. Given its decentralized structure of authority, the enforcement of a district's boundaries was circumstantial and often dependent upon the individual abilities of a particular leader or "big man." In the latter half of the nineteenth century the growing European demand for rubber, ebony, and ivory led to an explosion of opportunities for established "big men" and those seeking "big man" status to participate in long-distance trade in southern Gabon. This resulted in a number of spatial changes. People reshaped their kin and trading networks, which among other things altered the nature of districts. Furthermore, big men engaged in an intensified struggle for control of the commercial nodal points, which affected the relative importance of such places and the way they were perceived. Finally, the most powerful clan leaders gained the means to impose a territoriality to regulate access to neighboring districts so as to assure their link in the chain of alliances reaching from the coastal trading polities to the interior. Thus the nature of the functional regions (nodes

and networks) was changed, and formal regions which operated as territories under certain conditions were created where they previously did not exist.

Districts in Mid-Nineteenth Century Southern Gabon

The spatial arrangement of districts in southern Gabon was in many ways a function of the geographical positioning required for participation in the functional region. Given the importance of waterways as a means of transportation, it is not surprising that easily recognizable districts should have developed at key positions on rivers and lakes. These districts were often named according to their position in geographic space. A name might correspond to residence on a specific river or more generally in terms of residence as in “upstream” opposed to “downstream”); or it may indicate a contrast between residence on a river as opposed to inland or in the forest as opposed to the savannah. The predominance of these general geographical terms would seem to indicate a people’s relatively recent movement into an area.

Apindji-speaking clans residing along the Ngounié River in the nineteenth century organized themselves into loosely defined districts based on geographical position: *asi-gongo* (those upstream) and *asi-koi* (those downstream) but also *asi-mbéi* (those of the river) and *asi-mosényè* (those of the interior). In the oral traditions of the Apindji, there is mention of a middle district, *kate*, whose most powerful chief, Nzondo-Momba, mediated disputes between the chief Dibiti of the *asi-gongo* and the chief Kinga of the *asi-koi* (see Fig. 16). These seem to have been the three most powerful big men among Apindji-speaking clans in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The names of these leaders were also used in reference to the districts themselves demonstrating the link between district identity and an able leader. In this example, the boundaries between districts were not well-defined as the stretch of the Ngounié inhabited by the Apindji-speaking clans provides no striking geographical markers.⁹

⁹ For speculation on the boundaries between these districts, see Togo (1988:26); Raponda-Walker (1960:126); Swiderski (1975:105); Christopher Gray, Interview Notes XXIV, Joseph Pombodié, Mouila, September 30, 1991.

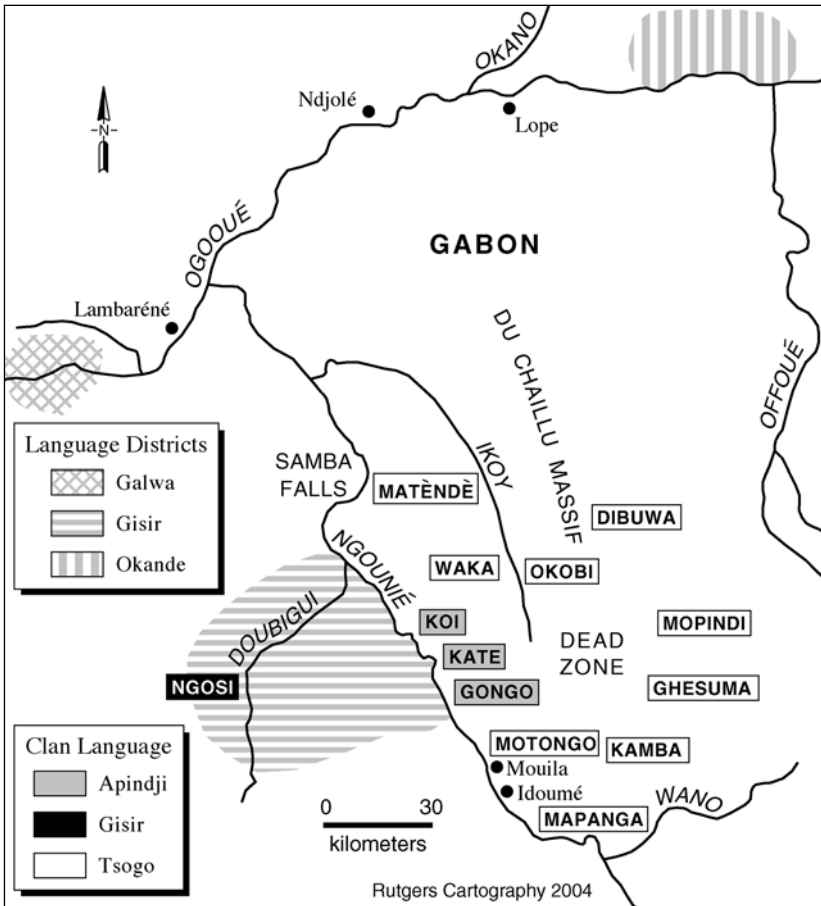


Fig. 16. Language districts and clan languages, Southern Gabon

Not only rivers but overland trade routes also provided settings for districts. As with the Apindji-speaking clans above whose districts blended into one another, such was the case of the nineteenth century trade route on the right bank of the Ngounié commencing at the important trading center of Idoumé (just to the south of the present town of Mouila) then heading east into the hills of the Massif Du Chaillu cutting across the Onoy, Ogoulou, and Wano Rivers (see Fig. 16). The explorer Paul Du Chaillu traveled these trails in 1865 and noted the frequency with which he encountered villages along his march. He was further impressed by the extensive cultivation of peanuts along the Ogoulou taking this as evidence of a considerable population. The villages he passed through were inhabited by Punu-, Tsogo-, Sango- and Nzabi-speaking clans and Du Chaillu described them in terms of “tribal districts” corresponding to his European notions of ethnic identity. In beginning his march east on the right bank of the Ngounié, he noted:

We left the banks of the river at a quarter past six a.m. Shortly afterwards we passed through an Apono (Bapunu) village and at half-past eight a.m. came to three Ishogo (Mitsogo) villages close together. All three probably belonged to the same clan, and they contained a considerable population. It was no new feature to find a settlement of a tribe living in the middle of a *district* belonging to another tribe. The Ishogos had been driven by war from their own territory, and have thus intruded on unoccupied lands within the territory of their neighbors (my emphasis) (Du Chaillu 1967:242).

Actually, the reverse was true as throughout the nineteenth century the Dibur Simbu, a Punu-speaking branch of the powerful *Bumwele* clan, were moving into the unoccupied space of the Mitsogo Motongo and Mapanga districts on the right bank of the Ngounié in an effort to obtain slaves and act as middlemen in the flow of people and goods to the coast. By 1936, a colonial report noted that the Punu-speaking clans that established villages in the district of Mapanga (which, interestingly, means “the first” in Tsogo) had recently ceded most of the district back to Tsogo-speaking clans (Maclatchy 1936); for names of Mitsogo districts, (Gollnhofer 1967:62).

However, the rest of southern Gabon was not so densely populated and district village clusters were more usually separated by large expanses of unoccupied lands described as “desert” or “dead” zones. Du Chaillu, in the final weeks of his first trek in southern Gabon at the close of 1858, vividly describes a dead zone which at

the time separated the Tsogo district of Waka from districts of Sango-speaking clans further east; this was some fifty kilometers to the north of the route he would take in 1865.

A party of Isogo (Mitsogo) and Apingi (Apindji) agreed to accompany me as far as the Ashango (Massango) villages, which they said lay in the mountains, about three days' journey off . . . The way was somewhat rocky, and the forest dense. Roads there were not, and my companions did not even know the country . . . The majestic forest through which we travelled seemed to be quite devoid of life, except indeed insect life. Once in a while I ran against the web of the great yellow spider, and occasionally we heard the cry of some little birds. But no larger animals had left their traces in our sight. My gun seemed a useless encumbrance. Not even a monkey showed himself . . . The gloom of the woods was something quite appalling to the spirits. It seemed a fit place for the haunt of some sylvan monster, delighting in silence and the shades of night (Du Chaillu 1861:460–461).

Within the network of the southern Gabon functional region, there existed key geographical nodal points that historically were desired locations for competing clan leaders. These were not permanent or even periodic market areas—transactions were usually conducted in villages and village sites generally moved every ten to fifteen years—but areas near the confluence of rivers or trade routes that saw a high volume of commercial traffic. The most important nodal point in the interior was an area downstream from where the Ngounié flows into the Ogooué that today encompasses the town of Lambaréné. Here Galwa- and Enenga-speaking clans controlled the flow of goods from the districts of Okandé-speaking clans upstream on the Ogooué as well as those goods coming down the Ngounié from Samba Falls, the site of another important nodal point (see Fig. 16). (Ambouroué-Avaro 1981:219–221); (Ogoula-M'Beye 1978:xxxii, 175).

It is interesting to contrast districts that developed around nodal points with those found in the source areas at the end limits of the trading network in the hills of the Massif Du Chaillu. The Ngosi district of Gisir-speaking clans located in the savannah on the upper Doubigui river was home to another important nodal point in the Southern Gabon functional region, linking the interior to the Nkomi-speaking districts of the Fernan Vaz lagoon. As the struggle for access to strategic nodal points became increasingly more intense between the years 1850 and 1880, precolonial equatorial political tradition in commercially active districts came under growing pressure. Even in the short period between Du Chaillu's 1858 visit to the Ngosi

district and his 1864 return, the explorer noted some revealing changes:

A few rambles about the Ashira prairie showed me that the population had much diminished, since my visit six years previously. Many of the villages which then studded its grassy slopes and hollows had disappeared. It is true that some of the head men had removed their people to new villages in the woods, which surround the prairie; nevertheless, I believe the total number of people had been much reduced. The tribe was once superior to all their neighbors in industry and cleanliness, and in the quality of their clothing and ornaments. A deterioration was now plainly visible. The well-woven dengui which people used to wear had almost disappeared, and in its stead I saw only garments of thin, dirty, cotton cloth. A few of the older women alone were decorated with copper rings round the neck. The young people had also abandoned the practice of filing their front teeth, and I noticed a total change of fashion in the dressing of their hair, increasing commerce with the Rembo [Nkomi] having had the result of their adopting Commi [Nkomi] fashions. The tribe have now constant intercourse with the Commi, and of late years the warlike Bakalai [Bakele] have married many of their women and of course taken them away (Du Chaillu 1967:116).

The Ngosi district's strategic middleman position and consequent further integration into the Atlantic commercial network had in the matter of a few years undermined a number of material and cultural practices. The increase in commercial opportunities as a result of being close to a nodal point led to an increase in competition and jealousy between clan and lineage heads. Witchcraft accusations, poison ordeals, and the poisoning of rivals were on the rise as ambitious clan elders sought new heights of wealth and power creating fear and mistrust among each other and their dependents. The consequence was an atmosphere of paranoia where village settlements broke into smaller units and often moved to a different location when the death of a member unleashed suspicion and accusations. At the turn of the century, members of Gisir-speaking clans recalled once having lived in large villages containing six to ten *ebandja* (men's public houses) corresponding to the number of lineages in residence; however, in the span of a generation these large villages had been split into "an infinity of tiny hamlets scattered here and there" (my translation) (Raponda-Walker 1960:104).

This was not the case with the districts of Tsogo-speaking clans visited by Du Chaillu in the 1860's (see Map 3). These districts nestled into the forested hills of the Massif Du Chaillu were not located

near nodal points and thus had not yet been fully drawn into the whirlwind of commerce happening just to the west. Their villages were large and stable and there appear to have been no overly ambitious leaders trying to dominate the districts for themselves. Local material culture was still flourishing and Du Chaillu was duly impressed by the beautifully carved doors on all the village dwellings.¹⁰ Unlike the villages of the Gisir- and Kele-speaking clans further to the west who abandoned residence upon death of a member, Du Chaillu

was pleased to find that the people here were not so much afraid of death as the tribes nearer the sea; they do not abandon a village when a death occurs. Indeed, the villages are so large that this custom would be very difficult to keep up (Du Chaillu 1967:380).

Even the names of these districts of Tsogo-speaking clans suggest a stability not found near commercial nodal points. Of the eight districts listed by André Raponda-Walker—the first Gabonese to be ordained a priest and an early scholar of the area's history—only two, Waka and Okobi, are geographical terms taken from rivers. The other six, Matèndè, Dibuwa, Gésuma (Ghesuma), Kamba, Mapanga and Mopindi, are “ethnic appellations”, according to Raponda-Walker, but likely refer to the names of the founding villages (Raponda-Walker 1960:113).¹¹ It was not until contact with Kele-speaking clans in the final decades of the nineteenth century—quickly followed by the arrival of French concession company agents at the opening of the twentieth—that this stability was permanently disrupted.

Districts and Territoriality

The spatial arrangement of southern Gabon in the mid-nineteenth century can be described as a patchwork of districts and dead zones

¹⁰ Du Chaillu counted 191 dwellings in the village of Igoumbié (1967:262–264).

¹¹ Gollnhofer provides meanings for some of the district names: “Mapanga” translates as “the first”; “Ghesuma” (“Gésuma”) is “who goes down”; “Mopindi” is “forest” or “wood”; “Matèndè” is reported to have a more geographical meaning, “in the Louga river basin”, which follows in that it was the district furthest west and closest to Samba Falls; “Waka” and “Okobi” are also further west thus suggesting that the geographical names refer to those districts most recently formed and the non-geographic names are older districts (Gollnhofer 1967:62–63).

with those districts near commercially active nodal points being more fluid and those in the peripheral areas being more stable. To what extent then can we say that these districts were territories?

Territoriality was exercised in two ways in precolonial districts: in the efforts of commercial big men to regulate the movement of goods and people as well as controlling access to neighboring districts and in the organization of self-defense from external threats. Those districts more fully integrated into the long-distance trade spent considerable energy in trying to control trading activity but at the same time this increased activity was creating instability and paranoia. Thus, leaders in districts that contained key commercial nodal points were generally unable to organize effective resistance to colonial rule as they did not trust each other nor were they willing to jeopardize their own participation in these newly lucrative networks. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Gisira Ngosi, for example, was too much in flux and perhaps had grown too large to organize a district-wide resistance to growing European presence. Thus, even though a term for district leader, *mata*, had been in use for several decades and there existed a central meeting place named “Gikulu-Gindzaka” in the Ndolo savannah for clan leaders to come together and conduct their business, it would appear that these institutions were either unable or unwilling to organize a district-wide resistance to growing colonial influence (Raponda-Walker 1960:21).¹² Leaders in districts like the Gisira Ngosi were more likely to exercise territoriality to control access to neighboring districts and obtain toll revenue. The increasing pace of trade, competition, and settlement brought with it increasing numbers of stranger populations, thus complicating clan configurations and creating entire villages of dependent slaves. These developments no doubt cut into the sense of district solidarity required to mount a campaign of self-defense against outside influence.¹³

Further complicating the arrangement of districts among Gisir-speaking clans in the nineteenth century is a list of *bisa* compiled by Raponda-Walker corresponding to more modest tracts of land than the Ngosi district and the other main Gisira districts of Tando and

¹² On the position of *mata*, see Deschamps (1989:23); Mamfoumbi (1981:35–40); Mougala (1983:47–50).

¹³ For a description of a slave village in the Gisira *Ngosi* district in the 1860’s, see Du Chaillu (1967:141–142).

Kamba. These appear to have been earlier smaller districts that resulted from the fissioning of the matrilineages making up the first villages established by Gisir-speaking clans at the mouth of the Doubigui; the village of Kamba, which supplied the name for the larger district, was among these earlier settlements, probably established sometime in the eighteenth century. On the lower Doubigui and Doubandji, according to Raponda-Walker, the villages of “Yombi, Ngubi, Ndugu, Gilunga, Gisambi, Girandu, Mulamba, etc. . . . gave their names to diverse fractions of territory or *bisa* (Raponda-Walker 1960:106).

In the final weeks of 1864, Du Chaillu visited the village of Dihaou, a few miles south of the confluence of the Doubigui and Doubandji rivers and said to be “the chief town of the Ashira Kambas”. The explorer noted that “Dihaou is a cluster of three or four little villages each containing about fifteen houses” (Du Chaillu 1967:94–95). The *bisa* listed by Raponda-Walker must have been of a similar composition. The chief’s name was “Dihaou Okamba” and Du Chaillu and his party were obliged to spend some time there in order to obtain permission to continue on to the neighboring district of Eviya-speaking clans on the Ngounié river. Just over a year later in 1866 the British trader Robert Bruce Walker visited a similar cluster of Eviya-speaking villages; “Buali” was “a group of five or six villages rather than a single town” containing “about five hundred huts.”¹⁴

One manifestation of how districts functioned as territories can be seen with these smaller clusters of villages. The leaders of these smaller districts were certainly more capable of controlling people and things by controlling area than the *mata* of the Gisira-Ngosi, for example. Whether invested in a single individual or in a council of clan leaders, the leadership of districts the size of Ngosi was informal and fragile, specializing in mediation rather than effective territoriality. These larger districts had developed to meet the needs of growing trade at commercial nodal points and were constructed according to a “continuity of conception” that mirrored the structures of the smaller districts and continued to stress decentralization (Kopytoff 1987:51–52). Lacking the literate instruments of administration, classification, communication and enforcement required for

¹⁴ Buali would soon be known as “Ngesi” because of its contact with English traders (Walker 1870:76).

control over large geographical spaces, precolonial territoriality could only be effectively exercised within the smaller geographical districts like the Dihaou cluster of villages encountered by Du Chaillu. In this particular case, what was controlled was access to the next district, Du Chaillu's passage forming a single link in the chain of relations that travelers had to work through to penetrate the southern Gabon interior in the mid-nineteenth century. Trade, of course, was also conducted along this chain of relations; indeed, Du Chaillu's whole journey traces out a network of "trading friends", or *bakanga* in Punu, as the explorer was passed on from one *mukanga* to another much like a *mùtèti* (a special woven basket) of salt heading from the coast to the interior¹⁵

The situation was somewhat different in the forested hills of the Du Chaillu Massif to the east. Here the Tsogo-speaking "*mabiya* (districts) enjoyed total internal autonomy" (Gollnhofer 1967:63). Since there existed no over-arching authority ruling over the different Tsogo-speaking clans nor was there a leader of a particular clan powerful enough to assert authority over the others, each district was an independent economic and judicial unit.

Mitsogo from a given *ebiya* (district) could not undertake to do anything in another *ebiya* without prior authorization. Thus, they did not have the right to hunt, fish, create a plantation or bury one of their relatives. What's more, there was a solidarity between members of a particular *ebiya* in situations of conflict with representatives of another *ebiya* (marriages, adultery, fights, deaths, etc.) (Gollnhofer 1967:63–64).

Given their position at the supply end of the trading network, these more stable Tsogo-speaking districts were able to develop a strong sense of district solidarity among their inhabitants. In their conflicts with Kele-speaking clans in the 1890's and with the French at the opening of the twentieth century, resistance was organized according to district, with some districts participating and others choosing not to. The conflicts with Kele-speaking clans have left a strong mark on the traditions of the Mitsogo. The battles were often caricatured in a mask performed at dawn following a nocturnal public dance organized by the members of *Bwété*, one of the central initiation soci-

¹⁵ For the role of *bakanga* among Punu-speaking clans, see Rey (1971:220–223); for a description of *mùtèti* (appears at "moutette" in French documents) and the salt trade, see Koumba-Manfoumbi (1987:244–248).

eties for men (Gollnhofer 1974:198–201).¹⁶ The latter half of the 1890's appears to have witnessed the most intense period of conflict as Mangunde ma kuze, head of the Kele-speaking Sa-buka lineage, led a series of attacks that forced the Tsogo-speaking clans residing in the Matèndè, Dibuwa, and Okobi districts from their villages on the Ikoy River. Mitsogo traditions relate that district organization for self-defense in face of Bakele aggression was a total failure until the belligerents made contact with the Tsogo-speaking clans of the Kamba district (Ngolet 1994:504–507; Gollnhofer 1967:252–254; Raponda-Walker 1960:114).

In 1907, probably not much more than a decade after the actual event, André Raponda-Walker was traveling through the villages of the Waka district where he obtained an account of the Bakele-Mitsogo conflict from Mbagna, a leader in the village of Ndougou:

Among those of us who put an end to the Bakele incursions were the Mitsogo-Kamba.—The Bakele wanted to give chase to our tribe while it emigrated but the Kambas resolved to stand firm and wait for them. In order to give themselves courage, they organized a huge fetish dance, known as *Epoboué*, and thus hardened, they attacked the Bakele near Mount Motèndè. The combat was long and bloody. Finally, the Bakele, not used to experiencing such a strong resistance from the Mitsogo, took flight and no longer desired to reappear on our territory unless it was to conduct commerce there (my translation) (Raponda Walker 1919:177).

Though there exists little information on this particular ritual dance, *epoboué* was likely linked to the central male initiation society known as *ya-mwei* among Tsogo-speakers and more generally as *mwiri* in southern Gabon (Gray 1996). *Ya-mwei* comprised a series of gradations that initiates passed through as they gained maturity in Mitsogo culture. *Ya-mwei* members could also adapt their rituals to meet specific and immediate needs. As with *epoboué*, this seems to have been the case with the *kono* society which was also created to ward off the aggressions of Kele-speaking clans at the end of the nineteenth century. A man already had to be initiated into *ya-mwei* in order to become a member of *kono*. *Kono* appears to have taken on a permanence of some kind as later ethnographic research maintains

¹⁶ Christopher Gray Interview Notes XX, Joseph Moukandja, Mimongo, June 6, 1991.

that its members were responsible for inflicting the punishments and fines required when the precepts of *ya-mwei* were violated (Gollnhofer 1967:95–99, 257–270). *Epoboué* was probably a specialized war ritual where combatants consumed a potion rendering them invulnerable to harm. These war charms, known as *bounda*, were often in the possession of specialists who attracted district leaders to their villages to purchase the charm; its effectiveness in battle determined success or failure in a conflict.

At the turn of the century, the Kamba district was located in an area loosely defined by the Ogoulou River to the south, the Onoy to the west, and across the left bank of the Mikoundzou to the east. It was at this same period that agents from the French concession companies, Société du Haut-Ogooué (S.H.O.) and Compagnie de la Haute Ngounié (C.H.N.), began establishing factories and traveling through Mitsogo districts to trade for rubber, ivory and ebony. The S.H.O. operated in the northern districts of Matèndè, Okobi, Waka and Dibouwa and Raponda-Walker reports that by 1907 “the caravans of the S.H.O. criss-crossed Mitsogo country in every direction” (my translation) (Raponda Walker 1910:187).”

The C.H.N. was not nearly as successful with its factories based in the districts of Motongo and Kamba to the south. By 1904 after several years of activity, the brutal and dishonest trading practices of the company’s French and Senegalese agents had pushed the leaders of these Tsogo-speaking clans to the brink of violent rebellion. Given the weak influence of the French colonial administration at this time, a C.H.N. agent named Ourson running a factory in the village of Kembélé (Kamba district) often took justice into his own hands and punished surrounding villages for perceived transgressions. At the end of 1903 and in the early months of 1904, a number of subordinates employed by the C.H.N., primarily from Punu-speaking clans, had been killed by the inhabitants of Kamba. The situation remained very tense and two columns of Senegalese *tirailleurs* were sent into the area to quell disturbances. A mistaken attack and burning of a village in Ghesuma brought this district’s leaders to ally themselves with Kamba. The alliance between Kamba and Ghesuma facilitated the rise of an influential leader, Mbombé Mondjo, who would remain the most powerful figure in these districts until his capture by the French in 1913.

In December of 1904, clan leaders of the Kamba and Ghesuma districts organized a number of attacks against C.H.N. personnel and

factories resulting in the death of Ourson and several others. They also attempted an assault on the French military post at Mouila (Deni 1931:86–87).¹⁷ In the transcript of Mbombé's interrogation at the time of his capture in 1913, a witness asserted that before these attacks Mbombé had called upon men from all the villages of Kamba and Ghesuma to gather at his home village, Nyanga-Mobego, to drink the *bounda* he had purchased from Ndouté, a clan leader from the Tsogo-speaking Mapanga district. Ndouté had in turn purchased it from a Lambaréné-based specialist who had been trading in the Mitsogo districts. Each village in the Kamba and Ghesuma districts contributed three to four men to the estimated force of six hundred that attacked Mouila (Deni 1931:87).¹⁸

The colonial military then undertook a series of unsuccessful punitive expeditions which only served to strengthen the resolve of the Kamba and Ghesuma leaders and to draw other districts into the conflict as the clan heads of Dibuwa also became hostile to the French. However, not all the districts of Tsogo-speaking clans took part in the uprising; those closest to the commercial nodal point at Samba Falls (Matèndè, Okobi and Waka) did not attack European establishments, apparently content to continue to seek profit from their trading activities. There is even some evidence that a number of villages from the Kamba district broke away to establish a new district (listed as Etavo by Gollnhofer) in order to distance themselves from those responsible for the deaths of Ourson and the others (Gollnhofer 1967:63).¹⁹

Territoriality was clearly exercised at district-level in times of self-defense. The colonial military expeditions sent into the Kamba and Ghesuma districts were perceived as an unprecedented outside threat that required unprecedented cooperation between districts. Further, the figure of Mbombé as leader of the revolt was and continues to be perceived as something of a symbol for this cooperation.

¹⁷ "Note au sujet de la Révolte Issogho, 24 janvier 1905," Archives Outre-Mer A.E.F. (Aix-en-Provence), Série D, Sous-Série 4(1)D3, "Rapports politiques-Gabon," 1905–1908.

¹⁸ Archives Outre-Mer A.E.F. (Aix-en-Provence), Série D, Sous-Série 5D 5D13 1910–1913, "Interrogatoire de Bombi, 21 mars 1913".

¹⁹ Rapport au Lt. Gouverneur du Gabon, "Populations Issogos, Considérations générales, 3 septembre 1907," Archives Outre-Mer A.E.F. (Aix-en-Provence), Série D, Sous-Série 4(1)D2, "Rapports politiques-Gabon," 1900–1908.

Contemporary traditions relate that as a young man he was chosen by Mitsogo clan elders to receive the power of the district's war charms; colonial documents from his 1913 trial provide rich detail on his obtaining and distributing the *bounda* potion which was to render all who drank it invulnerable to European bullets and certainly served as a potent force in the organization of the district revolt.²⁰ The threat and experience of outside aggression for more than two decades, from the Bakele attacks in the 1890's to the effective imposition of colonial rule in the 1920's, no doubt served to create a strong sense of district identity among those who resisted. However, the on again, off again military incursions organized by the French served to undermine the development of any consistent practice of territoriality as from 1907 the large, stable villages that Du Chaillu had visited in Kamba a generation earlier broke into much smaller settlements hidden in the forest to avoid the hassles of colonial rule.²¹ This is in contrast to the experience of the Gisir-speaking Ngosi district mentioned above where villages broke into smaller units due to the jealousies and competition of increased commercial activity. The villages of the Kamba district faced the ironic situation of the growth of stronger internal (within Kamba) and external (with neighboring districts like Ghesuma) solidarities in the face of French attacks while at the same time witnessing the physical disintegration of their villages due to the force of these attacks.

Disappearing Districts?

Vansina notes that districts "were the first victims of the colonial order" (Vansina 1990:81). This remark is accurate if "victims" means that districts no longer functioned or practiced the kinds of pre-colonial territoriality outlined above. But districts did not totally dis-

²⁰ Christopher Gray Interview Notes XXI, Simon-Pierre Moundouga, Sindara, May 18, 1991; "Rapport du Capitaine Spiess, Commandant de la Circonscription de l'Offoué-Ngounié sur la capture du Chef rebelle Issogho Bombi, Mouila le 5 mars 1913," Archives Outre-Mer A.E.F. (Aix-en-Provence), Série D, Sous-Série 5D, "Dossiers divers des Affaires Politiques," 13, 1910-1913.

²¹ Colonial complaints regarding Mitsogo flight and the difficulty of administering a void are stated early on; see Capitaine Conrad à M. Le Gouverneur du Gabon, 8 juin 1907, Archives Outre-Mer A.E.F. (Aix-en-Provence), Série D, Sous-Série 4(1)D2, "Rapports politiques-Gabon," 1900-1908.

appear. The three most important Gisir-speaking districts had by 1932 been transformed into *canton* chieftaincies in the colonial administrative structure. This was the culmination of a process that had evolved over several decades. French colonial territoriality was not effectively able to impose its order in physical space of southern Gabon until after 1920. For the first two decades of the 20th century, often to the chagrin and embarrassment of colonial officials on the spot, the concessionary companies were a more important colonial presence. Local populations continued their sporadic pattern of rebellion and the demands of World War I left the colony woefully lacking in resources and personnel. Even though administrative boundaries were drawn on maps, the boldly defined units of cartographic space hardly corresponded to the situation of lived physical reality. The colonial ability to map allowed for the creation of a textual space where the physical space of the real world was abstracted, reified, and emptied of its autochthonous unwritten meaning. As noted by the geographer J. B. Harley, "while the map is never the reality, in such ways it helps to create a different reality." (cf. Harley 1989:14; Sharpe 1986). In southern Gabon, this "different reality" was created from the colonial imposition of modern territoriality.

Further economic integration into the colonial economy occurred with the recruitment of growing numbers of rural villagers to work in the burgeoning timber industry during years just prior to the War. Production came to an abrupt halt as a result of the European conflict and the resulting loss of wages moved the colonial administration to collect tax revenues in kind, often through the collection of rubber and palm products. Agricultural production was thus disrupted as not only the men, who were responsible for clearing the fields, but also women farmers were made to collect forest products. This coupled with sporadic rains in 1919 led to disastrous harvests, food shortages and pockets of famine. French colonial presence up to this point had been just strong enough to wreak havoc by disturbing traditional practices and nothing more.

It was only in the 1920's that an operative bureaucratic structure was put into place and modern European territoriality effectively imposed. Following the pattern of a generation earlier where the commercial impact at nodal points was greater than in source areas, modern European territoriality was more effective among the Gisir-speaking clans of the Ngosi district, for example, than in the Kamba district of Tsogo-speaking clans. By the end of the decade, a distinct

“Gisir-Ngosi” identity was emerging. This was a modern identity transformed by the territorial practices of the French colonial post located in Mandji. Modern territorial practice puts considerable more energy into controlling people and phenomena by controlling space than premodern efforts. The ideological assumptions behind instruments of modern territoriality like mapping, census-taking, or the creation of a permanent regional guard are those of continuous enforcement within the boundaries of the territory. Mandji became the colonial space from which these instruments radiated to transform “the fluid and mobile space of the past” into the “crystallized” territory of the colony (my translation) (Pourtier 1989:307–308). The transformation of the Ngosi district also benefitted from the “cultural work”²² undertaken by the Holy Ghost Fathers of the Sainte-Croix des Eshira Catholic mission—most notably their writing down of the Gisir-Ngosi dialect. Gisir-Ngosi was subsequently employed as the language of Catholic missionary proselytization throughout southern Gabon during the first half of the twentieth century; language thus became politicized in new ways.²³

By the 1920’s, the Tsogo-speaking clans of *Kamba* had experienced tremendous upheaval but important elements of their district identity survived. The ethnic category “Mitsogo” had come to mean an uncooperative backward people in the usage of French colonial officials and missionaries. No longer the “peaceful” and “industrious” people described by Paul Du Chaillu in 1865 (Du Chaillu 1967:289) nor even the energetic traders described by Raponda-Walker in 1907, the refusal, most notably, of the *Kamba* and *Ghesuma* districts to participate in the life of the colony and their strategy of abandoning their villages to live in camps inaccessible to colonial guards led to the invention of a Mitsogo stereotype that exists to this day.

The creation of a Ngosi *canton* chieftaincy in 1932 was the culminating event of the transformation of the precolonial Ngosi district into its modern form. Central to the process was the long tenure of the *canton* chief Mourambo Ngungu, who served the colonial administration in various capacities from 1915 to his death in 1951.²⁴

²² The term is from Peel (1989:198–215).

²³ For details, see Gray, “Territoriality,” 224–230, 258–271.

²⁴ See Gray, “Territoriality,” 417–419.

Mourambo Ngungu through his long tenure and service to colonial rule came to symbolize through his person the modern Ngosi district and its territorial practice. This administrative stability—both in terms of a long-term leader and a favored *canton* position within the structures of the different colonial *circonscriptions*—was lacking in the Mitsogo districts.

Though the project of creating Mitsogo colonial chieftaincies dates back to 1920,²⁵ the transformation of the Kamba district took a different path. By the early 1930's, colonial officials of the Mimongo *subdivision*,²⁶ which had two Mitsogo *cantons* for which chiefs were chosen, noted that they had not been able to find men of sufficient authority to discharge the responsibilities—mainly collecting taxes and organizing labor requisitions—of the office.²⁷ Yet, by the mid-1930's these *chef de canton* positions were filled as were Mitsogo *canton* chieftaincies in the *subdivisions* of Mouila and Fougamou. These colonial-appointed chiefs continued to be ineffectual in imposing their authority and their ethnically designated *cantons* were recognized by the local peoples as an “administrative fiction” (Maclatchy 1936:20).

These colonial “*cantons*” were an “administrative fiction” because elements of precolonial Mitsogo district had not yet disappeared. Indeed, one is tempted to argue that district identity had been reinforced in new ways as a consequence of the spirited resistance of districts like Kamba to colonial rule. In 1936, Alain Maclatchy, administrator for the colonial *subdivision* of Mimongo containing Ghesuma, Mopindi, Mapanga and Dibuwa, noted that

The Mitsogos are fiercely attached to their country and do not leave it easily; labor recruiters [for the timber industry] have only had a little success among them, sometimes even meeting with complete failure (Maclatchy 1936:28).

²⁵ “Exposé de la situation de la colonie du Gabon (1920); Rapport d'ensemble sur la situation de la Colonie du Gabon pendant l'année 1920,” Archives Outre-Mer A.E.F. (Aix-en-Provence), Série D, Sous-Série 4D, “Rapports Politiques,” 4(1)D18, “Gabon,” 1920.

²⁶ For a discussion of the evolution of the names and functions of colonial administrative units in Gabon, see Pourtier (1989:9–78).

²⁷ “Circonscription de la Ngounié: Rapport Trimestriel, Année 1934, 3e trimestre,” Archives Outre Mer A.E.F. (Aix-en-Provence), Série D, Sous-Série 4D, “Rapports Politiques,” 4(1)D40, “Gabon,” 1934. The two cantons were called “Mitsogo Ouest” and “Mitsogo-Sud”.

A brief gold rush and the creation of mining centers that stimulated a period of intense economic activity from the 1930's into the 1950's facilitated a more complete integration of the Mitsogo into the modern sector and strengthened the authority of the *chefs de canton*. The gold was discovered in an area that had previously been an unsettled dead zone and the building of roads and mining towns to service the industry as well as the numerous Europeans and foreign Africans who came to work in the area effectively undermined what remained of the precolonial districts (Mounanga 1981).²⁸

Due to Mitsogo reluctance to submit to colonial territoriality and the fact that their different *canton* chieftaincies were spread across several administrative *subdivisions*, none of their precolonial districts was able to make the modern transformation in the manner of the Gisir-Ngosi. Indeed, the Kamba district has all but disappeared in the modern Gabonese administrative infrastructure. But there is some indication that even into the 1960's the district of Dibuwa may have retained vestiges of its precolonial form. The ethnomusicologist Pierre Sallée visited there in 1968 just before the Gabonese government undertook to regroup the district's villages into areas more accessible and convenient for a modern state. Sallée's romantic description of "abandoned villages" of "vast proportions" containing houses with bark walls sporting "geometric motifs" is eerily reminiscent of Du Chaillu's account a century earlier. It is misleading to think that the Mitsogo of Dibuwa had been able to, as Sallée put it, "conserve their original purity" (Sallée 1985:9–10). However, the symbolic place the idea of Dibuwa now holds as a source and symbol of a lost precolonial world for contemporary Gabonese does push one to consider the nature of the "cultural flotsam and jetsam" that survived the imposition of European territoriality not to mention the variations in time and place of "disappearing districts" and the death of the equatorial tradition itself (Vansina 1990:239). A spatial approach to the history of southern Gabon need not fall into the arbitrary as indicated in Sautter's remarks at the beginning of this paper; a focus on the differing fates of precolonial districts as they encountered colonial territoriality can provide new insight into the experience of modernity.

²⁸ Etéké and other mining villages have since become virtual ghost towns as the gold supply was quickly exhausted; some prospecting continues today.

REFERENCES

- Agnew, J. A. and J. S. Duncan (eds). 1989. *The Power of Place: Bringing Together Geographical and Sociological Imaginations*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.
- Ambouroué-Avaro, Joseph. 1981. *Un peuple gabonais à l'aube de la colonisation: Le Bas-Ogowe au 19^e siècle*. Paris: Karthala.
- Denis, Commandant M. 1931. *Histoire militaire de l'Afrique Equatoriale Française*. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale.
- Du Chaillu, Paul B. 1967. *A Journey to Ashango-Land*. New York: D. Appleton and Company.
- 1861. *Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa*. London: T. Werner Laurie.
- Dupré, Georges. 1982. *Un ordre et sa destruction*. Paris: Editions de l'Orstom.
- Deschamps, Hubert. 1989. *Traditions orales et archives au Gabon, Contribution à l'ethno-histoire*. Paris: Éditions Berger-Levrault.
- Entrikin, J. Nicholas. 1989. "Place, region, and modernity," in J. A. Agnew and J. S. Duncan (eds), *The Power of Place: Bringing Together Geographical and Sociological Imaginations*, 30–43.
- Gollnhofer, Otto. 1974. "Les rites de passage de la société initiatique du Bwété chez les Mitsogho: La Manducation de l'iboga," Thèse de Doctorat, Université René Descartes-Paris V.
- 1967. "Bokudu, ethno-histoire Ghetsogo." Diplôme de l'E.P.H.E., Paris.
- Gray, Christopher. 1996. "The Transformation of a Men's Initiation Society: *Mwiri* in Southern Gabon 1850 to the Present," Paper presented at the African Studies Association 39th Annual Meeting, San Francisco.
- 1995. "Territoriality, Ethnicity, and Colonial Rule in Southern Gabon, 1850–1960." Ph.D thesis, Indiana University.
- Harley, J. B. 1989. "Deconstructing the Map," *Carographica* 26:2, 1–20.
- Howard, Allen M. 1976. "The Relevance of Spatial Analysis for African Economic History: The Sierra Leone-Guinea System," *Journal of African History* 17:3, 365–388.
- Kopytoff, Ivor, ed. 1987. *The African Frontier. The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- 1987. "The Internal African Frontier: The Making of an African Political Culture," in Kopytoff (ed.), *The African Frontier*. 3–84.
- Koumba-Manfoumbi, Monique. 1987. "Les Punu du Gabon, des origines à 1899: Essai d'étude historique." Thèse de doctorat, Université Paris I.
- Maclatchy, Alain. 1936. "Monographie de la sub-division de Mimongo," Layoulé, le 20 mars 1936, Archives et Bibliothèque Nationale, Libreville, Gabon, BBR 1746.
- Mamfoumbi, Christian. 1981. "Évolution des sociétés secrètes chez les Gisir du Gabon," (Mémoire de maîtrise, Université Paris Val-de-Marne).
- Mougala, Antoine Denis N'Dimina. 1983. "Monographie d'une ethnie gabonaise: Les Gisir de 1855 à 1900." Mémoire de maîtrise, Université Omar Bongo, Libreville.
- Mounanga, Loundou. 1981. "L'exploitation de l'Or à Etéké (Gabon) de 1937 à 1960." Mémoire de license, U.N.O.B, Libreville.
- Ngolet, François. 1994. "La dispersion Ongom-Bakele en Afrique Centrale: Esquisse d'Anthropologie historique (Origines-vers 1930)." Doctorat Nouveau Regime, Université Paul Valéry-Montpellier III.
- Ogoula-M'Beye, C. R. A. 1978. *Gakwa ou Edongo d'antan*. Translated by P.-V. Pounah. Fontenay-le-Comte: Imprimerie Lorient.
- Peel, J. D. Y. 1989. "The Cultural Work of Yoruba Ethnogenesis," in Elizabeth Tonkin, Maryon McDonald and Malcolm Chapman (eds.), *History and Ethnicity*, 198–215.

- Pourtier, Roland. 1989. *Le Gabon, Tome 2: État et développement*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Pudup, Mary Beth. 1989. "Arguments with Regional Geography," *Progress in Human Geography* 12:3, 369–391.
- Raponda-Walker, André. 1960. *Notes d'histoire du Gabon*. Brazzaville: Institut d'Études Centrafricaines.
- 1910. "Au pays des Ishogos, simple récit de voyage," *Le Messager du Saint Esprit*.
- Rey, Pierre-Philippe. 1971. *Colonialisme, néo-colonialisme et transition au capitalisme: Exemple de la Comilog au Congo-Brazzaville*. Paris: Maspéro.
- Sack, Robert David. 1997. *Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 1997. *Homogeographicus: A Framework for Action, Awareness and Moral Concern*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Sallée, Pierre. 1985. "L'Arc et la Harpe: Contribution à l'histoire de la musique du Gabon." Thèse de doctorat, Université de Paris X.
- Sharpe, Barrie. 1986. "Ethnography and Regional System: Mental Maps and the Myth of States and Tribes in North-Central Nigeria," *Critique of Anthropology* 6:3, 33–65.
- Sautter, Gilles. 1966. *De l'Atlantique au fleuve Congo: Une géographie du sous-peuplement, Tome I*. Paris: Mouton.
- Swiderski, Stanislaw. 1975. "Histoire des Apindji d'après la tradition," *Anthropologica* 18:1, 85–124.
- Togo, Hortense. 1988. "La tradition orale des Apindji (Ngounié, Gabon)." Mémoire de maîtrise, U.N.O.B., Libreville.
- Tonkin, Elizabeth, Maryon McDonald and Malcolm Chapman, eds. 1989. *History and Ethnicity*. London: Routledge.
- Vansina, Jan. 1990. *Paths in the Rainforests*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Walker, R. B. N. 1870. "Relation d'une tentative d'exploration en 1866 de la rivière de l'Ogowé et de la recherche d'un grand lac devant se trouver dans l'Afrique centrale," *Annales des Voyages de la Géographie, de l'Histoire et de l'Archéologie* 1:59–80, 120–144.

THE SALT THAT BINDS: THE HISTORICAL
GEOGRAPHY OF A CENTRAL NIGERIAN
REGIONAL IDENTITY¹

RICHARD M. SHAIN

The start of the growing season in Nigeria's Middle Benue is usually a time of great activity. Farmers clear fields and plant their yams, guinea corn and rice in time to catch the first rains. However, in the early 1980s, many fields remained unprepared for planting and yam seeds stayed stored in barns. A land war had broken out in an area bounded by the town of Katsina Ala in the west and Wukari in the east between the Tiv people and two other groups, the Etulo and the Wapa Jukun. In Katsina Ala, the Tiv revived their generations old assault on the Etulo while in the west the Tiv continued their century long appropriation of farmland belonging to the Wapa Jukun.

Fought mostly at night along remote rural pathways by small groups using the most modern weapons, the war involved hundreds of casualties. Many disappeared never to be seen again. The combatants on each side burned a large number of compounds and yam barns. In most respects, this conflict was typical of the land disputes which have become endemic in Nigeria in recent years. However, it did have one unusual aspect. Both the Etulo and the Wapa Jukun solicited and received military assistance from communities far removed from the sites of conflict. Guns, troops, food and money streamed into the Middle Benue from all over Central Nigeria. This outside aid proved crucial in determining the outcome of the war. Though outnumbered, the Etulo and the Wapa Jukun fought the Tiv to a

¹ This chapter is a consolidated version of three papers I presented in 1996–1997: at the African Studies Association Annual Meeting, the West African Research Association Conference, and the Social Science History Association Annual Meeting. My discussant at the SSHA panel, Bakama BakamaNume, made extremely helpful comments and I am equally grateful for the remarks Elliott Skinner made from the audience at WARA. Thanks also to Allen Howard and Marcy Schwartz for their rigorous readings.

standstill, managing, for the present at least, to retain control of their farm lands.²

The outpouring of support for the Etulo and the Wapa Jukun revealed the continued vitality of a centuries old regional identity—the Apa complex.³ All those who assisted the Etulo and Wapa Jukun saw themselves as fellow “Apa peoples”, historically connected in various ways to riverain pursuits. This chapter examines the changing spatial properties and cultural logic of this regional identity which has endured for over five centuries. It also analyzes the challenges to the regional hegemony of the Apa identity from Tiv-speaking peasants and Hausa-speaking merchants. While those groups have been unable to destroy the Apa identity, they have succeeded in establishing themselves as regional rivals to the Apa peoples. As a result, the Middle Benue has become one of Africa’s most complex areas—a geographical region with an array of distinct and competing regional identities. The Apa identity first emerged in the 16th century. At its inception, it linked together the peoples producing and trading salt in Nigeria’s Benue River valley. Those peoples later formed a state, Kwararafa, which became a major Sudanic power in the 17th century. During this imperial phase of its history, the Apa identity was primarily political. However, as Kwararafa declined in the 18th and 19th centuries, the Apa identity became more religious in orientation. Identifying oneself as Apa involved regular participation in Apa regional cults.⁴ In the second half of the twentieth century, a revitalized Apa identity constituted one of the principal historical and ideological foundations of Nigeria’s “Middle Belt” sub-region. The Apa peoples have used their historical regional connections in postcolonial Nigeria to cement alliances within the military

² Strife between Apa and Tiv speakers continues into the twenty-first century. These conflicts have been particularly serious since 2003 and have provoked large scale violent military interventions by the Nigerian government. The enormous loss of life involved has attracted extensive international media coverage. For an interesting if uninformed report on developments in this area during the 1990s, see Maier 2000: 193–227.

³ In this paper, following Jukun practice, I will use Apa and Kwararafa interchangeably. Apa means “person” in Jukun and “Kwara” means “river” in more than one Nigerian language. The word “Kwararafa” thus translates as “people of the river”. I also use Wukari and Wapa as equivalents. The Wapa branch of the Jukun founded the city of Wukari and are still closely identified with it.

⁴ For more on regional cults in Africa, see Werbner (1977).

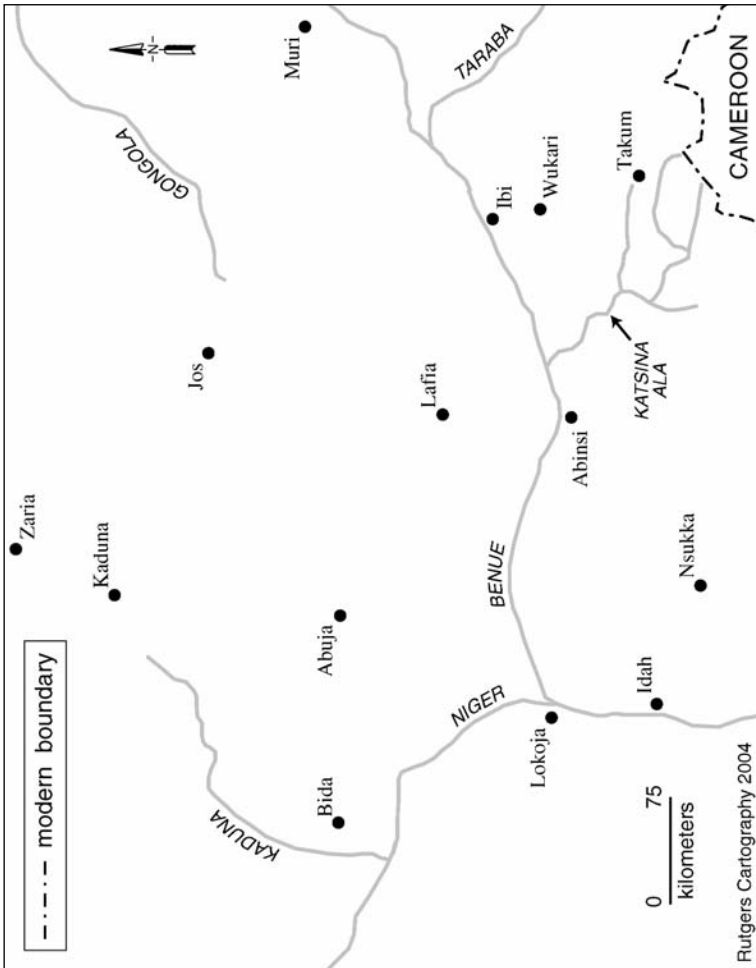


Fig. 17. Central Nigeria Region.

officer corps, to win coveted ministerial positions in the civil service, and even to agitate for the creation of new states.

As an identity, the Apa “complex” has had cultural and spatial characteristics which run counter to standard anthropological and geographical theories about preindustrial regions. Though anthropologists and geographers engage in heated debates about what constitutes a region, the general consensus identifies three characteristics: a high level of aggregation, cultural homogeneity, and physical and historical contiguity (Burton, Moore, Whiting, and Romney 1996:88). Apa as a region and as the Kwararrafa state never exhibited any of these qualities. It was highly decentralized, culturally diverse,⁵ and was never physically contiguous.

The lack of physical contiguity remains Apa’s most marked divergence from the regionalist paradigm. Politically, it embodied what the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai calls “sovereignty without territoriality” (Appadurai 1996:40). It was an archipelago state and region, composed of economic, religious and political nuclei along the river valleys of Central Nigeria. It lacked both identifiable boundaries and a spatial focal point. For the past thirty years, researchers have speculated in vain about where Kwararrafa’s capital was located, never realizing that such a capital never existed because it was not essential to Apa.⁶

The production of a regional identity is a contested process. Politically and economically dominant groups seek to impose ideological control on a regional basis while less powerful groups resist through the creation of “localisms”. Many anthropological and geographical models present identities as fixed. However, in West Africa, because of their contested nature, identities often have been fluid, multiple and over-lapping; in Stuart Hall’s words, “a meeting point that constitutes and continually reforms the subject so that he or she can act—points of suture, of temporary identification”.⁷ The Apa

⁵ It incorporated at least ten language groups from three different language families.

⁶ The Canadian historian J. Bertin Webster has argued that Kwararrafa’s capital was far to the north of the Benue Valley between the Borno Empire and the Hausa city state of Kano. The Nigerian historian A.A. Fari contends that Kwararrafa never even existed. The United States art historian Arnold Rubin believed that Kwararrafa’s capital was situated on the upper, not the middle, Benue. See Webster (1984:5–7); Fari (1984); and Rubin (1970:214–219).

⁷ Stuart Hall quoted in Watts (1992:124).

identity constituted such a meeting space of diverse groups that participated in varying degrees over time.

The Apa identity was the product of an enduring alliance of three groups: the many different “local” salt producers in such areas as Etulo,⁸ Keana,⁹ and Akwana; the Jukun speaking “owners” of important rainmaking cults, and Hausa speaking Abakwariga salt merchants.¹⁰ These groups shared a riverain orientation and were bound together by a common interest in manufacturing and distributing salt. The formation of this salt complex resulted in an “increased density of the interconnectedness of group to place and place to other places (Entrikin 1991:129). The group connectedness to place arose from the growing value of salt marshes, the enhanced significance of rainmaking shrines and the increased importance of markets where Apa salt was sold. As the salt complex developed, the Jukun linked their rain shrines together over a large area in elaborate hierarchies while the Abakwariga merchants devised similarly complex marketing networks. Out of this “increased density of interconnectedness” grew first the Apa regional identity and then the Kwararrafan state. A regional pattern of production held the Apa identity together and laid the foundations for the Kwararrafan state.

For much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Apa identity was hegemonic but contested. The growing importance of rain cults displaced ancient earth cults, arousing considerable local opposition.¹¹ Those lineages controlling access to salt marshes acquired increased political and economic power at the expense of other lineages specializing in fishing, hunting or craft production. These marginalized lineages often had a more tenuous link to the Apa regional identity than the salt producing families, creating tensions which

⁸ For more on Etulo, see Shain (1992).

⁹ For more on Keana, see Adefuye (1982:108–123).

¹⁰ The “owners” of rain-making cults were able to insert themselves into the salt production process at crucial junctures because they could control *when* rain would begin and stop. The timing of the rains was essential for a successful year at the salt brines of the Benue Valley. Lots of rain early in the rainy season would ensure that the salt brines would be at a healthy high level. Preventing rain at the end of the salt manufacturing process guaranteed that the drying salt would not melt away in a downpour.

¹¹ Jean-Marie Gibbal hypothesizes that this displacement is an essential phase in the state formation process. In Etulo, the overshadowing of the earth cult *Ata* by the Apa rainmaking cult of *Aku-ma* proved crucial in the construction of Etulo sacral kingship. See Gibbal (1994).

persist on the local level to the present day in such Apa centers as the Etulo kingdom.

During the nineteenth century, external threats to the Apa identity overshadowed internal conflicts. To the south of the Apa heartland, a competing regional identity called Tiv surfaced. Where Apa was riverain and centered around the production and distribution of salt, Tiv was “inland” and centered around the production of yams.¹² Where Apa peoples tended to settle in densely populated communities, the Tiv were self-consciously “rural”, spreading out more or less evenly across the Benue basin. These opposing spatial economies map out the tensions between the two groups.

While both the Apa and Tiv identities expanded in part through voluntary affiliation, the nature of their appeal differed greatly. Where Apa was stratified and secretive with a packed ceremonial calendar, Tiv was egalitarian and open, relatively unencumbered with ritual. Where Apa was saturated with a sense of history and place, Tiv was present oriented and remarkably portable. Many Benue youth, particularly those from marginalized lineages, found a Tiv identity a compelling alternative to Apa and became Tiv.

The Tiv also spread through more aggressive means. By at least the eighteenth century, land hunger had become a conspicuous feature of Tiv culture. Their intensive methods of yam cultivation which produced high yields soon diminished the fertility of their farm land. The appetite for new territory became so pronounced that early in their history the Tiv rearranged themselves into what the anthropologist Marshall Sahlins called “predatory lineages” to ensure perpetual Tiv expansion and an abundant supply of fresh farm land (see Sahlins 1961). A genealogical “charter” lies at the heart of this Tiv reorganization. Every Tiv is considered to be related to every other Tiv since all are the descendants of the same ancestor. This Tiv “family tree” “orders” Tiv space through the institution of the *tar*. *Tar* has multiple meanings but most significantly it refers to a territory occupied by the descendants of a single ancestor (Bohannan 1954:8). Within the *tar* exist lineages and nested within them are *ya*, compounds, ranging in size from two or three buildings to as

¹² The Tiv have always abhorred and avoided water related activities, whether fishing, river transport, or even swimming. Traditionally, they have relied on Apa waterman for ferrying services and for fish.

many as forty. The *tar* establishes Tiv spatial relations to such an extent that until recently nearly all place names in Tiv referred to kin groups.

Tiv methods of exerting land rights and settling land disputes have been one of the prime engines behind their “predatory” expansion. Theoretically, every adult male is entitled to enough land to farm but demand invariably exceeds supply. When an individual is unable to get what he considers his fair share, he seeks to claim land from his most distant relatives. This practice ensures social harmony among close kin and is a non-violent way of resolving family disputes. The “export” of land demand has led to many Tiv leapfrogging over neighboring *tar* where they might have family ties to either *tar* located far from their place of birth or even non-Tiv areas where they pioneer fresh zones of Tiv settlement. “Leapfrogging” never involves spatially isolating new Tiv compounds from the main body of Tiv population. The Tiv in contrast to the Apa peoples crave unimpeded proximity to one another. In the past, this proximity facilitated their exchange marriage system where every marriage also entailed the groom’s sister marrying the bride’s brother. Security considerations also have been paramount. Tiv lineages wanted to be close to one another in case of attack.

Two aspects of the Tiv migration into Apa territory in the nineteenth century made them troublesome to their Apa neighbors. The Tiv had a distinctively alternative approach to land use than the Apa groups. Apa peoples, as a role, carefully husbanded their farm tracts leaving ample time for their land to lie fallow.¹³ Many important cult shrines were located far from heavily populated settlements. The areas around these shrines often were deliberately left in an underdeveloped state. In addition, during the turbulent nineteenth century, some Apa groups abandoned prime farming districts because they were too difficult to defend. The Tiv have seen unfarmed land as unclaimed land. Misunderstanding Apa land use practices, they saw much of Apa as uninhabited virgin terrain.

¹³ The contrast between Etulo and Tiv farmed land near the town of Katsina Ala is striking. Despite having some of the highest rural population densities in Africa, Etulo farm land shows no sign of environmental devastation. Though the Tiv clan of Mbagen in the area has much lower population densities than the Etulo, their land is so declining in fertility they have even begun to grow cassava instead of yam.

When the first Tiv settlers arrive in an area, they seek to remain inconspicuous. Before long, though, they are joined by other family and lineage members and become more belligerent. Soon, the newcomers not only claim the land they have inhabited but they extend and invent new genealogies to incorporate their district into Tiv proper.¹⁴ Such a process rides roughshod over previously existing economic, political and religious hierarchies in an area and puts the Tiv in direct conflict with any polity in the vicinity.

Not surprisingly, when the Tiv began to migrate into uninhabited Kwararrafan land in the nineteenth century, they and those who chose to affiliate themselves with them increasingly refused to recognize Kwararrafan authority.¹⁵ As they did so, they further isolated the Apa communities from one another and the Apa identity took on the spatially discontinuous form it retains to this day. The Apa peoples resisted Tiv encroachment but the overwhelming Tiv presence made the maintenance of an Apa regional religious complex difficult. The Tiv were hostile to Apa religious practice and desecrated Apa shrines and interfered with Apa festivals. Many important Apa religious offices remained vacant because prospective candidates were hesitant to travel through Tiv territory for their installation ceremonies. As a result, the regional circulation of cult regalia, vital for Apa rituals, became a risky proposition.

During this same period, the launching of an Islamic reform and revival movement in the Hausa city states to the north constituted another severe threat to the survival of an Apa regional identity. This movement which resulted in the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate altered intergroup relations and imposed new spatial models on Central Nigeria. The Sokoto armies disrupted vital lines of Apa communication, further separating Apa communities from one another. Exacerbating these challenges to Apa integration, a migration of new Hausa merchants transformed the economy of the Benue Valley. The Sokoto Jihad particularly had a grave impact on the

¹⁴ The Sokoto Caliphate pursued the same tactic. As a result, many places in Central Nigeria have had three place names for the past century and a half—one Apa, one Hausa, and one Tiv. In recent years, as the Tiv have poured into Apaheld land, they have renamed localities by building new Catholic churches whose sign posts bear the Tiv name for the “new” settlement.

¹⁵ For a detailed account of Tiv migrations into the Benue Valley, see Orkar (1979). My chronology of Tiv migrations, however, differs significantly from Orkar's.

Abakwariga salt traders, one of the three initiators of an Apa regional identity.

Before 1804, the Abakwariga were both Hausa and Apa, wearing Hausa long gowns (*riga*) but participating in Apa rituals.¹⁶ Pre-Jihad Hausa cultural identity accepted a broad range of religious experience. A woman healer in a *bori* cult, an Abakwariga “owner” of an *Ashama* masquerade and a votary of the *magiro* cult in northern Katsina could all be considered “good” Hausa as long as they were nominally Muslim; or, at least were not actively hostile to it.¹⁷ After the emergence of the Sokoto Caliphate in the early 1800s, the criteria for determining who was Hausa narrowed. Being Hausa now entailed practicing the “reformed” Islam of the Sokoto Caliphate. Those who deviated from this norm risked marginalization and exclusion from Hausa economic and political networks.

While still “Hausa” in diet, dress and language, the Abakwariga found themselves relegated to the ethnic category of “degraded” Hausa by the Caliphate’s merchants, soldiers and clerics. Their connections with Hausa communities both at “home” and in the diaspora weakened. They no longer could be both Apa and Hausa. Their predicament became particularly acute when a fresh wave of Hausa merchants streamed into the Benue Valley in the 1820s and 1830s. These newcomers pushed the Abakwariga aside as they initiated new markets, negotiated new commercial relationships and set up new trading routes. Some Abakwariga “reconverted” to Islam and joined the interlopers. Others retained their local roots at serious economic cost. In the Apa kingdom of Etulo, the Abakwariga abandoned commerce all together and concentrated on black smithing. In Wukari, the nineteenth century capital of Kwararafa, they focused on weaving more than on interregional trade.¹⁸ In both cases, they maintained their close ties with the non-Islamic ruling dynasties in their areas and suffered tense relations with the new communities of Hausa traders. The hegemonic character of Sokoto’s Islam posed a

¹⁶ Little effective research on the Abakwariga has been done. For an important contribution, see Unomah (1982:123–135).

¹⁷ For more on the complex religious life of the pre-jihad Hausa speakers, see Usman (1981:7–8 & 68–71).

¹⁸ The Abakwariga produced a significant amount of the special types of cloth needed for title taking and for certain rituals and masquerades. Their *Kyadze* cloth with its intricate designs is still highly valued in the Benue Valley.

further threat to the Apa regional identity. Uthman dan Fodio's purified Islam was far more intolerant of competition than the more tolerant Islam it replaced. It brooked no rivals, either within the Caliphate or along its borders. The Caliphate's leaders were especially hostile to Apa's regional cult complex, seeing it as a dangerous anachronism which blocked the conversion of the Benue peoples to Islam. To undermine Kwararafa, the Caliphate encouraged the formation of the Bauchi and Adamawa Emirates just a few years after the launching of the Jihad in 1804.¹⁹ Both Emirates were located within striking distance of Kwararafa's heartland. From their founding, the two emirates raided Apa. Kwararafa's armies proved powerless to ward off those assaults. By mid century, Sokoto had wiped many Apa centers off the map, installing Islamic communities in their place.²⁰

This Sokoto colonization of Apa demonstrates that Uthman dan Fodio's style of Islam involved the imposition of a new spatial regime on Central and Northern Nigeria. His vision of an Islamic landscape reaffirmed the historic importance of cities as central places for Islamic education and political control of the surrounding countryside. Elaborate hierarchies linked these cities and smaller settlements into vast networks along which flowed goods, Islamic scholars, and soldiers. While local trade was not neglected, the Caliphate eagerly promoted commerce with the wider Islamic world in Africa and beyond.

Under this new spatial dispensation, the riverain markets of the Niger and Benue Valleys lost much of their former economic importance. Before the Jihad, the Hausa city states were a major market for Apa salt. After the establishment of the Caliphate, though, Hausa merchants preferred to purchase or capture human beings in Central Nigeria instead of buying commodities like salt.²¹ Enslaved labor had

¹⁹ For more on the history of Adamawa, see Abubakar (1977). Reliable, in depth historical studies on Bauchi are rare

²⁰ The Rev. Samuel Crowther's trip up the Benue in 1854 provides one striking eyewitness account of how this reorganization of space took place. See his account of the aftermath of the destruction of the Epira market town Panda in his *Journal of an Expedition up the Niger and Tshadda Rivers In 1854* (1970:38-42).

²¹ While many Apa salt centers declined in the nineteenth century, a few like the ones in the Awe area north of the Benue did flourish. However, there, Hausa merchants and Fulani rulers took over "ownership" of almost all the salt brines. Sokoto control of salt manufacturing was a relative rarity south of the Benue. For more on the historical situation in the nineteenth century in Awe, see Unomah (1982:163-166) and Lovejoy (1986:245-247).

played little part in most Apa economies and most Apa merchants were not accustomed to slave dealing on a large scale. As a result, some Middle Benue Apa markets like Akwana, Arufu and Abinsi which previously had an interregional reach shrank to become more purely local gatherings. Other markets like Keana in the Alago speaking areas north of the Benue which had specialized in salt were eclipsed by newly organized slave entrepôts like Lafia.

The emergence of the Tiv and the military, commercial and religious expansion of the Sokoto Caliphate created a complex situation in Central Nigeria. The Apa peoples with their splintered regional identity conceptualized their region differently from their new neighbors (see Figure 17). The Tiv farmers envisioned “their” region as a unified social field divided into lineages bound to one another through intricate kin ties. The Hausa traders and clerics saw “their” region as a set of interlocking economic and Islamic central place hierarchies dependent upon the northern Emirates.

The Apa sense of regional identity contains elements of the Tiv and Hausa models but differs from them in how it interrelates the natural, the religious, the political and the economic. As a region, Apa consists of landscapes, rivers and cities endowed with specific spiritual and historical significance. Belonging to this region until recently entailed membership in one of many regional cults and in once having been part of the Kwararrafan state. It also involved some level of participation in salt production and distribution.

In this nineteenth century argument over regional “definition”, Apa was initially at a considerable disadvantage with its military capacity shattered and its regional cult system in disarray. However, it was able to survive the Tiv and Sokoto challenges because the Benue salt-based economy continued, if on a reduced scale, for much of the nineteenth century. The arrival of the British in the Benue Valley in the 1880s, though, sounded the death knell for existing regional economic structures. Within half a century of their coming, the British had completely reorganized space in Central Nigeria, economically and politically, by building railroads, creating new opportunities for cash cropping and establishing new regional urban hierarchies. In particular, the British divided Nigeria into southern and northern provinces and sought to discourage indigenous cultural exchanges and political alliances which transgressed colonial borders. The Apa identity which had encompassed parts of the Cross River basin to the south lost its coastal “reach”.

Under such conditions, the survival of an Apa regional identity was at stake. However, the Apa identity emerged from this period of immense social, political and economic change in the 1940s even more dynamic than before. After World War II, a new generation of missionary-educated local intellectuals regarded the revival of the Apa identity as an essential phase in the modernization of their communities. These activists viewed Apa ties as an invaluable tool for political mobilization. It allowed them to make common cause with “traditional” rulers and to rally the potentially demoralized youth. By the 1950s, the activists had linked the Apa identity with the “middle belt” movement which challenged the political and cultural ascendancy of the Saradauna of Sokoto, Al-Haji Ahmadu Bello, and his Emirate allies.²²

In postcolonial Nigeria, the Apa identity has figured in military politics, especially during the years of Yakubu Gowon’s regime in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It was a key factor in the close relationship between Gowon and his Chief of Army Staff, Theophilus Danjuma.²³ Both came from Apa peoples and showed a keen interest in the development of the Apa region.²⁴ The mental mapping implicit in the Apa identity has had a significant impact on state creation during this period and during the Obasanjo and Babangida regimes of the late 1970s and early 1990s. A desire to protect Apa interests determined to a large degree the boundaries of Benue, Plateau, Gongola and Taraba states.

The key to the survival of the Apa regional identity has been the ability of the Apa peoples to reconstitute it as an oppositional rather than as a hegemonic identity. What started out in the sixteenth century as an arm of economic and religious control has become in the twentieth century a weapon for resisting what the Apa peoples see as increased Tiv and Hausa-Fulani dominance. Interestingly, the Apa identity remains as contested as always. Both devout Muslims and

²² For an interesting analysis of “Middle Belt” politics, see Tyoden (1993).

²³ For a biography of General Danjuma, done apparently with his complete cooperation, see Barrett (1979).

²⁴ Danjuma’s Apa identity has been unstable. Though at one point he held the honorary Wapan Jukun title of *Abonta*, commander of the Kwararrafan army, he now claims to be Chamba, a non-Apa people. Gowon’s group, the Ngas, have moved in and out of the Apa complex. However, at the Wukari launching of a Jukun Language Development Project in 1982 uniting all Apa peoples, the Ngas “traditional” ruler was in attendance.

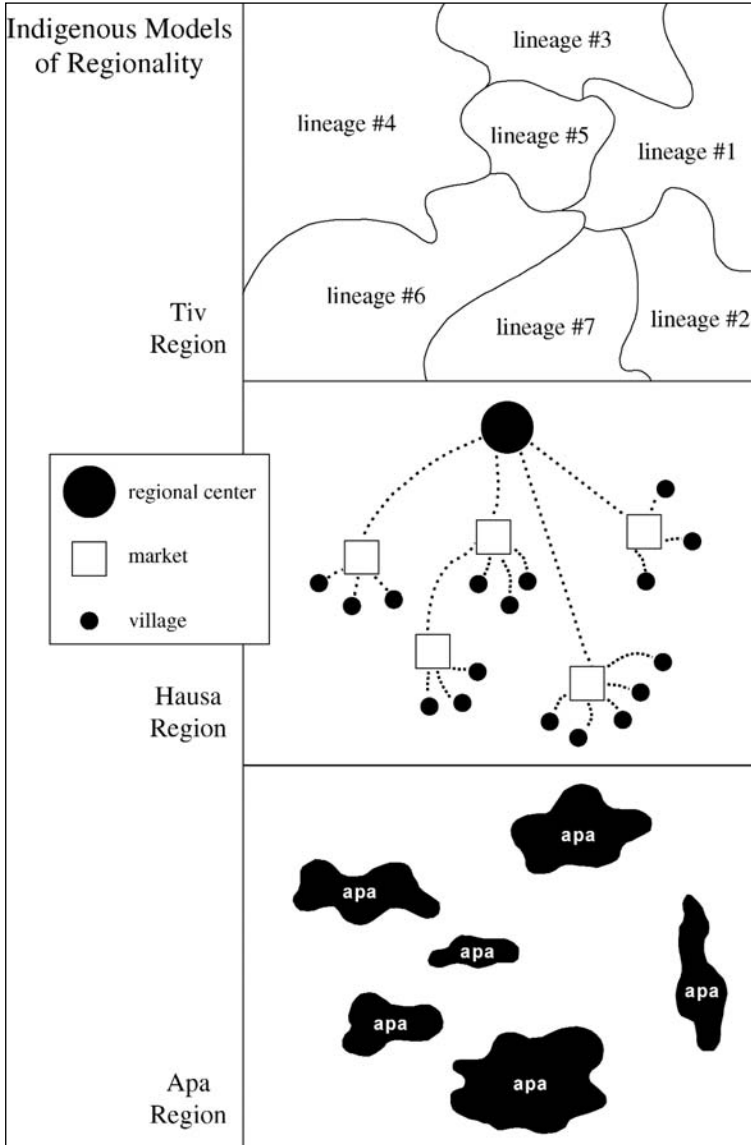


Fig. 18. Indigenous models of regionality, Central Nigeria

Christians in Central Nigeria have often been wary of it as an “animist” anachronism. On the local level, families which have had only a tenuous relationship with Apa have not been enthusiastic about its revival. Others in Central Nigeria have seen it as a crude device through which local political power brokers maintain their position.

The history of the Apa regional complex poses a number of interesting questions. In particular, it challenges much of the new social geography pioneered by Alan Pred and David Harvey. Contemporary geographical theory asserts that spatially fragmented identities are quintessentially part of the post-modern condition, the result of spatial transformations brought about by the triumph of global capitalism. However, as I have shown, spatially discontinuous regional identities have a long history in Africa which predates industrialization.

The history of the Apa complex and its charged relationship with Tiv identity also shows the limitations of studying the history of ethnic self-identification in West Africa in isolation from its regional spatial contexts. It also reminds us how contested and porous many of these identities have been from inception. In the case of the Apa complex, its decentralization has been one of its strengths. The Apa identity has allowed “local” communities to preserve their cultural autonomy and carve out their own spatial niche while deriving the many benefits from participating in larger arenas. Today, the cultural logic of this type of regional identity is more appropriate than ever before as the peoples of central Nigeria negotiate their cultural and political position in postcolonial Nigerian society and the wider global community.

REFERENCES

- Abubakar, Sa ad. 1977. *The Lamibe of Fombina: A Political History of Adamawa Zaria*: Ahmadu Bello University Press.
- Ade, Adefuye. 1982. “The Alago Kingdoms: A Political History” in Elizabeth Isichei, ed. *Studies in the History of Plateau State, Nigeria*, London: Macmillan, 108–123.
- Appadurai, Arjun. 1996. “Sovereignty Without Territoriality: Notes for a Postnational Geography” in Patricia Yaeger, ed. *The Geography of Identity*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 40–59.
- Barrett, Lindsay. 1979. *Danjuma: The Making of a General Enugu*: Fourth Dimension Publishers.
- Bohannon, Paul. 1954. *Tiv Farm and Settlement*, London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office.
- Burton, Michael L., Carmella C. Moore, John W. M. Whiting, and A. Kimball Romney. 1996. “Regions Base on Social Structure”, *Current Anthropology*, Volume 37, Number 1, February, 87–123.

- Crowther, Samuel. 1970. (1855) *Journal of an Expedition up the Niger and Tshadda Rivers in 1854*, London: Frank Cass.
- Entrikin, J. Nicholas. 1991. *The Betweenness of Place*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Fari, A.A. 1984. "The Jukun Empire: A Reconsideration", Department of History Research Seminar, University of Maiduguri, 24 February.
- Gibbal, Jean-Marie 1994 *Genii of the River Niger*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lovejoy, Paul. 1986. *Salt of the Desert Sun: A History of Salt Production and Trade in the Central Sudan*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Maier, Karl. 2000. *This House Has Fallen: Midnight in Nigeria*, New York: Public Affairs Books.
- Orkar, John N. 1979. "A Pre-Colonial History of the Tiv of Central Nigeria, C.1500–1850", Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of History, Dalhousie University.
- Rubin, Arnold G. 1970. "The Arts of the Jukun Speaking Peoples of Northern Nigeria", Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Fine Arts, Indiana University.
- Sahlins, Marshall D. 1961. "The Segmentary Lineage, An Organization of Predatory Expansion", *American Anthropologist*, Vol. LXIII.
- Shain, Richard M. 1992. "Water and Fire: A Cultural and Political History of the Etulo Speakers of Central Nigeria, c. 1630s–1890s", Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of History, The Johns Hopkins University.
- Tyoden, Sunni Gwanle. 1993. *The Middle Belt in Nigerian Politics*, Jos: AHA Publishing House.
- Unomah, A. Chukwudi. 1982. "The Gwandara Settlements of Lafia to 1900" in Elizabeth Isichei, ed. *Studies in the History of Plateau State, Nigeria*, London: Macmillan, 123–136.
- 1982. "The Lowlands Salt Industry" in Elizabeth Isichei, ed. *Studies in the History of Plateau, State, Nigeria*, London: Macmillan, 151–179.
- Usman, Yusufu Bala. 1981. *The Transformation of Katsina, 1400–1883: The Emergence and Overthrow of the Sarauta and the Establishment of the Emirate*, Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press.
- Watts, Michael. 1992. "Space for Everything (A Commentary)", *Cultural Anthropology*, Volume 7, Number 1, February, 115–129.
- Werbner, Richard P., ed. 1977. *Regional Cults*, London: Academic Press.
- Webster, J. Bertin. 1984. "The Three Phases of Kwararrafa: A Peripatetic State", African Imperial Seminar, Department of History, Dalhousie University.

HABITATION AND WARFARE STRATEGIES IN 19TH CENTURY MANDE—A VIEW FROM THE *KAFU*

JAN JANSEN

“You researchers must realize that our kingdoms were all different.”¹

In the past decades, the West African *kafu* has been studied extensively as a level of organization in a segmentary society.² Thanks to the research of J.-L. Amselle, A. Bazin, R. Roberts, and others, we gradually have come to understand the political, macro-economic, and macro-sociological trends which shaped and transformed *kafuw* over time. Yet, at a lower point of abstraction, it is difficult to get a grip on the history of a particular *kafu*. In this chapter, I aim to deepen our understanding of the *kafu* by studying it its wider geographical context, particularly by focusing on habitation strategies, warfare, and trade routes, as well as on the ecological changes caused by the inhabitants themselves. I seek to illustrate the dialectical relationship between strategies of habitation and strategies of warfare, on the one hand, and political and economic trends on the other hand, thus giving an impression of how people lived in *kafuw* in the 19th century. I attempt to describe the agency of the populations of two *kafuw*, a topic which has hitherto never been analyzed because of an alleged lack of sources.

The second goal of this chapter is to demonstrate that many sources for African history become more useful if historians sharpen

¹ Daouda Nambala Keita, Narena, October 1996. Daouda Keita, born 1956, is a son of a former Narena *chef de canton*. For an analysis of this remark, see the concluding section.

² I am much indebted to Ralph Austen, Stephan Bühnen, Allen Howard, and Clemens Zobel for discussion. Research for the period May 1991–April 1995 (on Mande griots) and for the period July 1996–June 1998 (on village foundation stories) was financed by the Netherlands Foundation for the Advancement of Tropical Research (grant W 52–533 and grant W 52–708). Research for the period July 1999–June 2004 (in the Mande Hills) was financed by the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences.

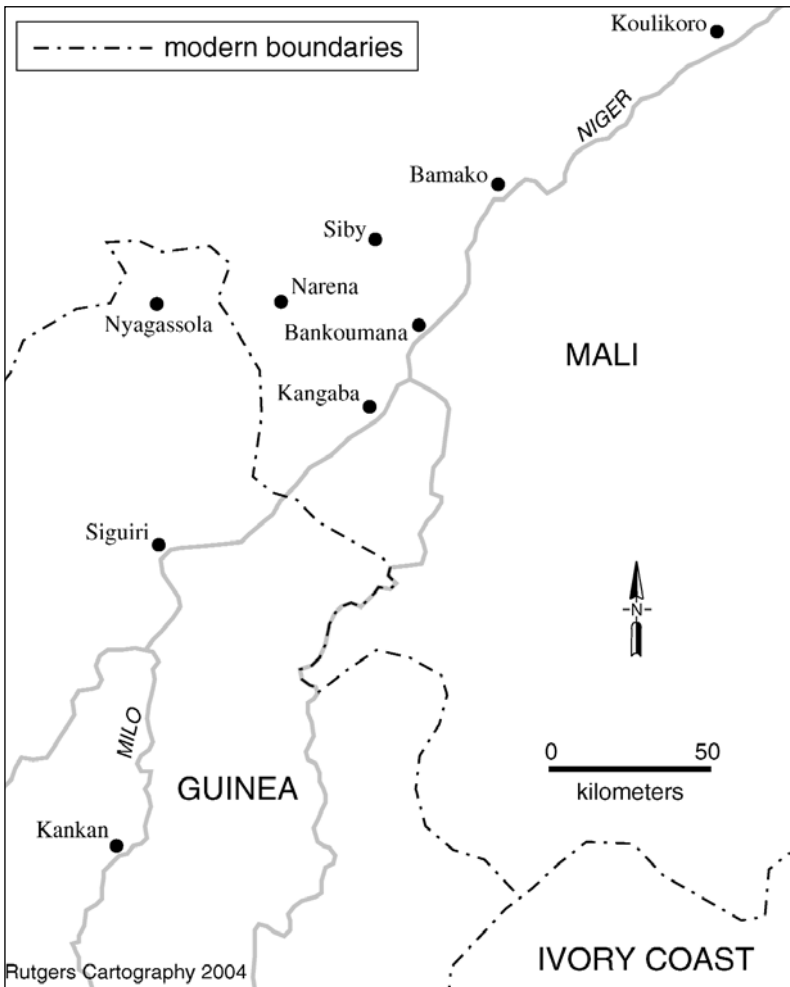


Fig. 19. Mali/Guinea Region

their methodological tools or change their point of view. The sources that seem to be the most appropriate for the study of the *kafuw*'s histories are the village foundation stories. However, I reject them as being not simply un-useful but as likely to introduce errors in reconstructing the past. Those stories, in fact, represent colonial models for administration and 20th century political claims. Thus, I extensively use 20th century sources in order to demonstrate the impossibility of reconstructing the 19th century landscape from oral traditions.

Inspired by historians of the Annales School—such as Marc Bloch and Ferdinand Braudel—I take the landscape of a region as an analytical concept. I use the term landscape to integrate empirically defined parameters such as social organization, material culture, and the environment. Thus I address the *kafuw* members' agency in relationship to historically determined but ever-changing spatial structures. In addition, I see the necessity to explore the inhabitants' mental landscape, but this is not the subject of this chapter and may be a difficult task for the 19th century because of lack of sources. (See final section of this chapter.)

The geographic scope of this study is the area between the Mande hills and the river Niger, the region South-West of Bamako. The time dimension is the period between the first visit to the area by a European and the actual implementation of French colonial rule in 1888. I will argue that changes in habitation can be proved for the 19th century, and that these were the result of increased warfare and changed warfare strategies. In the 19th century, this region suffered much from intruding armies. According to Mungo Park, around 1800 the area was dominated by Kangaba, an important slave market town that, in its turn, paid tribute to the kings of Segou. Kangaba had messengers stationed in the other *kafuw*. The mid-19th century jihads had a materially devastating effect: generals of El Haji Umar Tall destroyed many villages in and along the Mande hills. During 1883 and 1888 the area was the battlefield for Samori Toure's armies and the French imperial troops, who at that time could not successfully continue their occupation of the West African Sudan.

I restrict my investigation to two villages which are physically close to each other, but which have a quite different geography and history: Siby and Narena (see Fig. 19). Siby—50 kilometers southwest of Mali's capital Bamako—is located along the cliff that marks the Eastern border of the Mande hills. Narena is 40 kilometers southwest of Siby, on a plain that slowly ascends to the Mande hills. Siby

and Narena both were the power focus of *kafuw* that are still celebrated in oral traditions. Siby was the “capital” of the Sendougou *kafu*, and the present day village of Narena was the core of the ancient *kafu* of Narena. Moreover, Siby and Narena are well embedded in stories about the “far past”: a place called “Siby” is mentioned all over Sub-Saharan West Africa as the place of origin for thousands of people with the patronymic Camara. Narena is often described as a capital of Sunjata’s Mali empire, even in oral traditions as far away as Senegal (Monteil 1929; Folmer and Van Hoven 1988). When the French occupied the area they imposed a canton structure. The indigenous term for the canton was *jamana* (of course derived from the Arabic). *Jamana* was already in use as an equivalent of *kafu*. However, a canton was never called a *kafu*. In the decades after the imposition of the canton structure the French kept on adapting canton frontiers, often inspired by local oral traditions. In 1915 the French introduced a completely new canton structure in the area in order to facilitate the selection of the soldiers they needed to fight in the First World War.

A Fragile Environment

People have been settling on and along the Mande hills since the Stone Age.³ In order to interpret the historical processes of location and people’s understanding of the landscape along the Mande hills, its ecological fragility must first be mentioned. Because of the absence of detailed data on hydrology and the soil, this section will be impressionistic, but it still seeks to provide some major clues to a better understanding of the dynamics of a Mande *kafu*.⁴ For the starting point of my analysis, I take a quote by Mungo Park, the oldest written source I use. In 1796, Park traveled through the area on his way back home from his exploration of the Niger, and he described how difficult living conditions were in Mande and adjoining areas:

The population, however, considering the extent and fertility of the soil, and the ease with which lands are obtained, is not very great in

³ Along the road Bamako-Siby, between Kakele and Terenabugu, a Stone Age site has been made accessible for visitors. Archeologist Tereba Togola told me that similar sites are numerous in the area.

⁴ As far as I know there are no scientific reports on this rainfall, soil, and related topics for this area.

the countries which I visited. I found many beautiful, and extensive districts, entirely destitute of inhabitants; and, in general, the borders of the different kingdoms were either very thinly peopled, or entirely deserted. Many places are likewise unfavourable to population, from being unhealthful. The swampy banks of the Gambia, the Senegal, and other rivers towards the coast, are of this description. Perhaps it is on this account chiefly that the interior countries abound more with inhabitants than the maritime districts. (Park 1983:200)

Park wrote that Manding was “a country which is indeed hilly, but cannot properly be called mountainous, much less barren,” and he may have considered the population to be relatively well off, since there were no “swampy banks” on the mountains or in the area between the mountains and the river Niger (Park 1983:229).

In spite of the alleged good conditions in Mande, population density has always been remarkably low in the area south of Bamako. Although the ground was relatively fertile and additional income was guaranteed by gold digging and gold washing, life in pre-colonial Mande must have been very precarious and tough. In the 20th century, after occupation by the French, the villages along the river Niger grew rapidly in population, but along the Mande hills population density often remained less than 5 per square kilometer. On the mountains themselves it was much lower, often not more than 1 per square kilometer.

A question to be solved is the apparent depopulation of the Mande hills in the period 1820–1920. This area had suffered much from 19th century slave raids, and but did not experience population growth after the French took over, as might have been expected. The scarce data available hint at ecological changes. Water seemed to be a constant source of sorrow, sometimes because of its scarcity, sometimes because of its abundance. This constantly forced people to search for new places to settle. People say that Wanda—an important and fortified place north of Siby that was visited by Mungo Park—was abandoned, before the French came, “because of (shortage of) water.” Entire cantons became depopulated in the 1910s because of river blindness. Colonial reports from the 1920s state that people in the “canton” of Ouenta became blind at the age of twenty, and died at the age of forty.⁵ Moreover, the presence of the tsetse

⁵ Ouenta, Wanda, or Wonda (Mungo Park) are the same. People on and along the mountains refer to Wanda or Wanta when they talked about the northern part

fly made sleeping sickness endemic in this area. At the time of a survey in the 1930s, the population of Ouenta's five villages was found to be 256 "imposables"—healthy adults who could be taxed by the colonial administration. Therefore, in 1935, the French decided to add Ouenta and the adjoining canton of Bintanya Kamalen to the canton of Kenieba-Congo, creating a canton with only 1835 inhabitants in 700 square kilometers.⁶

Water was not only the transporter of diseases, it also created problems related to settlement and ground cultivation. Contrary to what is generally believed, the ground level of inhabited areas does not automatically rise. In West Africa, habitation often creates erosion of the soil, particularly of the roads that lead to a village. As a result, in a few decades a dry spot may transform into a swamp. This is aggravated by rain water flowing to the village by the eroded roads and paths.⁷ For Siby, this process is illustrated by "Sansankoro", a spot which is said to have been the first village of the Coulibaly people in Siby, but which is nowadays a rice field. During fieldwork I noted that in many Mande villages the mango orchard is the spot where the village chief's family once had its compound. Since mango trees must stand in the water each year for some weeks in order to guarantee a good harvest, and since people will never settle on grounds which drown annually, these terrains must have been victim of processes of erosion, and were undoubtedly much higher when they were chosen for house construction.

of the mountains, the uninhabited areas that nowadays consist partially of a protected forest. Some people claim that Wanda is an old name for Mande, while others say it was the town of origin of some prestigious Keita branches.

⁶ ANMK FR 2 E-5 Fiches de Renseignements des Chefs de Canton Bamako II, 1917–1955, canton de Ouenta. ANMK FR 2 E-4 Fiches de Renseignements des Chefs de Canton Bamako II, 1917–1955, canton de Kinieba Congo 1917–1946. See also Zobel (1996). It appears that the French did not know how to cope with such shifts in population size and habitation. At the end of the 19th century they created the canton of Nana, but 25 years later this canton was cancelled and the new canton of Kenieba-Congo was created which incorporated the remnants of Nana. As far as I know, the only source on Nana is ANMK FA 1–E 18, "1900" which contains a report of an exploratory tour made in the cantons of Nana and Bintanya. It is worthwhile noting that the people of Kenieba-Congo trace the history of their *kafu* back to the 18th century, although as it apparently was created in 1915.

⁷ According to Roderick McIntosh this phenomenon happens all over the West African Sudan (personal communication, Banjul, June 17, 1998).

Problems due to abundant rainfall become manifest in different ways even in nearby places. For the area between Kangaba and Bancoumana, major towns on the bank of the Niger, total annual rainfall determines which places will be flooded by the river. For the inhabitants of the Mande hills, the problems start the moment the rain begins to pour down. Along the cliff in Siby, people have to deal with torrents, literally waterfalls, and even a modern irrigation system sometimes cannot handle the immense amounts of water coming from the cliff. Within an hour after a heavy rain, parts of Siby are flooded, and they remain flooded for the next several hours or as long as a day. Taboun, 5 kilometers southwest of Siby along the Siby-Narena road, provides another example. Taboun is celebrated in the Sundiata epic and in Mande tradition generally as an ancient Camara settlement, but the present-day site was occupied in 1943. It does not seem to have been a good choice, at least in the long run. On a visit there I witnessed the following: one hour after a moderate shower began the paths in the village had been transformed into wild brooks as rainwater coming down off the mountain followed the tracks to Taboun created by pedestrians, bicycles, and donkey carts.⁸

It is difficult to comprehend why people would settle on a spot that would drown regularly, or why unhealthy places would be occupied. Regarding the Mande area, I seek some answer to this problem by supposing that there were hardly any places where a maintainable infrastructure could be developed. On almost any spot, in spite of an alleged attractiveness, human presence led to an environmental deterioration that could not be avoided by the available technique that people had available to manage the village infrastructure.

Having discussed the environmental dimension of the landscape, I now turn to the changed social climate. In the 19th century, increasingly large numbers of people were faced with war and therefore forced to change their living sites or modify them for defensive purposes. These choices depended on possibilities provided by the physical

⁸ On the move of Taboun, see ANMK FR 1 E 7 Rapports Politiques Rapports de Tournées, Cercle de Bamako 1950–1958, dossier ‘Canibala (Bamako) 1958’. Taboun used to be between Guèna and Nienkèma, ‘à flanc de montagne Taboukoulou’. According to Vallière, Taboun was in the hills and it had a very savage population (1885:322–3).

geography. Firstly, people along the Niger developed a system by which they could flee on the Niger, sometimes to temporary settlements on the other side of the river. Second, those near to the hills could resettle in the hills or immediately adjacent. There they could protect themselves against invaders by throwing and rolling stones upon them. Third, people in the open plains transformed their settlements into clusters of fortresses. However, additional defense was offered by the *fanfaw*, grottoes in the cliffs of the Mande hills. These can be found at a few kilometers from the villages—on the plains or along the cliffs—and they offered refuges to the villagers while an invading army destroyed their village. Thus, in the 19th century, in a fragile environment, defense became part of the landscape. This major political change had its impact on social organization, the organization of warfare, leadership, and architecture.

*The “Road of Mande”:
The Impact of Warfare on Spatial Patterns in the 19th Century*

I found the key to the question of how and why habitation changed structurally in the 19th century by comparing the accounts of Mungo Park from 1796 and Lt. Vallière in 1879–1881, when he was sent by Gallieni to explore the “Manding”. In 1796 Mungo Park arrived in Bamako, after a trip of almost one year during which he explored the “Interior of Africa.”⁹ He was on his way back home, coming from the Segou area. He was exhausted, and decided to return to the coast as quickly as possible. Since the shortest track, to Kangaba and further southward, had not yet been explored, he decided to go westward and follow the track people from Bamako showed him. The road he took actually was much more southward than he represented in the map added to his travel report, probably because his pocket compass had been broken during a robbery on his way from Bamako to Siby. After leaving Bamako, Park first visited Kooma: “This village is surrounded by a high wall, and it is the property of a Mandingo merchant, who fled hither with his family during a former war . . . the rocky hills secure him from the depredations of war.” After travelling “over several rocky ridges” Park reached Siby which

⁹ The following sections are taken from Park (1983).

he called Sibydooloo [Siby village], “the frontier town of the kingdom of Manding” where “the Dooty [dugutigi] or chief man [was] called Mansa, which usually signifies king.” Siby, he wrote:

is situated in a fertile valley, surrounded with high rocky hills. It is scarcely accessible for horses, and during the frequent wars between the Bamarrans, Foulahs, and Mandingoes, has never once been plundered by an enemy.

Wonda, a small town with a mosque and surrounded by a high wall, was Park’s next destination. He noted that there was a great famine in the Siby-Wonda area, which made him a serious burden for any landlord. He therefore decided to continue and took a rocky road, after having left his depleted horse with his landlord at Wonda. Then he passed through a number of unfortified villages (Ballanti, Nemacoo, Kenyeto, and Dosita) while he proceeded toward “Jerijang, a beautiful and well-cultivated district, the Mansa of which is reckoned among the most powerful chief of any in Manding.”¹⁰ “Jerijang” can be found on no map, but oral tradition clearly proves that this village is historically connected to present-day Narena. Early 20th century traditions contained in French colonial reports as well as present-day oral traditions mention Diarradjan or Jèjan as the youngest son of Nankoman a.k.a. Konkoman, the founder of Narena (texts and analysis in Camara and Jansen 1999).

From Jerijang Park went to “Mansia” (undoubtedly present-day Bala Mansaya), where he witnessed much gold mining activity, and then arrived in “Kamalia, a small town, situated at the bottom of some rocky hills, where the inhabitants collect gold in considerable quantities. The Bushreens live here apart from the Kafirs, and have built their huts in a scattered manner at a short distance of the town.”¹¹ There Park stayed for half a year recuperating. He has provided us with a drawing of the “town of Kamalia”: in the background there are rocks, in the foreground a forge and some individual

¹⁰ I have not been able to locate Ballanti on my maps; however, between Siby and Namiko is a rocky hill called Balandougou; Nemacoo = Namiko, now 6 kilometers north of Keniero; Kenyeto = Keniero or Kenyèro; Dosita is located on a map in Anonymous 1884, around present-day Kenyèma.

¹¹ Several villages in Mande are called Kamale (cf. Kamale North of Siby, and Kamale in the Bintanya region). They all have Keita village chiefs. Kamalia and Kamale are different renderings of the same name, and in the 19th century the French sometimes spoke of Kamalia instead of Kamale.

huts located in between closely connected groups of traditional round houses. Kamalia must be present-day Kamale, not far from the Kokoro river, the border between the present-day republics of Guinea and Mali. The drawing that Park made shows that it was then unfortified.

After his long stay in Kamalia, Park returned to the Atlantic coast in the company of a slave caravan. He was following a track known as the Mandesira, the “Road of Mande” which went through the mountains that formed the watershed of the Senegal and Niger Rivers, passing Nyagassola and Narena.¹² This was part of a system of trade routes which had been in use for centuries in Sub-Saharan West Africa. I see the jihads as the motor behind an intensification of the use of the Mandesira, since areas more to the northward were becoming too risky for trade. Merchants lived all along the trade route. The traders Park met were all Muslims and they lived separately from the non-Muslim population. It seems that they had extensive networks: Park was helped by a Toure and his brother. In the 19th century, the Toure and the Niare were the most influential groups in Bamako. The patronymic Toure generally is, in practice as well as in general belief, associated with Islamic scholarship.

What Park encountered after his departure from Kamalia is revealing of the changes caused by the rise of states to the north and west of the Mande heartland, notably Futa Jalon and Fuladugu (see fig. 20). After a few days of travel he wrote:

We continued at Kinytakooro until noon of the 22nd of April, when we removed to a village about seven miles to the westward, the inhabitants of which, being apprehensive of hostilities from the Foulahs of Fooladoo, were at this time employed in constructing small temporary huts among the rocks, on the side of a high hill close to the village. (Park 1983:252)

Although there is no source material for the 1700s, the incursions from the North into Mande seem in Park’s time to have been a new phenomenon. When Park arrived, trade to Kangaba from Segou still flourished, since Park mentions Kangaba as an important slave

¹² ANSOM 14 mi 686 D299 Mission Quinquandon 1883–1884 is a document containing the plans for a ‘Mission’ in Mande by Quinquandon. It is mentioned that there are two roads from Nyagassola to Bamako: the northern one through the hills was short, but difficult to do.

market. The Mande area was peaceful for the most part, and fortifications are absent in Park's account, although he mentions them often during his trip through the area north of Mande. It is remarkable that in Wonda Park found a mosque, while further southward the Muslims lived separately. This seems to hint at the non-conversion to Islam by the Mande population. Certain observations can be made about settlement patterns. An economic base existed in agriculture, craft production, gold mining which drew laborers and traders from a wide area around, and trade to the interior and the coast. The *mansaw* in this region, although long past their peak of influence, provided an overall political authority that helped to maintain order. They were not, however, primarily focused on warfare, and this could be seen in the architecture. North of the region, jihads had already compelled people to adapt the architecture of their settlements and sometimes the location. There were houses with two floors (Park 1983:157) or villages with entrance gates (Park 1983: 171, 251). The southern limits of this "Sudanic" habitation style was north of Siby, since Kooma and Wonda were fortified. In the succeeding century, the need to find methods of defense became common over the whole of Manding, but the precise response differed according to physical location and strategy chosen.

In 1879–81, Vallière traveled in the opposite direction as Park. Vallière departed from Kita, went to Nyagassola and then proceeded along the Southern cliff of the Mande hills to Narena. From Narena, there were two possible ways to reach the Niger: to Bamako via Siby, or to Kangaba. He chose the first option because he wanted to meet Gallieni in Bamako. Vallière's report conveys a quite different impression of the residential patterns than Park's. Along the Mande hills, every village he saw was fortified. South of Wonda and Kooma, Park had not mentioned a fortified place until he traveled West of Kamalia, where he saw people "apprehensive of hostilities" who were building places of refuge. Park's drawing of Kamalia depicts no fortification, but Vallière saw a strong fortification on the same spot.

In addition to warfare and raiding in the first half of the century, the region had since the late 1850s come under concerted attack from the expanding armies of the El Hajj Umar Tal. As David Robinson writes, while unique in certain respects, this was a continuation of an established pattern that affected a large area on the upper Senegambia and nearby sections of the Niger:

For the small Mandinka villages and chiefdoms [*kafuw*] in the Bafing and Bakhoy watersheds, the Umarian force resembled the raiders from Segou, Karta and Tamba that they had long endured. As part of the West African 'Middle Belt' of vulnerable societies, they took refuge on the mesas above the valley, or in the lands to the south, leaving behind their grain, cattle, and some of their weaker members. (Robinson 1985:251)

The Umarian army which carried out the conquest of much of the area was known as Mourgoula, and it established the fortress center of the same name northwest of the Siby-Narena region (Oluruntiméhin 1972:57, 243, 255–6; Robinson 1985:251ff.) In 1879, Vallière visited Mourgoula, then part of the Segou Empire headed by Umar's son Sheikhu Ahmadu. The officer noted that it would be easy prey for French armature, in case an attack was necessary.¹³

In terms of the landscape of people in Manding, Mourgoula had first been a base for the Tukolor jihadists to wage religious war and extend their influence. Later it was one of the fortified centers from which Segou under Sheikh Ahmadu attempted to dominate the region, continuing to attack the surrounding Manding *kafuw* which generally were resistant to Tukolor overrule. From the perspective of Ahmadu, Mourgoula was a major point used to control the trade

¹³ Peroz writes about these fortifications: "En effet, les places fortes soudaniennes sont, dans leur ensemble, comparables à des positions défensives organisées à l'avance, par la faible importance des obstacles et par la rapidité relative avec laquelle les attaques qu'elles motivent prennent habituellement fin. Le tata, obstacle d'une valeur défensive très sérieuse pour les Soudaniens mals armés et nullement entraînés aux attaques de vive force qu'il nécessite, n'a guère pour nous que l'importance d'un couvert bien organisé et parfois bien conçu; l'artillerie y peut généralement faire brèche rapidement quoique avec une grande consommation de munitions, et il est rare que sa hauteur soit telle que l'infanterie ne puisse l'enlever d'escalade avec des moyens même rudimentaires. Cependant, chaque fois que nous avons eu à nous rendre maîtres d'un de ces ouvrages nous avons éprouvé des pertes toujours plus considérables qu'en rase campagne; de plus, nous avons dû employer, pour les enlever, des règles tactiques entièrement différentes de celles qui président ordinairement aux opérations de nos colonnes expéditionnaires. . . . Nous avons dit que le mot tata, adopté par nous pour indiquer une enceinte en pisé ou en briques cuites au soleil était impropre. C'est en effet le terme employé par les oulofs pour désigner une enceinte, une clôture quelle qu'elle soit. Or l'art de construire des murailles d'argile, ou d'argile et de pierres sèches, est un art exclusivement soudanien et particulièrement mandé (bambarra ou mandingue); dans la langue mandé, l'enceinte qui entoure une ville, ou village, ou un hameau, se nomme guin" (Peroz 1890:99, 102–3).

and communication between Kita and other interior points, on the one hand, and the Manding states of the upper Senegambia-Niger zone, on the other, and also to block further French advance. When in late 1882 the French determined to launch their direct campaign against the Tukolor Empire, they first targeted Mourgoula which to them symbolically represented Tukolor strength and French weakness in the area. Desbordes, the commander, found it too well defended to take militarily and gained the center only by capturing its leaders through deception (Oloruntimehin 1972:245, 255–56).

Returning to Vallière's trek, after Mourgoula and Sitakoto, he came to Nyagassola, which had an impressive fortification (see picture in his report in Gallieni 1885:299). From Nyagassola to Narena he saw gold mining in Koumanakouta, ruins in Namarana, and a strong fortress in Kamale.¹⁴ (Gallieni 1885:310ff.). Both Nyagassola and Kamale were held by the Keita.

About Narena Vallière wrote extensively and his description is quite different than Park's image of "Jerijang," Narena's predecessor:

We soon saw that Narena with its two huge surrounding walls was a very important village. Since the reports of the indigenous population had made the place to be inhospitable, I was in a hurry to see the chief, with the aim to win his hospitality with some presents we had brought; but I received the most awful welcome. At the moment I conformed to the custom I thought to be universal in the Sudan, and stretched out my hand, he turned suddenly around, saying 'that these manners are those of the Segou people whom he did not like' This inhospitable individual bears the name of Bandiougou, and he presents himself as a declared adversary of the Toucouleurs. His village, of about 800 inhabitants, has suffered much from the visits of the muslim armies and contains a rather large number of refugees from the Fouladougou, who have feelings of hate again the former invaders . . . I soon found out that our host regretted his presentation . . . and had mistaken me for a friend of the Toucouleurs. . . . I [was informed] that Narena was the oldest village of the Manding and that all its inhabitants were of noble origin.

¹⁴ In October 1997, the chief of Kamale—nowadays a hamlet, but in the past the main village among the five villages of the Bacama region—showed me the grave of the "grandfather of my grandfather" in order to prove to me that everything he had just told me about his ancestor was true. He said that this was within the limits of the old fortress of Kamale, which they had left before he was born because of a shortage of drinking water. He showed me the periphery and entrance of the former tata of Kamale. This probably is the place Park spent half a year, but when no fortress existed.

When Vallière left en route to Siby, he passed the recently destroyed town of “Samba Fida” (Samalofida) and did not opt to travel to Kangaba. One year later Mahmoudou Alpha, an “officier indigène” of the French troops, concluded that Kangaba was bigger and more important than Vallière had assumed from information he had received. It consisted of six tatas.¹⁵

The local history of Narena published by Keita and Kouyaté gives some information about the fortifications of Narena that the Narena people had observed in their youth (Keita and Kouyate 1997:2–7).¹⁶ Three of the constructions were called Kandia, Issakourou, and Bankumana.¹⁷ They are still celebrated in oral tradition as Fadima Koné recounts:

I saw the ruins of the tata of Kandia. Behind the house of Kague Soma, close to the soro-tree was a remnant of the tata. On the road to Fadabanfada, there also was the remnant of a tata. The first tata of Narena was the one called Issakourou; I saw the remnants of this tata. The cheese tree of Bankumana that fell [in 1996–JJ] was brought from Issakourou when it was small. The Diara family asked my grandfather Fali permission to plant it in front of his door. Nanyouma Kouda, who lived with the family of Nanyouma Fode had the duty to water it. Next to that house of Alama Basandiou was a remnant of the tata. It was about three meters high and one and a half meters wide. You could walk around on it on horseback. I also saw the tata of Bankaran (Bankoumana), on the domains of Soukouba Diara. It was a high and complete tata. It was in the direction of Solo.

¹⁵ ANSOM, *Sénégal et Dépendances*, dossier 73 bis, Campagne 1880–1881; rapport du Lieutenant-Colonel Borgnis-Desbordes (30 chapters, 561 pages). Chapitre XXVII, mentions the mission to Kangaba by Mahmoudou Alpha.

¹⁶ The following two pages are based on texts collected by and analyzed in Camara and Jansen (1999).

¹⁷ The tata of Bankumana does not seem to be historically related to the village of Bancoumana, 40 kilometers from Narena, although the similarity in name is explained sometimes as a historical relationship. In the context of the argument of this article, it is important to note that these fortifications are sometimes perceived as villages. For instance, ANSOM, *Sénégal et ses Dépendances IV*, dossier 92A contains a manuscript titled ‘Mission du Manding fait par le lieutenant ROUY des spahis, 6 avril 1888—statistique des villages visités’. This text mentions a village called Kandia in the “pays de Narena, pillé par Mambi” (the ruler of Kangaba—JJ). In colonial as well as pre-colonial times, Kenyema, Samolofida, Nafagué, and Koulouka were dependent on Kandia. Rouy stated that the first three were small places, the last large. However, there was a significant difference between the “pays de Narena” in pre-colonial times and the colonial, post-1915, canton of Narena to which Sokourani was part. At the end of the 19th century, Sokourani belonged to the “pays de Djoulafondo.” It is remarkable that the present-day inhabitants of Sokourani say that their village used to be called Djoulafondo.

Nounfaran Kante has given another account:

I personally walked on the ruins of the tata of Kandia. At that time, lots of it remained. This tata was the property of the Konate. I also saw the ruins of Issakourou. This tata was owned by Koulouba Diara, the general with the task of protecting Fili Diby [chief of Narena in the early colonial period—JJ]. I also saw the ruins of the tata of Bayan, the ancient capital of Narena. My house has been built on the remains of the tata of Bankoumana. . . . The ruins of the tata of Kandia and of Bankoumana, which I saw, would reach to three meters high. My father had the habit of shooting at a cow (sic) . . . from the holes through which one can watch. As a child, I personally killed birds through those watch holes.

The old people of Narena also recall a palace which stood in Narena. One man who saw the spot where it had stood estimated its surface at fifty square meters (Noumouni Bala Keita, cited in Camara and Jansen 1999) Another said: “I saw the ancient site of the palace because our compound was on that spot. The palace was a special site in the tata. Not the entire royal family lived in it. Only his favorite wife inhabited the place, together with the king.” (Nounfaran Keita cited in Camara and Jansen 1999).

Vallière’s description of Narena gives a clue to the way people altered territoriality in the Narena *kafu* in order to accommodate to the military and political realities of the 19th century. My argument, however, is not based upon a coincidental change in architecture and village outlook. If that were the case, this analysis would be conjectural history. The available sources strongly hint at structural changes in social organization and in authority.

The fortresses Vallière observed must have been created in the mid-nineteenth century, and probably not all at the same time. Their leaders may have maintained some political autonomy while cooperating for the common defense. As the above account of Nounfaran Kante shows, a general in service of the chief had his own tata, as did Koulouba Diara. The distance between the fortresses are not described in the sources, but during fieldwork I conducted in the Mande hills I observed some that were separated by about 100 meters. The tata were temporary structures; Vallière saw two of them, but oral tradition has kept the memory of many more.

The presence of a Diara suggest, by the origin of this patronymic, the influence of Segou, or at least the presence of a small relatively independent warlord in service of Narena’s chief. The chieftaincy

itself seems to have altered in nature over the century, although the same Keita family stayed in power. Mungo Park called the ruler a *mansa*, a term referring to legitimate and ancient kingship. Present-day old men, however, talk without exception of the *faama* of Narena when they refer to the pre-colonial chief of the place. *Faama* is a term that refers to warfare; it would be appropriate to consider him as the established leader of a group of warlords or army leaders (*keletigiv*) (Jansen 1996; Person 1968). Thus, in Vallière's time, Narena was a collection of people related to each other by kinship, military services, and patronage, such as the refugees Vallière saw. It would be impossible to construct a map of the village in the 19th century, however, not only because of the destructive wars and the temporary character of the fortresses but also because of the changes Narena has gone through in the 20th century. Since it was located along the road the French built to Guinea, the village center has moved slowly to the road and the site of the palace is in the periphery of the present-day village.

*

Northward, on the Mandesira, people also suffered from a long history of raiding and warfare, but their response strategies often were different because of the different ecological possibilities. On his way to Bamako, Vallière continued to follow Park's route in the opposite direction. After Samolofida, he almost overlooked the population of Tabon/Nyenkenma, which had sought refuge in the mountains. In Siby, he arrived in the middle of a *Komo* ceremony and was confronted with drunken men dancing around the sacred groove. His impressions of the place are revealing:

The village of Siby has a very particular aspect; instead of a compact entity, it is composed of various groups of huts, established on one line on the foot of a long mountain with almost vertical cliffs. This arrangement has been taken to make it possible that at a moment of danger, everyone can quickly seek refuge in the rocks. The village, when deserted in this way, becomes uninhabitable, because those who have fled do not miss the opportunity, from the heights of their retreat, to roll on the attackers enormous boulders which they only have to push. The inhabitants, about two thousand, are quite unified the people say; they belong to the tribe (sic—JJ) of the Camara, a tribe of workers, blacksmiths, and gold diggers. They are lowly esteemed among

the other Manding people, who believe themselves to be from a better origin and who disdain their activities; however, energetic and well armed, they remain independent and not disposed to accept the domination of others.

The Siby people had chosen the same solution as had the inhabitants of Kinytakooro in the time of Park and, then later, those of Taboun/Nyenkenma. In contrast, the people of Narena developed a strategy that was a self-evident solution for a town on a plain: they constructed tatas, as did others in similarly located centers.

After spending the night in Siby, Vallière continued the next day to Bamako. Passing Nafadjè, he remarked that this was the end of Manding; Vallière's notion of the extension of Manding thus coincides geographically with Park's area of kings (*mansaw*). Again, a comparison of Park and Vallière gives an important clue. Park tells that the village chief is called *mansa* and therefore his patromymic will have been Keita, since the Keita are considered, in Mande, to be the *mansaren*, royalty. Nowadays, only a few Keita are left in the Sendougou area; the Camara are dominant. These Camara relate themselves to the Keita of Kangaba and in reports from the early colonial period, the Camara from Siby are pictured as people of Susu origin (meaning, from the forest of Guinea) whose suzerain is the ruler of Kangaba. Today, though, the population no longer traces descent to Susu.

It seems, therefore, that during the 19th century the Sendougou area had become affected by a grand political maneuver engineered by the rulers of Kangaba, or the Keita in general. The Keita themselves has been replaced as local authority holders by audacious foreigners in order to create a buffer between the Keita and the invaders from the north. These settlers were accustomed to live in the harsh conditions caused by constant danger. And warfare also had changed, probably in a revolutionary way, during the century. While Park described Siby as unconquerable, early 20th century written documents inform us that, in the 1880's, Siby was completely destroyed at least two times by Samori's armies. Thus, the Siby case demonstrates that a *kafu* was part of a wider system of alliances and political maneuvers and that the ability of a group to adapt to changing circumstances had its limits. The Keita's plan for the buffer failed, however, and royal Keita disappeared from the area.

War did not end with the French defeat of Almami Ahmadu's forces and the destruction of Mourgoula, which put a halt to the

razzias into Mande. It continued in succeeding years with the clashes between Samori and local rulers and between Samori and the French. The French highly valued Kangaba—located at the end of the Mandesira—as a post, and they explored the Mandesira with the hope of establishing a trade route (possibly by rail) from Kita to the Niger.¹⁸ Sheiku Ahmadu's occupation of the Segou area meant that a more Northern route was unattractive at that moment. However, when Borgnis-Desbordes headed for Kangaba in 1882 along the route taken by Vallière a few years before, he discovered that: “. . . a previously unknown chief a few years ago, Samori . . . the ally of Mamby of Kangaba, chief of the lower Manding . . . only had to make one more step to close for us the Bakhoy valley that we had occupied up to Kita.”¹⁹ Segou's power was crumbling, and thus Borgnis-Desbordes directed his troops to Bamako, which was occupied in February 1883. In order to keep Samori at a distance he fought a battle with the armies of Fabou a.k.a. Keme Brehman (Samori's younger brother) at the Wonyonko river and he destroyed all the villages south of Bamako up to Bancoumana. He thus created a no man's land between the French and Samori, which helped to establish Bamako as a politically secure site necessary for the end of their railway line.

With these pieces in place, the French no longer considered control over the Mandesira important, at least for the short run. In 1885 the armies of Samori destroyed Narena (Person 1968). Until 1887, Samori remained master of the left bank of the Niger, south of Bancoumana. Kangaba chose Samori's side when the French had not sent the support they had promised in 1881, and flourished by this alliance (Jansen 1996). This was the era that in Person's words was the Wild West of Africa, as illustrated by the actions of the “Mission du Lieutenant Combes” who had been assigned to explore Mande in 1885. Combes could not, however, resist the temptation to become a legendary conqueror, and thus he decided to help the people of a town called Kenieba, on the right bank of the Niger

¹⁸ ANSOM, *Sénégal et Dépendances IV*, 75 *Expansion territoriale et politique indigène* “Rapport sur une reconnaissance faite sur le Niger en Février 1882 (Kita, le 20 Mars 1882)”.

¹⁹ ANSOM, *Sénégal et Dépendances IV*, 90 bis, *Expansion générale* ‘Vallière, Rapport sur l'organisation politique donnée aux états de Mambi situés sur la rive gauche du Niger (Kangaba, 5 mars 1888)’, and Vallière's report in Gallieni 1885.

and under siege by Samori's armies. He arrived too late: Kenieba had already been destroyed. On their way back, the French were attacked by Samori's armies at Nafadji (between Nyagassola and Siguri), suffered severe losses, and had a narrow escape. From then onwards, the French were very careful with Samori, who—again according to Person—had superior tactics and who would certainly have beaten the French, if he had better armature (Person 1968 and 1977). In 1887, however, Samori voluntarily withdrew his troops from the left bank in order to attack Sikasso, and in 1888, an army led by Vallière occupied the left bank and he destroyed the palace of the king of Kangaba. In succeeding years the French suppressed further resistance and began to assert control.

*The Twentieth Century:
the Imposition of a Village Structure, and its Consequences*

In the early decades of the twentieth century, French rule had a great effect on settlement patterns and forms of habitation. I argue that this impact has become interiorized and that earlier adjustments have been completely forgotten in popular memory. As the French measurement changed the infrastructure and the administration, the landscape the Mande people lived in changed so much that the inhabitants obliterated many of their previous memories. Therefore, although present-day accounts of the foundation of villages seem to be the most appropriate historical source to reconstruct the history of a *kafu*, such accounts are weak and probably even misleading. They are not reliable sources for the study of changes in habitation strategies in late pre-colonial times in part because the village structure was not as ubiquitous then as it is nowadays, after French colonial politics led to a movement and proliferation of villages.

In part the erasure of memory took place because the French imposed their own principles of rule via the “chefs de canton” and “chefs de village” and also constructed roads in order to improve transport and the flow of commerce, and, of course, to impose rule more efficiently. Two roads are particularly significant for this study of habitation strategies. One that brought many changes was the road from Bamako to the Guinea border through Siby to Narena and then to the important gold mining center of Kouremale (on the frontier), with a branch to Kangaba that passed through Koflatè—

where gold also was discovered in the 1940s. The French first attempted to construct the Bamako-Kangaba road in the early 1920s, but then abandoned it in 1937, probably because it was destroyed annually by the flooding Niger. Only after the Second World War was a good road constructed on this trajectory, thanks to the introduction of the grinding machine.²⁰ Thus, over the period from 1890 to 1940 both Siby and Narena were located along the most important road to Guinea, which had a great impact on the habitation strategies.

Confronted with the new possibilities and restrictions of colonial rule, people in Siby and Narena made critical decisions regarding habitation. In Siby, the construction of the Bamako-Siby-Narena-Kouremale road ended flooding by water falling from the cliff, since at that time the water was canalized and directed to the bridge situated next to the present-day post office. Elder inhabitants have described the changes. Kanda Camara, for instance, recounted the following:

The trajectory Siby-Bamako used to be done on foot. The present day road between Siby and Bamako did not yet exist; the old route was along the foot of the mountain. Narena was the first to establish the road between Siby and Narena. Then Siby constructed the road up to Samanyana and Samanyana established the road to Bamako. At that time, there was not yet a road between Kangaba and Siby. The road between Siby and Bancoumana was constructed recently. (Diawara *et al.* 1997)

Attracted by the road, partially pushed by French policy, many Mande villages moved to the road. For Siby, this has resulted in an entirely new habitation strategy. As described above, Siby was a “conglomerate” along the cliff in the late pre-colonial era. The French did not seem to have known how to handle the area called Siby.

²⁰ ANMK, Fonds Recents 1 E-70 I, “Rapports Politiques- Rapports de Tournée Cercle de Bamako 1921–1944” refers to a ‘piste’ Bamako-Djoulafundo that was built after twelve years of discussion (then, the 230 km between Bamako and Siguiri [in present-day Guinea] could be done by car in 8.5 hours, but only in the dry season). “Rapport 1953—Narena” in ANMK Fonds Recents 1 E-7, “Rapports politiques et rapports de tournées cercle de Bamako 1950–1958” mentions a road along the river which was abandoned in 1937. Colonial administrator J. Lucchesi argued that the Bamako-Siby-Narena road was in a deserted area and advocated constructing a new Bamako-Bancoumana-Kangaba road through a more densely populated area.

Just after occupation it was considered to be a village, but in 1900 it is observed that the population had doubled, from 423 to 812, in a few years, since many liberated soldiers settled there after the war with Samori had come to an end. However, I wonder if this village of Siby covered the same area that Vallière saw Siby inhabited by 2000 people; probably, the Samorian wars had forced many to resettle. A few decades later the French ruled the conglomerate as a set of independent villages under a chef de canton. The “Carnet de chef” of canton chief Morignouma Camara (1949–1955) demonstrates this. His canton consisted of eleven villages with 6,880 inhabitants in 1951, of which 3,334 lived in Bancoumana and 728 in Siby.²¹ This Siby of the 1950s equaled the present-day quarter of Jinkono. Today, however, Siby consists of five “quartiers” or neighborhoods: one being Jinkono, and the others Kakala, Jisumale, Sebekoro, and Kinyekunna—which is of very recent origin. When one walks in present-day Siby, the center of the settlement is Jinkono where the market place is located.²² Jinkono originally was located between the steep cliff and the sacred hill Kuruninba—where the Komo ceremony used to be performed by the ancestors of the present-day Siby population. Nowadays, Jinkono is 300 meters from its ancient site, having been moved to the road. The quarter of Sebekoro came into existence in the 1930s, around a *sebe* tree along the road. Old people of Siby still vividly tell about how the houses of Sebekoro were constructed. Jisumana also moved a short distance from the cliff towards the road, and Kakala is one kilometer northeast of Siby.

Thus, as the canton chief’s “Carnet de Chef” demonstrates, the quarters of Siby were independent administrative units in colonial times. The memory of this situation is kept in the title of the authorities. The head of Siby is the *dugitigiba*, literally “big village chief,”

²¹ ANMK FR 2 E 5 Fiches de Renseignements des Chefs de Canton Bamako II 1917–1958, dossier 18 “Sendougou”.

²² The name of Jinkono is subject to various explanations. Daouda Diawara, one of the authors of Diawara et al. (1997), assured me that the term Jinkono did not mean “in the fortress” (jin as ‘tata’, cf. Peroz above), but that jin refers to an architectural style, to a house type which has become rare in the region. It was a rectangular house with a wooden skeleton plastered with clay, thus consisting of thick walls and roofs; it was very comfortable but too feeble for heavy rains and nowadays expensive because of the cost of wood. This house type used to be dominant in old Jinkono, where Daouda Diawara’s father (d. 1989) had his butcher’s shop, before Jinkono moved to its present-day site.

and is chosen from the “chefs de quartier” of Kakala and Jinkono, while each “chef de quartier” bears the title of “village chief” (*dugutigi*) referring to the colonial era. However, the colonial situation covered up the previous form of organization. The fact that these quarters celebrated the Komo ceremony together demonstrates there was at least a ritual unity among them.

The present-day village of Narena also is a complex construction that has been deeply affected by its colonial heritage. Its center moved slightly to the road, and from this perspective changes were much less dramatic than in Siby. However, it was very difficult and illogical to adapt Narena to the village model, even though there was on this site a group of neighboring and closely collaborating, but semi-autonomous, fortifications. Even more than Siby, Narena seems to have been a term referring to an area. The term does not refer to a village. For the present day village of Narena, people have some “old names.” “Memebugu” is often mentioned as such by people (Camara and Jansen 1999), while Jerijang (mentioned by Park) and Kandia may also be called as names.²³ Clearly, however, Kandia was a “pars pro toto”; it was the most famous among a group of fortifications. It is interesting that Park does not mention a Jerijang as a village or town but as a “district”. This name, we can only guess, might be related to a *faama*, even to the name of the youngest son of Narena’s founder Kankoman. Narena represented—according to many present-day inhabitants of Narena—a political phenomenon of a larger scale. It was the name of what in this volume is being referred to as a territory, or a formal region; French colonial sources often mention “le Naréna.” I think that Narena was a concept in the 19th century only relevant in relation to warfare, since Narena’s chief was *faama*, an authority that derives its status from the practice of warfare. There was no such a thing as a village, but only a group of fortifications, each with its particular authority.

Under colonial rule this form of organization caused a lot of trouble for the Keita and other claimants to authority. Since the Keita had no rights to the chieftaincy of the biggest “village,” yet were occasionally superior to those chiefs, the French were not eager to appoint them as *chef de canton*. In the end, canton chieftaincy was

²³ Carte NO XIV, G. Grandidier, *Atlas des Colonies* (Paris 1934) mentions Kandia, instead of Narena.

given to the Keita, but members of other families could and still can be appointed “village” chiefs over the settlements then collectively labeled as Narena. This seriously weakened the Keita political position in the area. In the long run, the geography of Narena and its rule adapted to French practices. However, Daouda Nambala’s complaint that “our kingdoms were all different” certainly refers to the inability of the French administrative model to cover the spatial variations in pre-colonial rule. Therefore, one must be careful with village foundation stories as historical sources; they may be a political tool that to a great extent reflects the structure imposed by the colonial government as well as the post-colonial governments. It must never be forgotten that Mali’s first president Modibo Keita promoted a socialist regime in the villages that were managed like a kind of kolchozes (cf. Leynaud and Cisse 1978). This had much impact on people’s lives and on village organization.

However, village foundations stories became even more relevant for politics under the present-day policies of decentralization (*maara ka segin so*) in which groups of villages have had to join in order to create a “communauté”, if possible on a firm historical basis. It is remarkable that, in the Mandé region, often the colonial canton model was chosen as a point of departure, and then one village was excluded, while another one, from a different canton, was included. This community formation was supervised and promoted from the capital by the government executives as well as by members of NGOs who also did some historical research, in particular on village foundation. This led to situations that are a nightmare for a professional historian. In Narena, I witnessed a civil servant asking the royal Keita to give the village foundation account of Narena, thus denying that the concept of Narena did not actually allow for the possibility of a village foundation story. In Siby, the village chief was responsible for telling the foundation story. However, I knew that if the NGO-researcher had gone to the quarter of Jisumana, he would have heard a dramatically different version which turned the tables entirely. This demonstrates that for Siby the village foundation story at the moment is the product of a discussion on village chieftaincy. In short, the image of the village has become a historiographical notion accepted by all participants in historical discourse. Nonetheless, the notion of “landscape”—as it has been elaborated in this chapter—better covers the wide range of empirically collectable data and is actually a more appropriate concept.

Principles of Settlement, Army Organization, and Warfare

Warfare played a major role in the changes in social organization during the 19th century, forcing the population of the Siby and Narena regions to adapt their habitation in response to the changes in the nature of the incursive jihad armies. Park described warfare as an activity done by raiding armies that attacked a village by night and took away its population (1983:224). However, at the end of the 19th century warfare had become a highly organized activity. In his ethnography on Nyagassola, Orza de Reichenberg described what he called “traditional” Malinke warfare as follows (** indicates that the original text is difficult to read):

In order to conquer a tata, the Malinke operate in the following way. Their army is always divided into three regiments that attack the tata at the same time. As soon as the warriors arrive at the foot of the wall, they place themselves between two **battlements (creneaux)**. With **pioches** they make holes in the walls that permit passage for a man. Then one of the two, attacked or attacker, who is able to shoot the other person first is the winner. During the time an attacker makes a hole, a warrior is along side of him ready to give him his gun as soon as he can. Through these openings, the attacking troops glide into the village. If ** are not resolved the battle is continued in the huts. This way of attacking explains the numerous failures which the attackers generally suffer. When they have weakened an enemy, the defender waits stubbornly behind his tata, shooting almost every ** to the attacking groups. The first attack decides almost always who wins that day. The demoralized enemy withdraws or leaves quickly in order to return another time.²⁴

This description shows the strength of the defense works in relation to the available armature. As both Samori’s armies—which depended on European armature—and the colonial armies proved, the tatas and their defenders were easy victims of European armature (see also Peroz’s description in note 13). Thus, the tata had become an old fashioned habitation strategy by the 1870s. D’Orza de Reichenberg’s description illustrates that an attacking army had a tripartite organization. On a village level this could be accomplished by different

²⁴ Centre d’Accueil et de Recherche des Archives Nationales (CARAN) in Paris; see Jansen 1999, pp. 28–31.

organizational principles. For instance, in the nearby kingdom of Kangaba, the army consisted of the members of three age groups which still solemnly celebrate their role during the well-known Kamabolon ceremony (Jansen 1998). Age groups were not the only "self-evident" organizational model for an army, if one looks to social organization. It is plausible that an army subdivision consisted of the male population of one tata. Towns may have consisted of a group of tatas brought together to facilitate defense, but it is more plausible that a group of tatas was the geographical representation of socially delimited groups which acted together under certain circumstances according to certain functions.²⁵ Narena oral traditions confirm this model. In Narena people tell about three *kèlèbolow* (war branches) which trace their origin to the three sons of Narena's founder Nankoman. The concept of Narena was used to express unity in warfare, when the people considered themselves as descendants of one mother, called Naren or Nan (Monteil 1929). The claim "to descend from the same mother" is, in the Mande world, an often used metaphor for political harmony and collaboration (cf. Jansen 1996). Narena may have been an important military settlement on the crossroads of the Mandesira, controlling the trade and slave caravans to Kangaba as well as Bamako. The tatas were the materialization of its power.

The inhabitants of Siby had a different solution to the changed conditions in the 19th century. When Park's and Vallière's descriptions are compared, one gets the impression that Siby had moved a short distance to the cliff during the 19th century. This move may have split up the village of Siby geographically, but the ritual unity (the Komo was performed together) did not change.

Apparently historical genealogies were often elaborated along lines that echo principles of behavior of the 19th century Mande population: a younger brother position represented political leadership and army leadership in times of warfare (Jansen 1996). The changes

²⁵ The military logic of this is uncertain since two small tatas would have in total a longer periphery than one tata of the same interior dimensions, and thus it would take more people to defend the two tatas; on the other hand, two (or more) adjoining tatas might have protected one another's flanks and required a large attacking army. The adjacent location would be explained if they moved to the place of refuge at different times and under different local authorities.

in habitation strategies reconstructed here for 19th century Mande—namely the creation of small units that collaborated in times of warfare—actually reflect the characteristics of Mande “historical” genealogies and the division of tasks among reputed “brothers,” which are often in threes. Three represents the male figure and the impossibility of achieving balance, whereas four, the female figure, can be divided into two equal parts. Thus, 19th century habitation strategies strengthened, produced, or perhaps were even produced by, social logics of a Mande status discourse.

Encoding the Landscape—a point of view

Attention to the geographical dimension in history is not new; works by scholars of the Annales School, in particular, have enriched our images of the past. Probably because of an alleged lack of sources, African history has never been studied using the Annales approach. My chapter can be read as a methodological exploration to fill this gap and to demonstrate that this approach can be fruitful for studying the history of Africa.

The present-day analysis of pre-colonial West African history is dominated by discussions of large-scale political systems and economics. Most of the time, source material of non-African origin forms its basis. This approach has produced brilliant studies and stimulating insights, but yet I think that—given the increased quantity of available sources—the real challenge nowadays lies at the regional or even local level. The combination of geographical, environmental, and social aspects discussed here, of course, form only one side of the coin; that other side is the study of mental landscape, the process of how people “encode the landscape”. An expanded analysis would involve, for instance, the role of sacred places that structured the human experience and influenced people’s behavior. Each village had its *solidaw* (cult places), and some of the *solidaw* had a regional function. For instance, sanctuaries such as the *bolonw* in Kangaba and Kenyèro—which are restored in septennial ceremonies—create sentiments of unity on a regional level (see Jansen 1998). Moreover, many sites loaded with historical meaning have given form to the landscape because they have been and often still are highly esteemed by Mande people because they represent or refer to the heroes who are celebrated in the widely known and highly esteemed

Sunjata epic. For instance, there are two legendary places called Old Rock: one of them known as Kirikuru is just north of Narena; the other, Krikuru, is not far from Nyagassola, in present-day Guinea. These places are believed to be the sites inhabited by the most ancient Mande. Some geophysical idiosyncrasies are related to etiological legends that are part of the story of the creation of society as it is represented in the famous Sunjata epic. For instance, near Siby is located *Kamajan donda ani a bòda*, the entrance and exit portal considered to have been made by the Camaras' ancestor Kamajan. *Kurukanfugan* is an open space north of Kangaba, where Sunjata, the legendary founder of the medieval Mali Empire, is believed to have divided the world among his generals' families after the victory over Sumaoro Kante. This event created the task division by patronymic which still is widely common in the Mande area.²⁶ Moreover, in Balanzan, south of Kangaba, there is a place venerated as the grave of Sunjata's general Tiramagan Traore. Such long-lasting characteristics have been encoded in the imagination and provide a basis for giving form and meaning to the landscape, whatever direction historical developments go.

I realize that Daouda Nambala Keita took the extreme point of view when he said to me: "You researchers must realize that our kingdoms were all different." For me, Daouda's statement has been an invitation to detailed research: the lack of the typical source material—such as manuscripts, literature, material culture—challenges us to explore other kinds of sources that may become relevant to each other when approached with a novel analytic process. My preliminary reply to Daouda's complaint is the connection made in this chapter: a connection between shifts in habitation, principles of social organization, and strategies of warfare and defense, as manifested in the occasional observations of travelers in combination with oral accounts. This chapter has sought to demonstrate that in the context of powerful macro-regional, even global, forces, the active role of people in local and regional history can be shown by examining their changes in place, namely habitation, and related social and

²⁶ At least it is known that the king of Kangaba gathered his troops on Kurukanfugan, and in 1882 King Mambi decapitated on this spot almost the entire population of Kenyoro— the skulls were still piled up there when Vallière occupied Kangaba in 1888. In 1925 the French started to use this plain as an air strip.

political processes and meaning, as well as their perspectives on the broader landscape.

An Afterword

It is tempting to speculate briefly on what this essay means for the organization or existence of the famous Mali Empire. Both Park and Vallière refer to the same area around Siby as the northern border of Manding, but originally this area called Manding—the remnants of the kingdom of Mali described by Ibn Khaldun and Ibn Battuta—was more extended. Coming from Segou, Park noted that west of Koulikoro “the language of the natives was improved from the corrupted dialect of Bambarra, to the pure Mandingo.” (Park 1983: 177) Since then this linguistic line has shifted southwards: nowadays the border between Bambara and Malinke is south of Bamako, more or less along the political line drawn by Park and Vallière.

In oral tradition Koulikoro is considered to be the limits of ‘Mande’ (according to Lansine Diabate in Jansen *et al.* 1995:160). It is famous as the place where Sunjata’s adversary Sumaoro Kante transformed himself into a rock. Given the fact that Islam pushed into Mande from the north (Segou, Macina) during the 19th century, it becomes plausible that the region between the Mande hills and the river Niger was really shaped by a process of slow change that was initiated in the North, in which warfare transformed the landscape. This could mean that the beginning of the 19th century was the last phase of the warfare and habitation strategies typical of the Mali Empire, a society characterized by an absence of fortresses. Actually, Park may have observed its decline, without knowing it. This hypothesis, however, suggest the danger of projecting a static image upon the medieval Mali empire, which becomes benign, profitable (the Mandesira), and an innocent victim of Muslim armies.

REFERENCES

- Amselle, Jean-Loup. 1977. *Les Négotiants de la savane*. Paris: Anthropos.
 Anonymous 1884. *Sénégal et Niger—France dans l’Afrique Occidentale*. Ministère de la Marine et des Colonies, Paris.
 Bazin, J. 1982. “Etat guerrier et guerres d’état,” in J. Bazin and E. Terray, eds. *Guerres de lignages et guerres d’états en Afrique*. Paris: Editions des archives.
 Bazin J. and E. Terray eds. 1982. *Guerres de lignages et guerres d’états en Afrique*. Paris: Editions des archives.

- Camara, S. and J. Jansen eds., 1999. *La geste de Nankoman—Textes sur la fondation de Narena* (Mali). Leiden: Research School CNWS.
- Diawara, D. et al. 1997. *Siby—Hier et aujourd'hui*. Siby, published by the authors, 16 p.
- Folmer, P. and E. van Hoven. 1988. *Soundjata Banta (Soundjata is dead)*. 8 mm., color video VHS. Leiden: Leiden University, Institute of Social and Cultural Studies.
- Gallieni, J. S. 1885. "Exploration du Lieutenant Vallière dans le Birgo et le Manding" in *Voyage au Soudan français Haut-Niger et pays de Segou 1879–1881*, par le Commandant Gallieni. Paris: Hachette, pp. 256–340.
- Jansen, J. 1996 "The Younger Brother and the Stranger: In Search of a Status Discourse for Mande," *Cahier d'Etudes Africaines* 144 (XXXVI:4), 659–688.
- . 1998. "Hot Issues—The 1997 Kamabolon Ceremony in Kangaba (Mali)" *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 31:2, 253–278.
- Jansen, J., E. Duintjer and B. Tamboura. 1995 *L'Epopée de Sunjara, d'après Lansine Diabate de Kela (Male)*. Leiden: Research School CNWS.
- Keita, D. N. and S. Kouyate. 1997. *Narèna pendant notre enfance*. Narena, published by the authors, 23 p.
- Leynaud, E. and Y. Cisse. 1978. *Paysans Malinke du Haut Niger*. Bamako: Imprimerie Populaire.
- Monteil, C. 1929. "Les Empires du Mali (Etude d'histoire et de sociologie soudanaise)" *Bulletin du Comité d'Etudes Historiques et Scientifiques de l'Afrique Occidentale Française* 12, 291–247.
- Oluruntimehin, B. O. 1972. *The Segu Tukulor Empire*. New York: Humanities Press.
- Park, M., 1983. *Travels into the Interior of Africa*. reprint London: Eland Press.
- Person, Y., 1968. *Samori—Une révolution dyula* (III volumes), Dakar: IFAN.
- . 1977. "Samori: construction et chute d'un empire" *Les Africains*. I JA, Paris: JA, 249–286.
- Peroz, E. 1890. *La tactique dans le Soudan (Librairie militaire de L. Boudoin et Ce)*. [Extrait de la *Revue Coloniale*, Oct.–Dec. 1890].
- Roberts, R. L. 1987. *Warriors, Merchants, and Slaves. The State and the Economy in the Middle Niger Valley, 1700–1914*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Robinson, D. 1985. *The Holy War of Umar Tal. The Western Sudan in the Mid-Nineteenth Century*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Zobel, C. 1996. "The Noble Griot: the Construction of Mande Jeliw-Identities and Political Leadership as Interplay of Alternate Values," in J. Jansen and C. Zobel, eds. *The Younger Brother in Mande: Kinship and Politics in West Africa*. Research School CNWS, Leiden, 35–47.

RE-MARKING ON THE PAST: SPATIAL STRUCTURES
AND DYNAMICS IN THE SIERRA LEONE-GUINEA PLAIN,
1860–1920s

ALLEN M. HOWARD

As Alan Pred has written, we must be concerned with the “local making of history, production of space and formation of biographies in place”—in mediation with wider processes. (Pred 1990:30)

This chapter explores the multifaceted relationships among human actions, structures in space, and oral and written representations of space in northwest Sierra Leone and neighboring parts of Guinea from about 1860 to 1920.¹ There, as elsewhere, people engaged in many forms of cooperation and contestation that shaped spatial patterns. Through repeated social practices, maintenance of networks, functioning of institutions, and interaction with the environment, they forged structures in space. The more enduring features distributed over the land were formed especially by social and economic accumulation and investment and in some circumstances through the exercise of power. People also formed and re-formed space through symbolic behavior and by bringing memories to bear upon the present. They re-marked (on) the past through action in and discourse about places and about people-in-places. Yet, they did so within a constraining structural framework established through prior exercise of power, social investment, and the accretion of physical amenities and memory.

During the nineteenth century, the Sierra Leone-Guinea plain became much more differentiated spatially. That differentiation could be found within the larger and more heterogeneous towns, between towns and the countryside, among towns, and among sub-regions. Some of the most intense struggles during the later 1800s reflected

¹ I am especially indebted to Lindsay F. Braun and Sarah K. Howard for their close readings of this chapter. Thanks also to contributors to this volume who commented on an earlier version.

that differentiation. People divided, for example, over religious practices (Muslims versus leaders of indigenous beliefs) and over degree and manner of engagement with the world economy. Such differences were spatially expressed. Furthermore, the plain became much more closely integrated during the century as people organized extensive networks of all kinds, as larger numbers of people traveled within and across the region, and as people exchanged ideas more easily, including ideas emanating from major centers in the surrounding regions.

Society in the Sierra Leone-Guinea plain was stratified by age, gender, achieved status, wealth, and power and authority. Settlements, from small villages to the larger towns, were dominated by elder men and women, kings and titled holders, war captains and other big men, and those who had earned reputations through their rank in male and female secret societies, success in trade, and leadership in indigenous and Islamic religious centers. Politics in its largest sense involved competition and alliance among those of rank, between the established leaders and newcomers who challenged them, and between those of rank and commoners.

Much of the history of conflict and cooperation focuses on particular places and on the connections among places. Our analysis repeatedly comes back to place: place as a location for central functions within a regional structure; place as the site for social action, practices, and contestation; place as an object of identity and meaning.² In the materiality of daily life, in social relations, and in discourse people produced places. Analyzing place involves looking at what individuals did in place, how they thought about place, and how their social reputations were associated with place. While there were many kinds of places, the analysis here of spatial change looks particularly at households, town sections, and towns, all of which

² As a conceptual starting point, I have drawn upon a number of theorists, especially John Agnew. Agnew states that place needs to be understood in three ways: (A) place as *locus*, the physical and social *context for action and practices*, which is particularly salient for the kind of node and network analysis employed here that involves how people interact on a daily and long-term basis; (B) place as *location*, that is, where *reproduction* and transformation of social relations occurs, in *relationship to larger regional and global systems*. This is consistent with the structuralist approach and often involves examining hierarchies of central places, but non-hierarchical relations are also significant; and (C) place as *site* with meaning, an *object of identity*, and, I would add, a *repository of (contested) history and a source of meaning* (Agnew 1993:251–271).

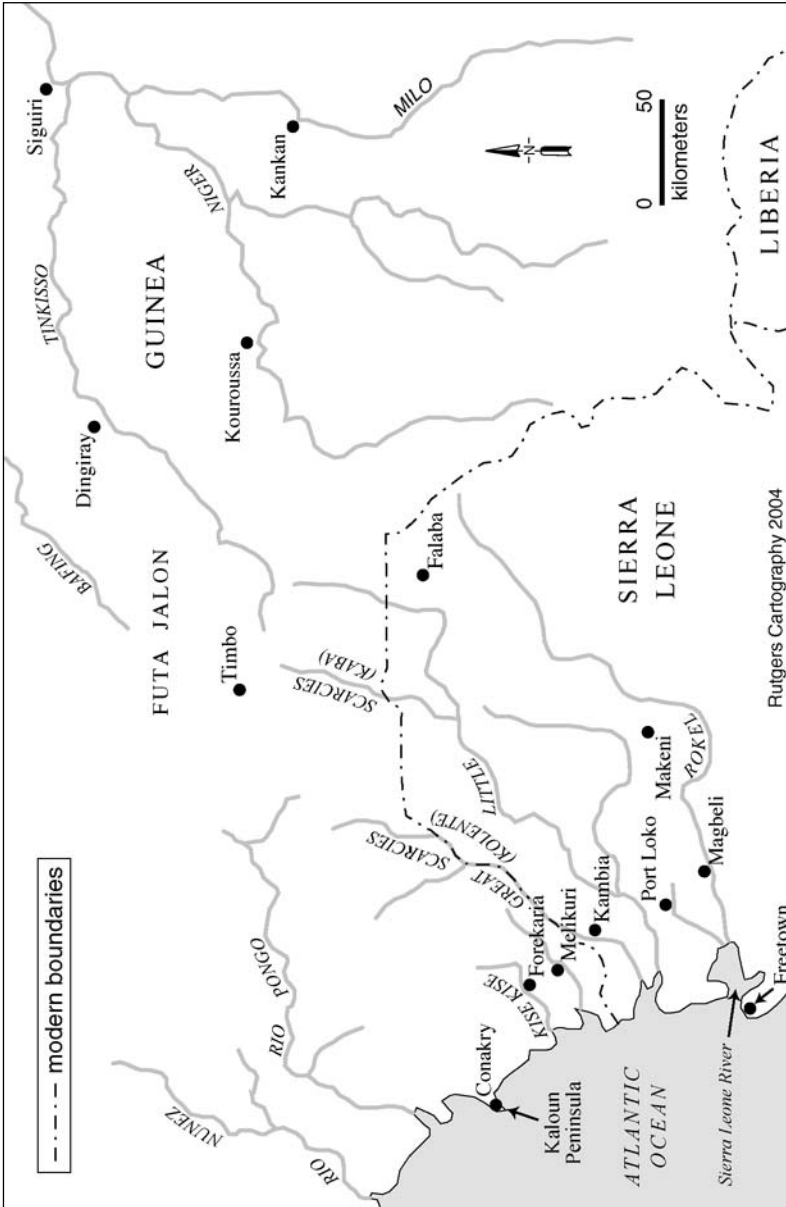


Fig. 20 Sierra Leone/Guinea Region

had centrality or nodality as measured by their relationship to other places.

Still, the centrality of households, sections and towns melts away when they are dis-aggregated into individuals, groups that cut across places, networks and alliances, and, in the case of towns, other sites such as a king's court, a mosque, or a trading station. Analysis, therefore, also must also focus upon networks that existed among individuals, kin, affines, traders, those engaged in religious practices, age mates, members of work groups, war parties, and other social collections. Such networks were rarely confined to one center. I argue here that in many circumstances people did not view centers in their totality, but in dis-aggregated and relational ways. People perceived of towns (and also of villages and the city of Freetown) in terms of people with whom they had direct or indirect connections (kin, patrons, teachers, traders, and so on); activities they participated in or heard about; the public reputations of the big men, ranking women, and others who lived in them; and ideas about past events that were accreted—or contested—in places. Thus, reconstruction of the spatial past must search out the images associated with people-in-places and events-in-places. Moreover, the meanings and memories associated with any given place were in part formed by that place's relationships with other places. Dramatic public events served both to mark and give meaning to places and to the linkages among places. (Howard 2000:13–35).

British and French colonization of the plain at the end of the 19th century brought fundamental spatial changes, directly and indirectly. Rulers and lesser officials lost sovereignty, while European administrators built administrative centers, opened courts, imposed taxes, and in other ways intervened. The colonial governments and international firms invested in infrastructure which changed the patterns in which people and commodities moved. Inter-regional commerce was disrupted, while the export of bulky agricultural products rose significantly, affecting farmers and traders—and also the pattern of towns and networks. Residents lost some but not all of their ability to shape the region. Residents continued to contest over places, but often in modified ways. In particular, Muslim traders, religious leaders, and other big men were able to sustain regional and trans-colonial space organizing activities.

The Regional and Macro-Regional Case Study

Geographers distinguish between a formal region that possesses certain distinctive homogenous characteristics (ecological, political, and so on) and a functional region defined by interaction among people or the flow of ideas, goods, and people (Hurst 1972; Howard 1976). The Sierra Leone-Guinea plain, or northwest as I have called it, was not a formal region. It consisted of the lower basins of a series of rivers running parallel to each other into the sea. Looking inland from the Atlantic, the plain was made up of a narrow coastal strip of mangrove swamps, a wide belt of rain forest, a forest-savanna transitional zone, and some areas of open grassland. Except for the north (in present-day Guinea) where a finger of the Futa Jalon uplands reached toward the coast, the plain was all below 500 meters and only slightly differentiated by altitude.³ The Sierra Leone peninsula, including Freetown, was part of the region. Given the fragmentation of governments, it was not a formal political region either.

A functional region is an artificial construct but it reflects reality. Out of the social, political, and economic complexity, we select certain elements to define a region—but not arbitrarily. Functional regions are identified by intensity and quality of interaction. Thus, during this era the northwest can bear the label “region” because people living in different places were interconnected with each other in multiple ways and because commodities and ideas flowed in established paths. At its margins it blurred into neighboring regions. The northwest had ancient ties with adjoining regions, and over the course of the nineteenth century, it became closely integrated with an extensive macro-region that included northeastern Sierra Leone, the upper reaches of the Niger River basin, southern Futa Jalon and its margins, and sections of the coastal plain stretching both northward and southward (what in various publications I have called the Sierra Leone-Guinea system; fig. 20).⁴ That Sierra Leone-Guinea macro-

³ The term northwest, which I have used in other publications, suffers from a bias, namely that the reference point is contemporary Sierra Leone. Similarly, the Sierra Leone-Guinea coastal plain is teleological because it presumes the existence of the modern states. Better would be the Konkouria-Ribbi region, demarcated by rivers rather than politics. However, that phrasing does not serve to locate most readers in terms of known places.

⁴ In many respects, after their founding Freetown and the Sierra Leone Colony should be treated as part of this region rather than as separate and distinct, despite

region in turn was linked with the larger West African and Atlantic worlds. The expansion of African imperial states, the spread of Islam, migration, and above all commerce were the primary forces that integrated (and helped to define) the regions.

Exchange integrated the northwest region internally and with surrounding regions (Howard 1997). Salt, kola, and palm oil had long been exported inland from the region, along with a few other commodities. In return, people of the highlands and savanna sent cattle, goats, sheep, hides, calabashes, shea butter, leather goods, and other manufactures to the northwest (Fyle 1988b). Enslaved people were transported into and out of the northwest, and there also was a substantial human traffic from the south and east that went through the region, up the coast and to the interior (Howard 2003). Patterns of production and exchange altered over time. For example, traders were drawn to kola areas, which, in turn, stimulated farmers to plant more trees, tend their trees better, and harvest them more completely, resulting in an expanding supply which then attracted more buyers. In the second half of the 1800s, the call for commodities and the greater flow of traders stimulated production of food, other goods, and services. As Freetown grew in size and wealth, its population exerted a disproportionately high demand for rice, cattle, other foods, various indigenous manufactures, and raw materials.

Atlantic demand had for several centuries affected patterns of production and exchange, and, of course, warfare and raiding for captives. In the second half of the eighteenth century, the overseas slave trade reached its peak and declined (Jones and Johnson 1980; Lovejoy 2000:51, 60–61ff.). Long-existing exports such as gold, ivory, and camwood continued to be shipped in small quantities throughout the 1800s. Timber was the first major “legitimate” export of the nineteenth century, followed by peanuts and palm products. For a relatively brief period, substantial quantities of rubber were shipped abroad. Kola, long carried by sea north up the coast, gradually expanded in volume and by the late 1800s was a major item of commerce. Conversely, the northwest and the Sierra Leone-Guinea

the unique aspects of Colony history. The region was made up of what in the twentieth century were the Sierra Leone Colony, Port Loko and Kambia districts of Sierra Leone, parts of adjacent districts, and the southwestern corner of Guinea-Conakry.

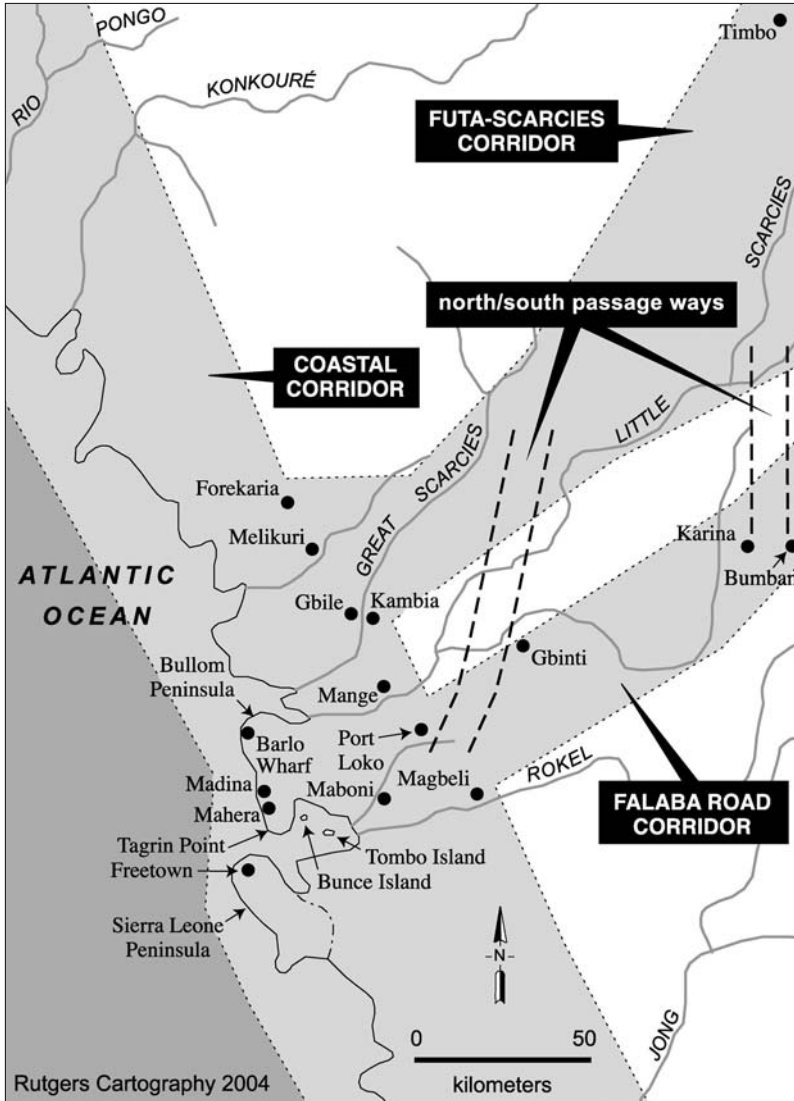


Fig. 21. Corridors and Passageways, Sierra Leone Guinea Region.

macro-region as a whole drew a large volume of products from the Atlantic. The list of imports is familiar: cloth, tobacco, alcohol, guns, powder, hardware, and other manufactures.

The northwest and the broader Sierra Leone-Guinea commercial system gained their outline dimensions over generations through a synergistic interaction of people with the environment. Natural features—particularly rivers, high hills, and mountains—had a strong effect upon the location of centers and lines of travel. For, instance, people did not easily cross the major rivers as they grew wider near the coast, so many roads lay along a northeast-southwest axis that traced between the larger rivers. Given soil, rainfall, and other natural factors, as well as the location of centers of demand and transport, production of particular commodities tended to become concentrated in certain areas. Terrain, sources of commodities, and the pull of centers combined to shape the system of roads; in turn, the established lines of travel influenced further siting of production and commercial functions.

This shaping of space did not occur mechanically or in any teleological, predetermined manner. Rather, it involved cooperation among spatially dispersed people and also competition, conflict, and even war among rival families, alliances, and towns. Towns rose and fell in importance. After the middle of the 1800s, however, the general outline of the northwestern region within the Sierra Leone-Guinea system was clear, though the specifics continued to vary. Economic and natural forces favored certain places such as the towns at the heads of navigation that were natural breaks in transportation (human portage and donkeys to boats).⁵ Freetown became the premier Atlantic entrepot of the region by the 1830s, if not earlier, but until late in the century it was still rivaled by trading factories in the rivers and island, some of which were points where ocean-going vessels could unload and load cargoes. The introduction of the steamship with its infrastructural requirements ensured Freetown's gradual ascendancy, and its position was boosted by technologies

⁵ In my book in preparation, *Traders, Accumulation, and Spatial Power: Commercial Change in Sierra Leone and Guinea, 1780–1930*, I also discuss the importance of the major trading factories, mostly on islands, that were down river of the heads of navigation. For the most part, they were singularly economic installations and lacked the political and cultural centrality to help structure the region in the larger sense, although there were some notable exceptions.

such as the telegraph, comparatively great fixed investment, particularly in docks and storage facilities, and the Colony's political and military strength. Freetown exerted a strong space-shaping force by bending roads and waterborne travel toward it and stimulating economic activity in towns near its orbit (Howard 1968).

Yet, even though Freetown and the Colony had a long and increasingly strong presence during the 1800s, the spatial influence of the enclave should not be overstated. Timbo, Kankan, and other inland cities including Falaba, also shaped the macro-region and affected routes and towns in the plain. The location of interior cities, production zones, consuming populations, and trade routes were as influential as Freetown and the heads of navigation in giving the Sierra Leone-Guinea system its distinct northeast-southwest orientation. Over the nineteenth century, major roads evolved along that axis. Several roads that lay parallel and close to one another came to comprise two great corridors: the Falaba Road Corridor and the Futa-Scarcies Corridor (see Fig. 21). Travelers were able to move back and forth among the roads in each corridor, and before starting journeys from the coast or interior could choose between the two corridors and roads making up each. The strong French presence north and south of the Kaloum peninsula (where Conakry eventually was built) also helped to orient the Futa-Scarcies Corridor (Goerg 1980; Howard 1972). Furthermore, another important corridor ran along the coast; it comprised the ocean and various waterways and roads parallel to the coast as far inland as the heads of navigation. This corridor ran perpendicular to the other two corridors. Those corridors, along with lesser roads that cut across the Falaba Road and Futa Scarcies Corridors, gave the region a grid-like pattern. The roads were not simply spokes oriented toward a Freetown hub. Rather, information, ideas, and people, as well as goods, moved in all directions along the grid.

During the 1800s, production, exchange, investment, migration, the spread of ideas, and settlement caused many towns to become more internally differentiated, and also caused both sub-regions and towns to become more differentiated from one another. The major routes bypassed some sub-regions, for instance the area north and south of the middle reaches of the Mabole river. Also, some towns and sub-regions were much more affected than others by inter-regional commercial alliances and migratory currents, especially of Muslims—particularly in the second half of the 1800s. Thus, for

instance, interior sections of Yoni, Marampa, and Masimera were far more homogeneously Temne-speaking than the lower Rokel, Bullom peninsula, and Port Loko creek basin. The former did not lack a history of immigrant settlement, and, in fact, Yoni had witnessed a significant incursion of Fulbe-speakers (Fyle 1988a). However, the newer waves of mid- and late-nineteenth century immigrants, particularly Mande-speaking Muslims from the upper Niger, did not settle in the interior sections of Yoni, Marampa, and Masimera in significant numbers. Certain sub-regions, such as middle sections of the Rokel and Mabole Rivers, were important producers of palm and some other commodities, but they saw far less inter-regional traffic than did areas that were along the Falaba Road and Futa Scarcies Corridors, and they did not contain highly heterogeneous exchange centers like Port Loko and Kambia.

Over time, certain places gained distinctive characteristics. Muslim teachers were fairly widely dispersed by the mid-1800s. Yet only in a few places such as Freetown, GbiLe, Gbinti, and Port Loko were there men with substantial learning, sizeable libraries, and *madrasas* whose students numbered in the scores. Traders from the Sierra Leone Colony were located in villages along the rivers and even inland, as well as in leading exchange centers like Magbeli, Mange, Kambia, Port Loko, and Melikuri. But only in such towns as Port Loko might one hear spoken during a single day in the trading season several interior Mande languages (Maninka, Bambara, Sankaran, Susu, Yalunka, and others), Futa Jalon Fulbe, Loko, Limba, and Temne (each with dialectic variations), as well as Krio.⁶ These examples reflect the ways that certain places were well integrated into the regional and inter-regional system of exchange and communication while others were much less connected with, or were even isolated from, such flows. Some of the historical significance of such differences can be addressed through the tools of spatial analysis.

Central Place Theory as a Descriptive Model

Central place theory is essentially a structural-functional model. A standard device is to construct a rank order of centers based on size

⁶ From its early days, and especially in the second half of the century, Freetown was the most diverse place in the region, and its immigrant population constituted a powerful magnet (Harrell-Bond, Howard, and Skinner 1978).

and functions, weighted in appropriate ways. Criteria for a ranking of towns in northwestern Sierra Leone during the late nineteenth century would include exchange, bulking and other transport functions, information transfer, religious activities, and power and authority. Elsewhere, I have attempted such a grading for the region ca. 1880, after the Sierra Leone-Guinea commercial system had been operating in outline form for several generations and at an historically high volume for more than two decades.⁷ The three highest ranking centers were heads-of-navigation: Port Loko, Kambia, and Magbeli. The scaling ranked Port Loko above all other towns, with only Kambia quite close. Magbeli and the inland center of Bumban were ranked at less than 75% of Port Loko and several other towns at about half. The difference between Port Loko and Magbeli can be accounted for in three ways. The former had a much more prominent role in long-distance trade (though Magbeli may have handled more bulky regional commerce), Islamic affairs, and politics, as it was the capital of a small state and Magbeli was not.

When looking at space-organizing capacity, it is insufficient to treat the highest ranking towns alone. Several actually had other centers located close to them, although typically in different political jurisdictions. When the centers comprising such a cluster were treated together their combined functional centrality was actually much greater than that of any single town. For instance, the cluster around Magbeli included Rokon and Forodugu, both important centers of trade and politics; together the three performed many more commercial functions, drew in more people, and generated a greater regional polarity than did Magbeli alone. As a cluster they added to the pull of trade along the Rokel river, on the Coastal Corridor, and on a branch off the Falaba Road Corridor.

The high rank of Port Loko, Kambia, Magbeli, and other trade towns in the central place hierarchy depended upon the activities carried out by members of the households and firms located in those

⁷ The aggregated scoring was as follows: Port Loko 30, Kambia 28, Magbeli 23, Bumban 22, Karina 18, Mange 18, Samaia 17, Gbinti 16, Rokrifi 14, Marampa and some major capitals with limited trade 10–12, major war towns 5–6. This technique is flawed in certain ways, namely from insufficient data and the subjectivity of scaling, but it can give an index of the relative functional importance of towns in sustaining the spatial patterns of a region, particularly with regard to commerce (Howard 1981). I did not have sufficient data to include Melikuri, but it likely would have ranked at the level of Port Loko and Kambia.

places, as will be discussed below. These towns were, in Agnew's words, "located according to the demands of a spatially extensive division of labour," literally at the intersection of the macro-regional Sierra Leone-Guinea system and the Atlantic system (Agnew 1993, 262). But they also contributed to the development of that spatial order. It is important to note that inland towns such as Bumban and Karina, and others still farther from the coast, such as Kankan, also developed according to a spatial logic and contributed to the overall commercial system. The integration of the Sierra Leone-Guinea system with Atlantic capital was not mediated only by centers along the coast and in the rivers, but those inland as well. Such centers played a major role in bridging the northwest with interior regions.

Freetown was deeply imbedded in the Atlantic capitalist order and the Sierra Leone-Guinea system. Many of the amenities that accounted for its centrality were paid for by the colonial government or by firms owned by Sierra Leoneans, Europeans, and others from abroad.⁸ Warehouses, docks, and other commercial facilities were erected by the administration which taxed commerce and also by businesses that brought capital from Europe, took loans, and invested profits. The colonial state and businesses alike hired salaried and wage workers and directed their skills and labor to construct, maintain, and utilize infrastructure, for instance, cranes and lighters, as well as to tasks such as accounting for exports and piloting ships. The firms gave out substantial amounts of credit to middle- and small-scale traders who added it to capital they generated. From its beginnings, a significant informal sector existed in Freetown and the Colony, including small marketers, touts, food processors, and others who served those who carried commodities. Thus, large firms, middle-scale business people, self-employed craftspeople and traders (some of whom had households resembling those of *jula* in the plains), and workers of all kinds contributed to Freetown's centrality, as well as that of factories on neighboring islands and along the rivers.

While central place theory is valuable because it reveals certain spatial patterns, by itself it does not explain those patterns. Furthermore,

⁸ Through its taxing capacity and backing from London, the Colony government also had the means to mount diplomatic and military campaigns and carry out other space-forming and sustaining endeavors, as will be discussed below.

the relevance of central place theory for history has been limited because it has been applied to a narrow range of activities and has often been applied in a static, ahistorical manner. It is therefore necessary to employ central place models synchronically, to look “beneath” the patterns in order to explain how they came into existence, to analyze the patterns in the context of wealth and power, and to incorporate cultural and perceptual dimensions. The next several sections of this chapter illustrate ways to complement central place theory by investigating spatial dynamics. First, we dis-aggregate centers and look at the types of productive and commercial units found in centers in order to reveal more about places as locations, that is, as sites of exchange, social accumulation, and social reproduction. This in turn helps to explain concentrations of spatial functions in particular places. Second, we examine how action networks converged in centers in order to gain additional understanding of the processes of social reproduction and to better explain the inter-relationships among centers, the relationships of centers to the surrounding agricultural countryside, and the relationships of centers to the region as a whole. Third, in order to further build power and the perceptual into our analysis, we look at how individuals, groups, and alliances marked space, how others resisted them, and how people re-marked (on) space through discourse and symbolic actions in places. This pertains to the interpretation of places—and the component elements in places—as objects with contested meanings. Finally, we review the impacts of colonialism and Atlantic capitalism upon spatial patterns in the early twentieth-century and make overall assessments of both the spatial constraints under which people in the region acted and the ability of people to shape space under new constraints.

Toward a Social Economy Model of Centrality: Household Labor, Skills, and Accumulation in the Late Nineteenth Century

Central place theory is mainly a descriptive model, but it has more explanatory value when it is combined with an analysis of daily practices and how regular practices contribute to accumulation and social reproduction in space. In terms of space formation in the region as a whole, perhaps the most important nodal institutions were households, trading firms, and governments (kingdoms and the Sierra Leone Colony). There were many variations among households and

commercial firms, and some households operated as commercial firms (Howard 1978). Households differed greatly in their composition and resources, and thus in their capacity to generate centrality. In the plains, those households that became engaged in large-scale commerce and those headed by powerful big men (Temme pl. *angf m bana*; *sing. wuni bana*) possessed means of accumulating and using resources that were unavailable to other units. Large households were based in a physical compound that often was walled, but such households typically also included outlying houses in farming hamlets and villages, and even compounds in other towns. Such households should be treated as aggregates: the resources gained from the subsidiary units added to the centrality of the main household. On the other end of the spectrum, small, village-level households and small firms had little nodality because their members generated and controlled few resources and did not draw people or goods to them. Members of the smaller households and firms did, however, gain greater space-shaping capacity by acting collectively through alliance networks with other small households. Typically, they banded together in labor teams to facilitate field preparation, weeding, and harvesting and thus to ensure as high an output as possible. As will be seen in subsequent sections, much of the region's spatial dynamic involved competition and cooperation among big men, important households, and alliances of people of rank. Competition opened options to members of less important households who, for example, became partners with traders or served as fighters under war leaders. Furthermore, those who lacked the resources or connections to exert influence widely over space often had significant impact within sub-regions through the operation of so-called "secret" societies and the social integration that took place around shrines, mosques, and other nodal places.

Throughout the region households were the primary units of production and were made up of kin, in-laws, clients, dependents, and servile people. Our initial attention is upon the households of big men—and in a few instances big women—because of their capacity for social accumulation and investment, and the resulting impact upon space. Those households differed from village households in the number, labor power, and range of skills of their members. Labor was critically significant to the centrality and network-building capacity of households. Labor and agricultural skills determined food output and also the means to grow or harvest from the wild those commodities (kola, palm, rubber, etc.) that had commercial value

and could be exchanged for other goods. This ability to accumulate resources enhanced the capacity of a household to support members, purchase slaves, obtain clients and specialists, and to engage in alliance building and a variety of social and political activities that brought status to its ranking members and enabled them to assert influence over lesser households. Holders of titled offices, especially kings, had a customary right to tap the labor of their subjects.

Households also varied greatly in their members' skills, social resources, and reputations, all of which added to the households' centrality and capacity to gather and strategically use resources. Skills in manufacturing, translation, piloting boats, and many other activities were especially important for tapping the flow of resources through the places where households were located—a significant and often neglected element in centrality. Some households also functioned as trading firms or Quranic schools, produced crafts, or were deeply involved with military activities; a small portion of such households did not farm. Immigrant traders and specialists could use their skills, connections, and reputations to build up their labor forces, often rather quickly. Thus, large households engaged in synergistic processes by which the labor, skills, knowledge, and reputations of their members enabled them to accumulate additional resources, which in turn enabled them to add more labor, skills and so on. Network building, to be discussed in the next section, was also part of the synergistic processes.

Later we will examine the households and strategies of war leaders, Qur'anic teachers, and other specialists, but here we wish to focus on traders because of their particular significance for central place hierarchies based on exchange functions. Examining traders also leads us to incorporate other systems of resource flow, particularly credit. Except for Europeans and some Krio, most traders used their households as firms. Professional long-distance traders (*jula*) who lived in the plain and in Freetown, plus big men trading in the riverine and inland towns, conducted business by depending upon the unpaid labor and skills of household members, plus the support of kin, allies, and clients.⁹ Such firms also hired specialists when

⁹ Wealthy and prestigious *jula* who were well established in Freetown often had access to land in the near hinterland and used dependent and servile labor to work it, as did their counterparts inland (Howard in preparation).

needed, paid for transport, and took credit from merchants. Big men were prominent in the regional bulk trade and, in some cases, in inter-regional commerce, which was primarily in the hands of *jula*. *Jagiti*, settled immigrants who hosted traveling traders, became big men, and big men served as landlords. Some big men as well as *jula* dealt in enslaved people (Howard 2003). Other African traders operated at a smaller scale. A critical component in the commercial system were the hundreds of men and women from the Sierra Leone Colony (most of whom came to identify themselves as Krio) who were small-scale traders in the Colony and rivers. Most of them owned little property, and in the river towns they typically rented a house for trading purposes. They combined their own labor and skills with those of family members and a few employees or non-family dependents. They had limited working capital and gained some credit typically in the form of imported manufactures which they exchanged for exports and goods consumed in the Colony. Those who went to trade in the river towns often sustained themselves by integrating with the local and regional social and economic networks. Finally, in the Colony and adjoining rivers up to the heads of navigation were middle- and large-scale import and export firms, wholesalers and retailers owned by Sierra Leoneans, Europeans, and others that were organized more strictly along capitalist lines; though some often also had family employees, they were distinguished from smaller traders because they bought or rented more substantial parcels of land or commercial facilities, employed most or all of their workers on a wage or salary basis, and received larger lines of credit or loans. They also invested in working and fixed capital, such as docks, storage facilities, and boats, which meant that they contributed much more to the functional nodality of trading centers than did their lesser counterparts. The biggest of such firms had scores of employees and working capital worth tens of thousands of British pounds sterling. They were at the apex of the import-export hierarchy, and their operations dwarfed those of most other traders.

When central places are dis-aggregated, it becomes clear that local processes of social reproduction sustained towns and enabled them to be sites of commercial functions. In towns at the heads of navigation there were boat carpenters, captains and helmsmen, dockworkers, translators, cooks, and people with other occupations—both men and women, many of them assisted by youth and children. Most served as unpaid members of households, and, while extremely

busy at the peak of the trading season, were not engaged in such jobs full-time, year round. During the rest of the year they farmed or handled other tasks. Certain specialists were full-time or nearly so, and received money or other compensation for practicing their crafts; some had sufficient work to reside in the main centers, while others traveled from place to place.¹⁰ In addition, in many smaller centers throughout the region, the labor, skills, and commercial know-how of a wide variety of people were critical for building infrastructure and facilitating exchange. Underlying commerce and the non-commercial circulation system was a vast number of people residing throughout the region who produced, processed, transported, and sold food, exports, building materials, and many other things, and who obtained some commodities in return. Most were primarily engaged in local household and community economies and devoted only a limited portion of their working life to producing for the market. Some carried and sold goods that they, their family, or their neighbors had produced, or did a tiny business going about collecting crops from villages during the trading season. Paradoxically, the flow of commodities handled each year by tens of thousands of farmers and petty traders both supported the spatial structure of social power and, as will be seen later, provided means for people to challenge or by-pass that structure, in part by trading directly in Freetown.

Networks, Resource Flows, Social Accumulation, and Social Landscapes

While households, firms, various institutions, and towns themselves were sites for action and practice, such processes also went on through the networks that bridged them. The study of spatial structures and dynamics thus must go beyond place-particular modes of cooperation and conflicts.¹¹ Network analysis involves studying the interconnection among people and social entities. One can speak about networks within and among households, between members of the same or different mosques, unifying traders across regions, and so

¹⁰ In this chapter we do not discuss mobile labor parties, nor specialized craftspeople such as smiths, weavers, and leather workers (Frank 1995).

¹¹ It is in this dimension that Pred and some other theorists often are not comprehensive enough in their efforts to integrate time, space, and social life (Pred 1990:14ff.).

on. Within the region, social and material resources and ideas flowed through networks that linked people, but not all people in a network were equally important or equally able to gain resources from the networks, even though reciprocity was an important social principle. Generally speaking, the more important rulers, title holders, big men, ranking women, *jula*, and other traders had greater ability to gain resources from networks than did others at lower social positions. Those with wealth and power quite often were located in towns and town clusters, or, as in the case of immigrants royals, specialists, and war leaders, actually acquired towns around their compounds. Thus, in a seeming paradox, analyzing networks reveals that the more important towns could have both less and more nodality than suggested by central place theory—less in that networks show how compounds and other central institutions were not entities located solely in one place but instead were meshed with villages, hamlets and other centers, and more in that networks also explain how wealthy and powerful people drew to towns resources that were revealed by the measures of functional centrality. Thus, central place analysis may both underestimate the centrality that some major towns and clusters possessed within a region and give a misleading boundedness to those centers.

The regions' networks were immensely complex and cannot possibly be described in their totality.¹² Certain patterns are clear, however. Within a sub-region, networks tended to be multilateral and joined people in dense, rather diffuse local social relations. By diffuse, I mean that people were linked in many ways, not simply around narrowly defined transactions. Other networks were contractual and specific in nature. Networks also varied in extension, that is to say their reach over space. If the networks among common farming populations were more local, those among professionals could be very extensive, for example, when linking warmen and especially *jula*. In the latter case, such ties often corresponded with the main inter-regional roads and facilitated the flow of people and commodities along them. The networks of war leaders often patterned differently

¹² Networks, of course, were not bounded but ramified endlessly over space; network analysis always involves artificially circumscribing a limit. On the other hand, it is possible to assess the density of networks and the degree of interaction. Such criteria in fact help to define functional regions.

over the region. In some instances, trading partners or war allies also built up comprehensive social ties through intermarriage or other means, making those relationships more diffuse. Furthermore, some networks were more hierarchical and star-like in their pattern with people of rank at the center, while others were among people of roughly equal social status. Hierarchical or horizontal (lateral) networks could have any degree of spatial extension, although there were frictions of space that made it difficult for poor people to sustain extensive horizontal networks. Much of the appeal of petty commerce for ordinary peasant families must have come from the capacity it provided them for stretching out their connections, hence generating possibilities for cutting risks or opening new opportunities.

The capacity of individuals, kin, and other groups for building networks and their strategies for using them varied according to their position within households, gender and age, skills, mobility, knowledge, and other resources, as well as their physical location. Those factors also distinguished their ability to gain information, to perceive a wide social landscape, and to respond to changes in the broader spatial framework. People living in large households situated in the polyglot towns had many more opportunities to become part of extensive networks and learn from such ties than did those residing in places far removed from the main roads. Most likely, enslaved women assigned to work in remote farming hamlets knew far less of the local and regional social landscape than most other people, and were among those with the fewest opportunities to build connections.

One's networks brought a person critical social resource, but forging as well as sustaining networks required resources, and, as Robertson and Berger have argued, one's ability to use resources was affected by one's class position and gender (Robertson and Berger 1986:10–13ff.). For some, their own labor and their children's labor added up to their primary resource, perhaps their only transferrable resource, as when people in crisis pledged themselves or their children, or when youth offered themselves as apprentices of professionals (Howard 1994). *Jula*, craftspeople, morimen, and other professionals used their mobility, skills, and reputations to forge connections, as did war leaders, whose capacity to seize resources by force enabled them to fashion networks quickly. Immigrant traders who settled in the region and became big men were particularly adept at tapping resources flowing through their households and channeling them into building

networks, which in turn brought more resources and the potential of fostering even more expansive networks.

Because of their status, command of respect, and legal responsibility for the household as a whole, ranking male and female members of households had considerable control over members and a large say in the way household resources were used to forge and maintain networks.¹³ They also had strong influence over the networks that members of their household entered, as perhaps best illustrated by their arrangement of the marriages of children and dependents. Both men and women of rank built connections through their children. Senior males in particular could negotiate alliances of all types with their counterparts and with their juniors as well. Such alliances took many forms ranging from serving as landlords for “strangers,” to banding with distant kin, to providing resources that aided clients. Senior wives were important in the networks meshing their husband’s household with other households, but they also maintained or built up their own ties based on their family heritage and their accomplishments. Wives were part of commercial and diplomatic delegations, their reputations and personal and family connections enhancing the parties’ goals.

The importance of wives, children, allies, and clients in social, economic, and political negotiations can be demonstrated in many ways. For instance, when in 1868 the ruler bearing the title Sattan Lahai contacted the Governor of Sierra Leone to collect a stipend and put forward his views about a conflict in the Kolente area, he chose his emissaries with care. He dispatched his adopted son “Thomas Wilson, brought up in the house of a European and speaking English fluently,” two of his *santigi* (officials from important families who assisted him at his capital), and his wife Bon Kebah “without whose presence I was informed the money never would be paid.”¹⁴ Diplomatic

¹³ Pa Almami Follah, among others, expressed this forcefully in interviews. For instance Pa Follah said: “In those days your younger brothers and children will all support you and if any of them has a palava [legal dispute] and he brings it to the head, he will only say ‘go to work’, I will take care of your palava because you are doing work for me.” He went on to talk about how respect was accorded household heads and husbands, and how slaves were flogged for disobedience (Howard interview with Pa Almami Follah March 28, 1968).

¹⁴ Public Record Office (PRO)/Colonial Office (CO) 267/193, Sierra Leone 5726, letter of Sattan Lahai, 10 April, 1868.

and commercial teams sent by interior rulers often included the principals' wives, who not only interacted with the wives of ranking men along the way, but attended formal gatherings, were considered members of the delegation, and were introduced to title holders on the route and to influential African and European administrators and merchants in Freetown.

People of high status within institutions often were able to form more dense and extensive networks than others. Such ties were both with peers and with people of lesser standing. Thus, Muslims bearing the titles of *fodi*, *alpha*, or *karamoko* not only built connections with their *talibe* (students) that might last for decades, but also with the parents of *talibe* and with families who looked to them for spiritual guidance or who wanted to intermarry with them because of their status (Skinner 1976:499–520). Similarly, women leading chapters of *bundu* or *sande* “secret societies” could establish lasting ties with young women who graduated, with their parents, and with the parents of the men who married the graduates, as Carol Hoffer has described for an area on the south margin of the region (Hoffer 1974). Traders with experience and some wealth often gathered younger and poorer “partners” who handled the heavy work or collected commodities in return for a share in the returns gained. War leaders attracted followers who served them militarily and politically; younger trainees also provided labor and other forms of support.

Most of the relationships described above could be inverted to find the mind-set of a junior person, or that person's parents and kin. Although some people formed connections out of desperation, namely those who pawned themselves, others sought to gain experience, resources, or mobility. Young men turned to war leaders as patrons and, if trained and favored by them, were able to move outside their village of birth, acquire material and social resources, and perhaps build a reputation for themselves. Adults sent their children or younger dependents to the houses of prestigious relatives, titled officials, or Quranic teachers with the hope of gaining not only specific training but also beneficial connections. Each initiation lodge had different elders whose reputations and connections varied, thus affecting the future possibilities of initiates. Some parents apprenticed their children to Sierra Leoneans in the river centers or the Colony itself. Though this, like other apprenticeships, could result in drudgerous labor and abuse, parents did not simply choose it out of penury but out of a hope that their children would gain experience,

formal education if lucky, and beneficial connections. Horizontal ties also mattered. In the houses of the elite, ordinary people formed bonds, too. Connections were particularly important for boys and girls who joined secret societies: youth who were initiated together often maintained a lifetime bond; they spoke of one another as brothers or sisters, assisted each other, and shared resources.¹⁵

People moved from one place to another to gain access to a household or another nodal institution, make useful connections, or simply be in a more vibrant town. Given the bilateral nature of kinship, young men often left their natal home and went to the household of their mother or another close relative in order to make connections, as well as to inherit property, gain a title, or prepare to assume a headship. Some big men, particularly soldiers, rose to become leading figures of the later nineteenth century through networks they forged by residing in several different places. Thus, while it is important to describe the form of networks, that is only a starting point. It was the dynamic quality, the content, and the social perceptions of the relationships that gave shape to space.

All in all, many alliances and patron-client ties converged in the households of prominent figures, adding to the centrality of those units. Resources flowed through networks into the households and then out, enabling ranking people to maintain or diversify their connections. Because towns were collections of such households, networks were oriented around the centers. If mapped, the networks would appear as spokes radiating outward, linking towns to other towns and smaller settlements. In an earlier article, David E. Skinner and I diagrammed nodality and networks for Port Loko and Kambia at two different time periods in the nineteenth century (Howard and Skinner 1984). Because of the space-forming activities of big men and others, over time more networks converged on the two towns. All in all, the flow of people, social resources, commodities, and ideas along the networks literally gave shape to the region. However, the

¹⁵ On occasion, elderly men I interviewed in Port Loko and elsewhere said that they wanted to take me to meet their "brother," who turned out to be a person with whom they had been initiated fifty, sixty, or more years earlier. Thus, Alhaji Bomporro Bangura introduced me to his age mate Pa Almami Follah as his brother. Both were of Bangura ancestry but not directly related. Much more research needs to be done on the societies; Hoffer's study of Madam Yoko makes it clear how matrons with great reputations drew girls to them (1974).

pattern was not an even mesh: threads were concentrated in some places and sub-regions, but sparse elsewhere.

Power, Social Ranking, Landscapes, and the Marking of Space

People observed intently such socio-spatial events as the settlement of a powerful “stranger,” the creation of a new chiefly title, the size of the cargo boat a trader ordered built, the burning of a war leader’s village, the death of a compound head, and the growing reputation of a family into which a young man or woman had married. People perceived such actions spatially in terms of changes in social landscapes made up of individuals, linked individuals, households, groups, and other social entities, as well as natural features, buildings, and so on.¹⁶ People also “read” such landscapes in a complex way that incorporated past events involving people and places that were sites of action (Barnes and Duncan 1992: cf. introduction). While people widely agreed upon certain aspects of the social landscape, their spatial lenses, so to speak, varied according to their social position. Age, gender, and status—as well as geographic location—greatly affected how widely and deeply a person saw the social landscape and how a person interpreted it in qualitative terms.

A substantial portion of the oral and the written documentation available for reconstructing the history of the region refers to titled authority holders, notable families, big men, and, to a lesser extent, prominent women—some of whom bore titles. While in certain respects this must be regarded as a bias in the sources that privilege the elite, it does to a considerable degree reflect how people perceived the social landscape. Hundreds of records—letters written by residents, reports given by native language speakers, oral accounts, and other kinds of evidence—refer to a village or small town as “so and so’s” place, or to a household or a town section in terms of its founder, its current head, or other ranking members.¹⁷ These records

¹⁶ See the essay and several chapters in this volume for discussions of the concept of social landscape as employed by scholars of Africa. Here we mean the way in which individuals perceived others around them in terms of personal characteristics and reputations, relationships between people, relationships of people to nature and to institutions, and events-in-place, all within a framework of patterned social practices. This draws upon but does not agree fully with the theorization offered by Eric Hirsch (1995:1–30).

¹⁷ When I resided in Port Loko, several elders reconstructed for me the physical

were authored by people of all social strata. In the late nineteenth century, notables provided human reference points; other people and places often were seen in relationship to them, although not exclusively so. It should also be stressed that the human landscape was dynamic: new people rose to prominence and, as will be seen in the next section, those who challenged the dominant class also became features in the landscape.

Information about people and households, and their reputations, spread widely. When traders in the interior were considering alternative routes, hospitality stops, and exchange points on a trip to the coast, they did not think only in terms of wharves, stores, and other structural features, or the prices of commodities, as important as those were. Travelers' mental maps included individuals with whom they had connections or about whom they had heard. They pictured particular households where *diatigi* resided, town sections with mosques and *alphas* leading prayer, cattle yards owned by *julaba* with whom they had dealt before, and, in Freetown, the compounds and courts of "ethnic" headmen, or shops owned by dealers in desired commodities.¹⁸ Rulers and other officials of the great inland states had their mental maps of the leading figures and important centers in the region, and as their delegates traveled from place to place they appropriately accorded honors, distributed presents, and allocated their time.¹⁹

People in the various sub-regions of the northwest would look at sections of Port Loko, Magbeli, Kambia, or other towns (including Freetown) and see the big men, ranking women, powerful families,

layout of the town as they knew it in the late 1800s. Pa Conditto Fofana possessed particularly valuable spatial knowledge (Howard interview Port Loko 10 February, 1968).

¹⁸ The Governor's Interpreter's office, Aborigines Department, and the Department of Native Affairs gathered scores of such accounts; they ranged from skeletal lists of towns through which traders and other travelers passed to detailed descriptions of places and records of the duration of residence, road conditions, dues paid, names of authorities and *diatigi*, and much more.

¹⁹ The *almamis* of Futa Jalon, Sego, Dinguiray, and other states, as well as Samori Toure, were informed about and paid careful attention to protocols. For instance, when *Almami* Ahmadu of Sego sent a diplomatic and trade party to Freetown in 1884, his principal messenger presented 10 oxen to the Governor and one each to the headman of the Serakuli community and another notable. SLA/Arabic Letter Book (ArLB) 3, letter from Amir al-Mu'minin of Segu to Gov. Havelock, 15 Feb., 1884.

and specialists residing in those places. They had a sense of those families' resources as revealed in the human composition of their compounds, the fame of their visitors, and the number of their *fakis* (agricultural settlements) and enslaved and dependent laborers. Wives did much to give a compound its reputation, both in terms of their own personal qualities and the families from which they came. Senior wives were mothers of grown children whose own reputations reflected upon their natal household. Also figuring in the social perception of a household were the qualities of those who had been sent as children to be "trained" by its ranking men and women; decades after a woman left a household where she had been trained, her conduct redounded to the benefit—or perhaps the shame—of that unit.²⁰ In addition to their current residents, people looking at a compound would also think beyond it to brothers, sisters, and children living elsewhere, considering them part of the ramifying networks that intersected in their households of origin.

The northwest had long been characterized by a pattern of overlapping, layered, and shared authority, but the situation grew ever more complex as the nineteenth century went on. Given the continuous arrival and settlement of "strangers" and the rise and decline of big men and ranking families, people with power, authority, and resources bargained over spatial arrangements and marked agreements through various devices including titles. Beyond that, big men built alliances to organize space in ways that enhanced their interests, and they used force, including war, to consolidate spatial arrangements that favored them or to disrupt patterns they saw as injurious to themselves or beneficial to rivals. Big men who did not hold royal titles could on occasion exert more influence over regional politics than rulers, serving as king makers and premier figures in alliance

²⁰ This is difficult to document for the nineteenth century, but can be assumed from the ways in which people spoke of senior women in the 1960s and 1970s and the accounts they gave about deceased women. In Port Loko, for instance, many talked of the household maintained by Hajia Kabba, of Sendugu section, whose husband had been a leading *diatigi*, as was her senior son. To marry one of her grand daughters was a high social achievement, for it was assumed that a young woman whom Hajia raised carried some of her qualities. See Mary Dalton Howard interviews with Hajia Kaba, Port Loko and Allen Howard interviews and informal discussions with Alhaji Brimah Kabba (for instance, Port Loko 11 February, 1968) and various discussions with Tamba Kamara, this author's research assistant, who was married into the Kabba family.

networks.²¹ Peace-making often dramatized new arrangements of power and authority and thereby new spatial patterns.

It should be stressed that authority was backed by and disrupted by the exercise of power. Most big men and title holders were war leaders, had been war leaders, were closely allied with or patrons of war leaders, or hired war leaders to support them. There were exceptions: some Muslim teachers or leaders of prayer exercised considerable influence, and some settled *jula* had political weight because of their wealth and connections. Even though based in Freetown, some headmen, imams, and *diatigi* of the immigrant communities had sufficient resources, social prestige, and allies to affect affairs inland through their networks (Harrell-Bond, Howard, and Skinner 1978:85–104ff).²²

For several centuries back, titled rulers (*bai*, in the Temne-speaking area; typically styled kings in English) had held the highest ranking formal office in the numerous mini-states in the region. The authority of such rulers had recognized limits marked out by natural features, claims to farm land, and the allegiance of villagers.²³ There also were areas that did not have such titled rulers, or where the authority of such rulers was nebulous. Over the course of the nineteenth century, several new *bai* titles came into existence with the blessing of existing rulers. Upstarts, some of them from royal families based elsewhere, also assumed titles that other rulers and big men came to recognize. The most common new title was *almami*

²¹ Region-wide alliances helped both to maintain and to alter the spatial order. Typically, in the short-run, war alliances did not lead to a total reconfiguration of power within a sub-region, but only to shifts in the power balance. But notables did hold long-term spatial strategies which they carried out through alliances. This brief overview only begins to describe the political dynamics of the region. Documents reveal complex and changing patterns of seniority and power throughout the nineteenth century (Howard 1972).

²² Through alliances, such figures often obtained farm land, cattle grazing sites, and trading stations in the near hinterland of the city. See also Howard interviews with Alhaji Jimba Kamara, Freetown 12 Sept., 1968; and Alhaji Ibrahim Jabbi, Freetown 22 January, 1969.

²³ Elsewhere I have written about some of the particular political devices common in the region, such as sharing of royal kingly titles among two or more families, often in rotation, and royal recognition of the residual claims of so-called ground kings. Rulers were assisted by officials who bore such titles as *santigi* and *kapr*; those titles tended to become lodged within families, but there was competition for them, and rulers appointed rising figures (and thus families) to such offices (Howard 1972; Howard 2000).

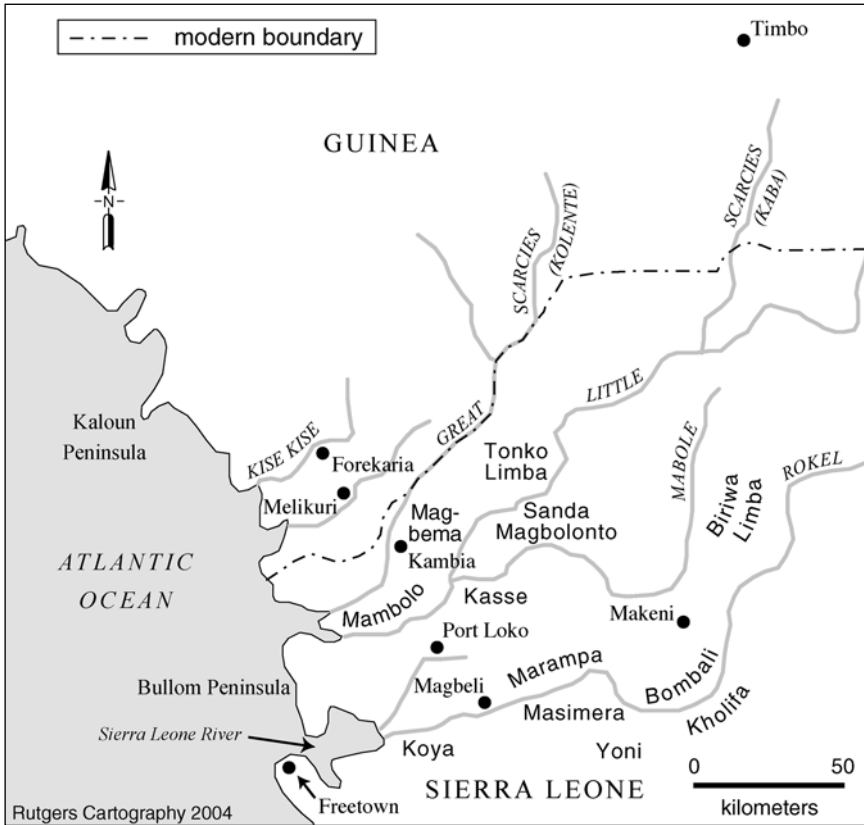


Fig. 22 Late 19th Century Polities, Northwestern Sierra Leone 317

(or *almamy*, lit. “the imam”), derived from Islam and following the style in Futa Jalon and elsewhere. Others were known as *alikali* (lit. the judge). In effect, those who gained power and authority created new mini-states, sections of such states, or spheres of influence. Existing title holders accorded or recognized titles in order to recognize, accommodate, and incorporate rising big men, and thus to help regularize sub-regions. This should not be seen in terms of system stabilization: some big men used military might to force themselves upon the landscape, established title holders often resisted the granting or claiming of new offices, and rivalries were heated and could result in prolonged wars. In certain instances, members of one alliance network bestowed offices and titles upon a person with the hope of creating a loyal counter-force against another person or faction, or of controlling that person, his family, and faction. Women’s titles also existed in some areas, most notably in Koya where they were associated with a spiritual center (Howard 1972:190–195ff.; Fyle 1981:56–60).²⁴ All in all, the creation of titles and granting of authority was a way by which those with authority, power, and influence recognized the changing relationships among big men, families, networks, centers and politics (see fig. 22).

The social and political careers of leading figures reveal in bold fashion how spatial patterns and perceptions were written upon such individuals and their descendants. A war leader named Sattan Lahai emigrated into the area by the 1820s, if not earlier, established a base at Laia not far inland from Kambia, and attempted to assert control over a considerable area by force and alliances. He met substantial resistance from other authorities in the sub-region, but integrated himself in various ways, including marrying into an important family in the Kasse mini-state. Those connections provided a basis of local legitimacy for his son who was asked to lead a section of Kasse and who later carved out a territory of his own by gaining control over towns and villages that had been under other authorities. He also founded towns, most notably Rowula in a kola and export crop growing region, and sought to direct trade to and through centers he dominated. Apparently he assumed the title of *Almami*

²⁴ See Public Record Office/Colonial Office 879/25/322, T. G. Lawson, “Sierra Leone: Despatch from the Administrator in Chief, enclosing information regarding the different districts and tribes of Sierra Leone and its vicinity” (1887).

Sattan Lahai, which over time became generally recognized. His successor, also styled *Almami* Sattan Lahai, made Rowula his main town, but he had several subsidiary centers and moved among them as he sought to manage social, political, and commercial alliances and to handle challenges that arose in the sub-region. He attempted to dominate the important commercial center of Kambia, directed the actions of many armed warren, and engaged in a wide-ranging diplomacy concerned with trade and war. In the 1870s through the 1890s, he was known from Freetown on the coast to Futa Jalon and Kankan in the interior, and from north of Moria to south of the Rokel river. Comparing the late 1800s with the time when the first Sattan Lahai crossed the Kolente, it is starkly apparent how those men, supported by members of their households and many others, marked the physical and sociopolitical landscape by establishing, expanding, and intervening in towns and villages and by building or joining existing marital, political, and commercial networks. In effect, they reshaped a sub-region around the lower Kolente, Kaba, and Mabole rivers. Over most of the second half of the nineteenth century, men bearing the title of *Almami* Sattan Lahai were major elements in the mental landscapes of all people who were concerned with social or political affairs in the surrounding sub-region and beyond.²⁵ People of the time would have identified a few others with comparable influence in the region—*Almami* Dala Modu Dumbuya during the first half of the century, *Almami* Rassin, *Almami* Suluku, *Bai* Bure, and a few more—and then below them many others who also possessed the requisite resources, reputations, and allies to imprint space, at least on a smaller scale.²⁶

The on-going dialectic by which social and political space was contested and regulated is revealed in the histories of Magbeli, Port Loko, and Kambia.²⁷ While those head-of-navigation towns ranked

²⁵ They and their actions are mentioned in a large number of written documents generated by residents ranging from petty traders to the most powerful rulers who lived throughout the region and beyond (Howard 1972:312–317ff).

²⁶ There have been biographical studies of several figures from the late nineteenth century. Along with LaRay's Denzer's treatment of *Bai* Bure (1970), who is discussed below, the most important is C. Magbaily Fyle's thoroughly documented, critical study of *Almami* Suluku (1979). Two others that yield valuable insights, while relying rather uncritically on oral sources, are Wurie and Hirst's treatment of *Almami* Rassin (1968) and Ijagbemi's study of Gbanka (1973).

²⁷ The documentation for the following section can be found in Howard (1972:94–96ff. and in preparation).

at the highest levels functionally and were roughly comparable in economic activities, they were quite different in terms of the history of settlement and household formation, networks, title taking, and the dynamics among big men and ranking families in their sub-regions. As big men, families, and alliances contested for social and political influence, they marked their claims and relative standing through the building of compounds and other edifices, physical occupation of places, creation of new offices, and other means that were publicly dramatized.²⁸

In the later decades of the nineteenth century, Port Loko, the capital of the Bake Loko mini-state, was a collection of sections: two were held by the principal ruling families (Bangura and Kamara) who had gained their rights to office in the second decade of the nineteenth century, a third and older section located some distance away was occupied by the family of the ground king with special claims to ancient ritual sites, a fourth was controlled by the Sankoh family which earlier had asserted royal claims, and there were other sections including one belonging to the Fofanas. In the latter part of the 1800s, the senior leaders of the Bangura, Sankoh, and Fofana compounds constituted a triumvirate—built on personal friendship, intermarriage, common economic interests, and political expediency—that exerted strong space-shaping influence far beyond the boundaries of the mini-state. Rival families, including the royal Kamara and the Kanu who held the post of ground chief, their sections, and allies were considerably weaker but challenged the dominant party in various ways, for instance by supporting known opponents located along the Falaba Road Corridor. At a certain stage, however, the rivals apparently agreed among themselves not to introduce war into the town and risk its disruption.

Magbeli was located within a mini-state, Masimera, whose ruler (with the title *Bai* Simera) was based elsewhere and was supported by royal shrines. While the king crowned the head of Magbeli town, there was a long history of tension between holders of the two offices. Much of the animosity stemmed from the fact that Magbeli was sited at the intersection of one branch of the Falaba Road, one line of the Coastal Corridor, and the Rokel River which fed into the Sierra Leone River—whereas the capital was located inland and

²⁸ The following cases are documented in Howard (1972 and in preparation).

traders from the interior typically bypassed it. The sharing of trade duties between the *bai* and Magbeli town chiefs and big men was a critical point of conflict, and several open clashes took place over that issue with Sierra Leonean and other traders caught in the middle. Underlying such disputes was the ability of those located in Magbeli to welcome “strangers” on their own authority, control access to traders and commerce, and build up their compounds and social networks with resources flowing through that location. In an effort to exert greater supervision and authority, successive *Bai* Simera stationed a delegate in the town who tried to exercise authority in the ruler’s name and refused to crown claimants to the town chieftaincies. Struggles over crowning and the roles and actions taken by title holders were boldly and publically dramatized when factions drove rival big men out of town, seized their symbols of authority, and attacked their compounds.

Kambia was located in Magbema, whose ruler bore the title *Bai* Farima, but it was not the principal royal town like Port Loko, nor was there a bi-polar struggle between its head and the ruler, as in the case of Magbeli. Rather, it became the focus for a multi-sided contest among several authority holders and big men in the surrounding sub-region. The main rivalry was between successive holders of the *Bai* Farima title and successive Sattan Lahai. The first Sattan Lahai to settle in the area actually seized Kambia for a period, then built his own town about 10 miles away and attempted to exert control from there. His son, *Almami* Sattan Lahai I, was accorded a chieftaincy in the town, but when *Bai* Farima’s appointee and faction gained dominance in Kambia, Lahai attacked it on more than one occasion. Around 1860, the rival parties agreed to no longer wage war over the town, but to compete for a share of decision-making. The first *Almami* Lahai gained the right to choose and install the town headman with the title of *almami*, as representative of his interests. *Bai* Farima attempted to weaken that figure by creating the *alikali* title, whose holders, when strong enough, acted as a co-head with the *almami*. Both of those figures were supported by extensive alliance networks. In the last several decades of the century, when the two *Almami* Lahais had sufficient personal influence and the backing of other titled figures, *Bai* Farima’s efforts were checked, but eventually the *alikali* became the effective town head.

Such examples of power struggles and of multiple, overlapping, contested spheres of authority greatly complicate a structural analysis

of town politics. They confound a static, pointillist map. Each town was a collection of big men, title holders, households, and sections. Each town was a site of convergence for networks. People located in the towns were able to influence events far beyond, while those based elsewhere projected their power upon the centers, seeking to influence events in them and draw resources from them. These cases also illustrate how sub-regions nested within the northwest. The politics of each town was primarily shaped by those living there and in the nearby vicinity, yet each also was affected by more distant power holders and events. Similarly, some of the major space-contesting alliances focused on those towns also worked to shape the trade corridors leading to them, thus further creating the northwest region and integrating it into the Sierra Leone-Guinea macro-region.

During the 1870s and 1880s, notables from Port Loko, Magbeli, and other riverine towns, along with titled authorities and big men from inland towns, split into two factions and engaged in a series of intrigues, power plays, military actions, and negotiations. One faction was able to assert greater dominance, weaken its opponents, order space in a manner more to its liking, and promote trade that benefitted its members. The alignment of the two contesting factions was expressed to a certain extent in terms of religious identity, since at least some of the dominant alliance saw themselves as Muslims in opposition to adherents of the "secret society" *poro*. It was not, however, a story of Muslim immigrants versus older non-Muslim residents, since some long-established families aligned themselves with newcomers and with Islam, while others did not. The dominant party was most distinguished by its members' commitment to building extensive alliances and to protecting and promoting regional and inter-regional commerce. The spatial complexity of both alliance patterns demonstrate that conflicts of the era cannot be interpreted simply as "trade wars" between people competing for control of trade towns or routes, or as "tribal" or ethnic wars. Big men and authorities within towns such as Port Loko and within mini-states such as Masimera opposed one another. Each faction contained people of diverse linguistic backgrounds whose ancestors had settled at different times and incorporated themselves by different means into the social and political landscape.

Major changes in the spatial patterns of politics and social rank typically involved public acknowledgment and dramatization. When a person was selected to fill a royal title on the death of an office

holder, qualified local elders typically made the selection. But the office holder needed a wider ratification through coronation that involved rituals at sacred sites and the participation of neighboring rulers. As rulers took part in such crownings, they both gained and asserted seniority over those newly installed. A new ruler, even if wealthier or more powerful militarily than some of his peers, owed his office to the legitimization they provided. Among the fraternity, those who had participated in the crowning of several rulers over a period of years acquired enhanced seniority. Thus, Bai Compa of Kholifa stated in 1887 that, in the time since he had been installed 23 years earlier, he had participated in the crowning of 11 other rulers and had become senior among them.²⁹ By being invited and agreeing to attend, upstart settlers and military leaders recognized Bai Compa's stature and his right to speak authoritatively about issues discussed on such occasions, despite the fact that he was not the mightiest ruler. Those who chose not to participate or who showed up with a train of warmen sent a different message about their views on the alignments being displayed. At such ceremonies, the spatial order was dramatized by who was present and who was absent, and also by the specific roles participants took. Such public events revealed for a sub-region the then current (but over the long term fluid) relationship among men and women who possessed, first, authority, old and new; second, power, especially warmen; and, third, status of different kinds achieved through seniority, Islamic learning, or wealth. Many, of course, combined all three.

Peace-making ranged from mediated negotiations between two parties to elaborately staged congregations designed to create and express political order over a wide area. In the latter, numerous rulers, lesser chiefs, war leaders, and other prominent figures would be assembled. Often they were summoned by high ranking title holders or by Muslim clerics who, because of their perceived neutrality or moral sway, would preside over the gathering. After disputed issues were talked through and parties mollified, the notables engaged in ritual swears and eating of bread. Quantities of goods were exchanged to bring people together, broker disputes, and seal the arrangements. At one great peace-making conference in 1880, those who orchestrated it distributed 150 pieces of cloth, 10 cases of gin, 5 demijohns

²⁹ Sierra Leone Archives (SLA)/Aborigines Minute Paper (AbMP) 310/1887.

of rum, and four oxen. The magnitude of the goods indicated both the prestige of the main participants and the number of warmen who had to be compensated.³⁰ Among other things, the events signaled readjustments in the relationships among big men based in various centers—some small and others the largest in the region—and thus in the relationships among centers themselves. In 1882, seven rulers plus a number of lesser authority holders came together for a peace congress. This required, according to reports, 14 bullocks, 150 bushels of husked rice, 10 cases of gin, 7 sitting chairs, 7 country gowns, and 50 pieces of cloth. While not equally strong, the rulers were entitled to identical chairs and gowns by virtue of their offices, and their positions had to be recognized at the assembly. Other commodities, however, were distributed widely to ensure that powerful figures maintained the spatial order, at least temporarily (SLA/AbMP 42/1982).

British authorities and rulers of the great inland states viewed the region's landscape in terms of notable figures who lived in particular sites and whose actions were interpreted against the known histories of their offices and families. Though many administrators of the Colony blundered terribly in their relationships with rulers and power holders, a few were savvy about the way public images were built and manipulated, most famously Thomas George Lawson, Government Interpreter who ran the office of African ("Aborigines") Affairs (Skinner 1980:13–49ff.). In his policy correspondence with authorities and other big men, he frequently referred to past gatherings, describing where they had occurred, who had been present, and what actions had been taken. He then connected the past directly to the current actors, often bending the interpretation to serve Colony goals.³¹ He and other Colony officials, including governors, spoke in similar ways at assemblies attended by dignitaries and sizeable crowds of common people, modeling themselves on the indigenous modes

³⁰ Considering the amount of alcohol provided, it is interesting to note that while several of the principals were Muslims, many of the professional war leaders were not, and, further, that this war involved the conflict line between those big men and places identified with Islam and those with *poro*. SLA/Government Interpreter's Letter Book (GILB) 1879–81, statement of Thompson 6 Nov., 1880.

³¹ He did this at times with reference to a treaty and the goal of securing African compliance with particular clauses, as Colony authorities interpreted them, but the relevant point here is that he did not simply cite the sterile print on paper, but rather interpreted the past in terms of particular individuals and events-in-places.

of discourse. Lawson in particular was keenly aware of how such meetings were likely to unfold and therefore appreciated the nuances being expressed.³² Thus, in the public discourse people-in-places and events-in-places were remembered and talked about, their meanings often contested. Conversely, the memories accumulated around a place were conferred upon those who were present, linking them with others across time via the physical sites that were charged with meaning.

Working within and Challenging the Social-Spatial Hierarchies: War Leaders, Peasants, Youth, Women, and Slaves in the Later Nineteenth Century

Men, and to a lesser degree women, of high rank exerted a great ability to shape space through their control of resources. Big men, in particular, influenced spatial patterns through their alliances, as seen, for instance, in the way opposing parties diverged over their integration of Muslim settlers, promotion of long-distance trade, and other matters. People in lower social positions tended to be linked directly or indirectly with those figures as kin, clients, or dependents, thus supporting and reinforcing the spatial patterns framed by the notables. On the other hand, this interdependence and the rivalries among big men and authority holders gave war leaders, less important elders, junior men and women, clients, and even the enslaved an opportunity to bargain and to assert, in varying degrees, space-shaping ability, or at least to use spatial patterns to their own advantage. Furthermore, some directly challenged the spatial order their superiors managed by stepping outside it. Spatial analysis, therefore, must look both at repeated practices and institutionalization in space and also at tensions, conflict, and disruptive events.

The forces that shaped the region and led to the increased differentiation of centers and sub-regions also generated contradictions and stimulated alternative ways of organizing space. This can be revealed by examining the use of force, particularly by war leaders, and at episodes where space was contested through war. As mentioned above, many titled figures were or had been war leaders; moreover, many rulers, office holders, and other big men recruited

³² For an example pertaining to events in the Kolente region discussed elsewhere, see SLA/GILB 1873–1876, memo to Gov. 22 Sept., 1873.

war leaders. Some war leaders supported the maintenance of the spatial structures comprising the Sierra Leone-Guinea system, while other leaders supported what might be considered an alternative structure. That is to say, they were linked with authorities and big men who were opposed to the principal organizers of the main trade routes. Moreover, war leaders did not always remain aligned with the same faction throughout their careers, and could change sides out of political or economic self-interest. War leaders, their lieutenants, and ordinary fighters also operated on their own, plundering and disrupting order rather than serving the political and economic interests of their patrons. They promoted and fed on disorder. Some raided villages and towns so as to gain captives for the inter-regional slave trade or plundered farmers and traders, engaging in a form of primitive accumulation that boosted their wealth and influence.³³

War leaders and other fighters were under the nominal control of titled rulers or other authority holders in whose spheres they resided. Ostensibly they were not supposed to pass through a ruler's territory without his permission, and rulers were held accountable by other authorities when that happened. In the political discourse, critics would assert that the particular authority holder was too weak to control the movements of warmen, or accuse him of tacitly granting approval of their movement or of secretly supporting those who had hired the fighters. Working together, members of the main commercial alliances did whatever they could to quarantine warmen away from trading towns and roads they wanted to keep open. Rulers and other authorities arrested and stocked warmen accused of minor theft from markets, more severely punished those found guilty of plundering villages, shops or *jula*, and expended substantial resources to hunt down and kill notorious highway bandits.³⁴

The complex, often contradictory actions of war leaders can be seen in some of the major conflagrations when authorities and allied big men mobilized hundreds, even thousands, of fighters. One such long-lasting struggle centered in Moria. While the conflict ostensibly focused on the right of *Almami* Bokari to rule, it actually involved several interconnected issues—the practice of Islam, contests among

³³ Howard 2003; I also am working on a larger study of war, war leaders, and slave trading in the nineteenth century.

³⁴ SLA/GILB 1882–1884, statement of Alimamy Damoh Sorie 19 Dec., 1882; SLA/GILB 1882–1884, memo of 2 July, 1883.

families, and rivalries among towns.³⁵ Most of the contestants spoke Susu, although many were of diverse Mande-speaking immigrant backgrounds. On several occasions the conflict broke into widespread warfare, as in 1882. At that time the leading fighter was the renowned Kibali (later *Bai Bure*), a Temne-speaker who first had been hired by Bokari in 1865. Kibali was sent in 1881 or early 1882 into the interior with many goods to recruit other war leaders, who in turn brought along their own men and collected others. It appears that he used networks that linked prominent military figures rather than contacting them all directly, since the top warmen and their armies reportedly assembled at an interior point and then moved toward Moria. Among those who were knitted together was another equally famous (or notorious) leader from Bomboli district named Carimu, also a Temne-speaker. Other primary figures included Ceray Amarah, “a native of Sierra Leone” (meaning the Colony) whose father was a Liberated African and whose mother was from a different Temne-speaking area than Kibali or Carimu; and Gbombo, a Loko-speaker who was under the authority of Sorie Kesebe of Rotifunk in Bompeh (increasingly a Mende-speaking area), but who had served under *Bai Mauro* in Bullom until joining Bokari. A fifth was *Santigi* Kukuna “who comes from the interior (place unknown), but resides with *Bai Inga*,” a Temne-speaking ruler then backing *Almami* Bokari. Also joining was Boatmonneh, from the mixed Loko- and Temne-speaking area of Sanda Magbolonto.³⁶ The bases of operation of those men spanned much of the northwest. Each one assembled lesser leaders, who in turn drew in many fighters. The following year, Bokari’s opponents, speakers of Susu and other Mande languages, recruited large numbers of Temne-speakers from Yoni district. When that body was defeated, Bokari’s supporters purportedly took prisoner about 1000 people of diverse backgrounds and destroyed

³⁵ Much of the information on the 1882 phase of the struggle comes from the writings of Thomas George Lawson, who had three decades of experience in the area and traveled there in that year as representative of the Colony of Sierra Leone. David E. Skinner is engaged in a detailed study of *Almami* Bokari and other leading figures in the area.

³⁶ SLA/GILB 1882, report of 33 March, 1882; see also SLA/AbMP 52/1882, interview of Governor with Sattan Lahai and *Bai Inga*, 17 April, 1882, which verified the war leaders’ names; SLA/GILB 1882, memo of 17 Aug., 1882. It is likely that Kibali and other war leaders whose first language was Temne were also fluent in Susu and probably other languages as well.

several towns. The networks of the prominent war leaders differed significantly in their spatial patterning from those of rulers and especially of *diatigi* and *jula* whose networks stretched along the main roads. Typically, important warmen had their own towns and were not based in the main capitals and commercial towns, except when they were temporarily living in such places to provide protection and military backing. Rather than repeated gatherings of titles holders, such as the coronations, where the gravity of the event was increased by the presence of those who had attended earlier ceremonies, the military alliances were assembled by the core figures calling in their allies, who in turn called in others. Each large-scale configuration differed from previous ones, depending on who was available and willing to fight. They could assemble where it was convenient and not likely to antagonize neutrals. There were communication linkages among top and middle-level warmen that spanned the region and reached beyond, but the senior organizers operated through their secondaries, who in turn mobilized others and extended the web further. In the end, they converged on a place that did not have special meaning for most of them, but only for those who hired them.

The careers of famous war leaders illustrate the complex and often contradictory roles they played in spatial history. Kibali was perhaps the best known *angkrugba* in the region during the later 1800s and became the principal organizer in the north of the 1898 uprising against the British (Denzler 1972). He was the scion of an important family that resided in Kasse, a territory off the main routes but one that became more important as export trade rose, especially in palm products. Over more than two decades his ability to gather large numbers of fighters helped to protect the Kambia-interior road, one of the major roads comprising the Futa-Scarcies Corridor, which benefitted Rowula, the headquarters of *Almami* Sattan Lahai, as well as Kambia. His actions also generally helped bring traders along the lesser roads that passed through the territory of *Bai* Inga and through Kasse. For instance, in 1883 when Bilali and his allies defeated Bokari's enemies and their mercenaries, trade flowed to Kambia.³⁷ Conversely, in 1885 *Almami* Bokari's fortunes were reversed and Kambia was devastated by attacks. In that fighting, Kibali's war men

³⁷ SLA/GILB 1882-1884, memo of 2 July, 1883 and 4 Oct., 1883.

were accused of plundering *jula* and traders.³⁸ Much of this period he directly served *Almami* Bokari, but for several years he was the head of fighters arrayed under *Almami* Sattan Lahai and *Bai* Inga, and he eventually went to reside with the latter, who probably saw that as a way to both guarantee his own security and keep the war leader under supervision. After they quarreled (perhaps over territorial issues), *Bai* Inga ousted him, and Kibali became re-engaged as a war leader. It appears that Kibali's own strategy was to build networks of fighters and allies linked to him, add to his holdings in enslaved people and other dependents, and enhance his fame as someone with daring and skill. Through his travels, victories at particular places, and extensive networks, he was building his reputation by marking space, and people spoke of him in terms of events-in-place. In 1886 people in Kasse selected him to be crowned as their ruler with the *Bai* Bure title.

Thousands of fighters were drawn into the Morian war. Large "war fences" (stockades used for defense or to establish an advanced position) were built and attacked, as were towns. In one incident in August 1882, 300 opponents of Bokari allegedly died when a fence was overrun; a number of big men were captured or killed.³⁹ On the one hand, such fighting was clearly orchestrated and carried out for the benefit of the title holders and the highest level generals. But, on the other hand, not only the Moria wars but other fighting also afforded youth a way to leave their homes and accumulate resources and connections. While some of the most famous war leaders came from prominent families, others did not. Because of the reputations and personal ties they acquired, those from ordinary backgrounds might later in life become heads of sizeable compounds, or even heads of a village, town section, or small town. A few might become middle-level war leaders. The occupation should not be romanticized, however. While soldiers fought against other soldiers hired by the elite, they also stole from and enslaved peasants in order to sustain themselves. Furthermore, fighters had to spend many dangerous years under the command of or at least at the ready call of big captains, who in turn were clients of the major war leaders or big

³⁸ SLA/GILB 1884–1885, memo of 4 Feb., 1885; memo of 27 May, 1885 listing towns on the south bank of the Kolente destroyed by armies led by Bokari's opponents.

³⁹ SLA/GILB 1882, report of 25 August, 1882.

men and title holders. Undoubtedly, the majority of fighters remained at lower levels before abandoning war and raiding for farming. As indicated above, those who turned to a career of pillage, or were not under the control of men of rank, often were hunted down and punished.

There was another dimension to war. At the famous 1882 attack upon *Almami* Bokari's positions, it was also reported that some stockades were built by enslaved people, many of whom were armed as fighters. Both at the onset of the long war in 1865, again in 1882, and perhaps on other occasions as well, enslaved people who were Temne- and Mende-speakers seized the opportunity brought by the disorder to escape back home. They may have been emboldened by the presence of fighters speaking their own language and perhaps hailing from their own territories.⁴⁰

A much more overt challenge to the slave-holding hierarchy had appeared some decades earlier in the remarkable person of Bilali, whose full history has yet to be written. According to Ismail Rashid, his father was *Almami* Dumbuya, ruler of Kukuna, and his mother an enslaved woman. Dumbuya enabled Bilali to have an "extensive Qur'anic and military training," and also provided that on his death, Bilali would be freed, in keeping with Islamic practice. But when the ruler died in 1838 his successor refused to end Bilali's bondage. At that point, Bilali and other slaves escaped. They attacked Kukuna and, eventually, Bilali established Laminayah, which became a refuge for escaped slaves and a symbolic challenge to the slave-holding class which repeatedly tried, and failed, to destroy the town. (Rashid 2003: 144–147; Fyfe 1962:283–284).⁴¹ Edward W. Blyden, appointed by the Governor as Agent to the Interior, wrote from Kambia in 1872 that Bilali had "not only a devotion to the idea of liberty at any price but a strong attachment to himself and a hatred for all those who hold slaves. . . ." Many authority holders and other big men had "formed a combination against him . . .," but not all. Blyden asserted that when many leading figures gathered at Kambia to talk over Bilali's threat to the established order, many Susu- and Temne-speaking leaders were opposed to Bilali, while Limba-speaking rulers

⁴⁰ SLA/GILB 1882, report of 18 August, 1882.

⁴¹ SLA/Local letters to Governor box 11, 1872–1873, 900/72, encl. Letter of Almami Bokari.

supported him. Perhaps, thought Blyden, that was because Bilali had attacked Kukuna and other sites of Susu-speaking big men who had been encroaching on territories claimed by Limba authorities.⁴²

However, the issues were more complex and can be interpreted, at least partly, within the spatial framework set out here. For one thing, Bilali selected wisely in building his fortified refuge center where he did because it was marginal to the main roads and not a direct threat to those big men and authorities who, while slave holders, were most concerned with securing the roads in the Futa-Scarcies Corridor which led to Kambia, rather than to Kukuna or Bokari's territory. More important, the division of big men did not follow an ethnic breakdown, and the underlying issues in the long series of wars involving Bokari were political and commercial. *Almami* Sattan Lahai I, himself a holder of many slaves, wrote in 1870 that if *Almami* Bokari heeded the call of the Kukuna big men who owned slaves and brought Bilali "to duty" (in other words, re-subjected him) it "would lead to a general war throughout the country."⁴³ In 1872, *Almami* Sattan Lahai II who had succeeded his father, was attempting to build up the economic base of his main center in Rowula and was to opposed to the Kukuna leaders and *Almami* Bokari because of competition over Kambia and desire to control trade flowing from inland, as described previously. Lahai's paternal ancestry had come from the Susu area, but what mattered was that his father and he had become fully integrated into one of the great alliances that combined title holders and other big men of diverse ancestry, most of whom spoke Temne. Lahai, for political and commercial reasons, sought to protect the Tonko Limba kingdom against Kukuna's expansion, and he later became the senior partner in an alliance with the Limba-speaking ruler of Tonko Limba, who himself went on to become a staunch protector of that branch of the Futa-Scarcies Corridor. The more fundamental point here, however, is that Bilali and his settlement had great meaning for people of all social classes. Rashid has stated it well. Bilali's

... actions, especially the provision of refuge for escapees, potentially threatened the entire slaveholding complex in the region. His free

⁴² SLA/Local letters to Governor box 10, 1872, encl. Blyden to Gov., 10 Jan., 1872.

⁴³ SLA/Local Letters to Gov. Box 9, 1870-1871, *Almami* Sattan Lahai, King of Rowula, to Gov., 14 Oct., 1870.

community and its rigidly antislavery posture thus represented a break from the vicious predatory culture of slavery. His opponents saw Laminyah as a second Freetown in the heart of their region and spared no effort in trying to uproot it (Rashid 2003:145).

Furthermore, Blyden's intervention linked two symbols of freedom: "the evolving indigenous tradition of antislavery with the Enlightenment abolitionism of the Freetown colony." Muslims debated the case of Bilali in theological and moral terms because Bilali was a Muslim and his father had freed him, and even some of "his enemies conceded his entitlement and right to defend his freedom" (Rashid 2003:146).

In the last several decades of the century, enslaved people and younger women escaped in considerable numbers to the customs posts of the Sierra Leone Colony and to Freetown itself (Grace 1975:91–95ff.; Rashid 1999). It is quite likely that some of the enslaved people who fled to the British territory learned about the growing current of escapees through trading networks, since enslaved people served as porters and other kinds of laborers, and probably also through communication ties among their peers.⁴⁴ Through such spectacular exoduses as in 1882, as well by escapes by individuals and small groups, enslaved people reduced the flow of resources that supported the households and networks of ranking people, who thus had less ability to affect broader spatial patterns. During the 1890s, tours by British officials through the countryside also encouraged many to escape. It became official policy, however, not to interfere with "domestic institutions" and even as late as the mid-1890s British Frontier Police were instructed not to accept escapees at police posts but rather to inform escapees that they were to go to Freetown for refuge.⁴⁵ After the northwest was incorporated into the Sierra Leone Protectorate, British authorities colluded in maintaining slavery because they feared resistance by the elite and wanted to ensure continued agricultural production (Grace 1976). In the first part of the twentieth century, slaves continued to go to Freetown in numbers that

⁴⁴ SLA/NAMP 67/1895, statements of Mamadu and Mormordu, escapees to Kikonki. For groups who escaped from the same place, see SLA/NAMP 95/1897. For an escapee who reached British territory and then went back and assisted others, see SLA/270/1897.

⁴⁵ SLA/Native Affairs Minute Paper (NAMP) 284/1895, encl. circular #5 of 1894. See also SLA/Native Affairs Confidential Letter Book, Conf. 2/1894.

worried chiefs, big men, and British authorities, who at times assured the chiefs that the exodus was not being given official encouragement.⁴⁶ Until abolition in 1928, most slaves apparently remained under their masters, staying located in rural hamlets and small villages as well as in urban compounds, reflecting the continuing hierarchical social and spatial order. Moreover, during the last several decades of the nineteenth century, the British had made only an intermittent and attenuated effort to stop the coastal slave trade, which in part traversed the Colony itself and which supported the hierarchical social and spatial order, both in the northwest and adjoining regions (Howard 2003).

Women sought alternatives to family-arranged marriages and unwanted domestic situations, or simply sought more access to resources. By collecting small quantities of kola or processing palm oil, they converted their own labor into trading capital. From traders farther up the commercial ladder, they took credit in the form of goods—and did not always return on schedule, or at all. Some became the “country wives” of Sierra Leoneans residing in the rivers, even inheriting property, or took up work for female traders from the Colony, thus building useful connections. They went to Freetown or the river stations with loads for sale, then stayed. In other ways as well, commercial networks became an important way for women to enhance their resources and information. For youth, serving as junior members of firms enabled them to gain access to Freetown, find their way about, and prepare for their own trading journeys. For all these people, the ability to move through space, obtain information, and take advantage of social connections was critical. They, like big men and *julaba*, perceived Freetown in terms of individuals—*diatigi*, merchants, kin, and the elders and headmen of ethnic communities—and in terms of the households and institutions associated with such people.⁴⁷ Whereas British authorities ideologically

⁴⁶ SLA/CSMP 4473/1907. Slaves also gained freedom by an officially recognized redemption process. In a thirty-month period in the early 1920s, 2000 were redeemed. However, District Commissioner Stanley stated in 1923 that he did not believe that redemption was significantly altering the number of “domestics” in the Protectorate, nor the nature of the institution itself (Memo to Governor, April 1923, in CO 267/604, printed as Cmd 3620, Feb., 1928).

⁴⁷ Howard interview with Pa Momo Kamara, Port Loko, 7 February, 1968. People of Krio-Temne ancestry also connected with Freetown through particular merchants who provided credit and assistance; Howard interview with Pa Duramani Cole, Port Loko, 27 February, 1968.

proclaimed the Colony a beacon of freedom, in actuality it was the capacity of ordinary people to use and strengthen the pathways of communication leading to the coastal centers that gave them leverage vis-à-vis those who were socially and politically dominant.

Peasants in general took advantage of growing opportunities to trade and thereby obtain resources that made them less dependent upon those of high social rank and less vulnerable to a disadvantageous clientage relationship or to pawning in the event of food shortage, a court case, or other calamity. Although such people did not have the political and military power to manage the roads, they did contribute to shaping the overall spatial structure by processing or manufacturing goods, or working as petty traders and members of family or village groups that carried commodities to exchange centers. Peasants' market information, mobility, and network building should not be underestimated. In the latter nineteenth century, thousands of people each year carried many tens of tons of palm products, kola, rubber, benniseeds, rice, and other commodities to the coastal exchange centers, and large numbers also ventured inland. As carriers and traders, junior men, women, and youth built up ties with trading "friends" and gathered information. The trade in building materials and common necessities, such as mangrove poles, potash, charcoal, baskets, salt, and vegetables and other less expensive non-staple foods, bound together the lower ranks across the region.⁴⁸ The sources of these products, however, indicate that those who resided nearer to the Sierra Leone peninsula had the greatest opportunity to build up regular contacts in the city and along the rivers, whereas those in the more interior reaches of the region traveled once a year coastwise (Howard in preparation).

Thus, it can be argued that the peasantry facilitated the centrality of the major towns by producing, processing, and transporting commodities to those places and by exchanging them, which boosted the position of the accumulators residing there. But villagers also bypassed those towns, or simply walked through them to trade in the river factories or Freetown. They relied upon their connections with "friends" in those places who regularly traded with them and they

⁴⁸ For a description of how people traded in small quantities of rubber, salt, tobacco, and other items which they carried in homemade hampers and baskets, Howard interviews with Pa Almami Port Loko 28 March, 1968 and 16 May, 1968.

gained bargaining leverage and an opportunity to get better prices because of the market forces generated by competing exchange points located at different stages along the roads and waterways leading to the colonial capital. They did not necessarily trade at the nearest site that performed the low and middle-level exchange functions, as would have been predicted from the kind of central place model discussed earlier. In fact, the heads of navigation towns were part of a much larger system of centers. With Freetown performing a full range of exchange functions and the factories and river towns duplicating those at the lower and middle-levels, a rather mixed structure existed, one that combined hierarchical and non-hierarchical or longitudinal organization. Furthermore, small-scale and occasional traders, many of them farmers, also traded inland and laterally on the regional grid, as well as engaged in many non-market exchanges. Kola markets, for example, lay to the east, northward, and coastwise. Ultimately, though resource poor, peasants in combination used their knowledge of farming, tending productive trees, and harvesting from the wild; their labor in processing and particularly in walking considerable distances bearing heavy loads; and their network-building capacity in order to assert some autonomy from local big men. For every load of commodities carried, several people combined their skill and labor: perhaps a young man was most adept at the risky task of climbing oil palms, two or three men and women working together processed the palm fruit by cracking nuts and extracting oil, and a middle-aged man with trading experience walked with a hamper on his back to the waterside; children assisted in various ways. Typically, it was not simply one family but rather a group of villagers who worked together. Thus, the local nodes and networks provided some alternative to those that linked people hierarchically to their senior kin, chiefs, and patrons.

Deep contradictions were at play, however, many of them resulting from the way in which the northwest region was being drawn into the Atlantic economy. Small shop keepers in the river towns, often owing a season's worth of credit to merchants in Freetown, and the numerous petty traders who scoured the countryside for commodities frequently complained about giving out goods on faith and never being repaid. In the case of the shop keepers, part of their losses were extractions by the powerful, but the poor also took advantage of others in a weak position. Those who sought to operate in minor nodes and across the middle and lower levels of the

spatial structure often found that they were inescapably part of the hier-archy.⁴⁹ Freetown, with its many competing stores and hospitable “friends,” was still notorious as the place where the ignorant were fleeced by big merchants and petty touts alike. Hundreds of seasonal traders could not match the carrying capacity of one big man based in a head of navigation center with his capacious canoe with built up sides or even a boat, plus kin, slaves, and clients assisting his operation. He could make several runs a season to whatever exchange point he selected. Those big men, like other traders in the river towns and inland centers, had to fight through the late 1800s and the first twenty years of the colonial era, and beyond, to prevent being overwhelmed by the international firms and other foreign traders.

*Spatial Aspects of the Transition to Colonial Rule and its Formalization
1890s to 1920s*

European officials—British in the Colony of Sierra Leone and French based in Conakry —exerted ever greater political and military intrusion upon the region during the last several decades of the nineteenth century, eventually resulting in a formal take-over. During the long transitional period, Europeans planted new spatial structures by exerting their power and, along with merchant firms, by investing capital. The late 1890s and early 1900s saw the imperial countries militarily defeat resisters, establish house taxes, and erect colonial boundary pylons, military posts, district office buildings, and other

⁴⁹ Middle and lower level traders used a particular device to increase their effective working capital and annual return. After receiving goods on credit in Freetown or the river factories, a trader or trading group would carry out two or three cycles of exchanging imports for commodities before delivering products to the original creditor. In between, of course, the trader had to supply other dealers and get goods from them. Problems arose when the original creditor learned of the scheme through networks that he or she had with other wholesalers or middlemen, or simply became suspicious at the delay and would either withhold credit or give it to a rival of the delinquent. Traders who brought exports to Freetown tried to maintain two or more “friends” among the buyers, and would seek the best price they could get; on some trips they would share out part of their load with a “friend” to maintain relations, but also because they did not trust any one buyer enough to deal exclusively with that person. As one kola trader put it when referring to dealers, they were “very much rascals.” Howard interview with Pa Momo Kamara 7 February, 1968.

material manifestations of their presence. Officials both physically marked the ground and staged public events to dramatize spatial changes. African authorities and other people of rank who resisted the colonizers, who were willing to cooperate with them, or who sought a better bargaining position observed the shifts in power and the accompany spatial changes, and they also signaled their stance by engaging in space-defining events. While the Europeans used a mix of subtle and violent measures to exert control, war was the ultimate, deadly sign that a new spatial order was being installed; all Africans who militarily resisted were defeated or obliged to surrender because of the Europeans' scorched earth tactics. For the northwest, the most notable marker was the surrender by *Bai* Bure in 1898; for the broader Sierra Leone-Guinea macro-region changes were signaled by *Almami* Samori Toure's abandonment of the upper Niger in 1895–96 (and his later capture) and the killing of the *Almami* of Futa Jalon, Bokari Biro, in 1896 (Denzer 1970; Barry 1998: 284–293). Conquest was followed by a nearly two-decade long period when Europeans reconfigured space by re-working the arrangement of district headquarters and boundaries, laying the main railway and its northern extension, and installing inland trading stations at new rail towns as well as at some older centers.

Starting as early as the 1870s but intensifying greatly from the 1890s, antagonisms in the northwest were expressed vividly on the ground. There were repeated incidents where Africans protested or directly challenged the ways that British authorities and their agents inserted their power and authority into African-controlled space. Seizures by British customs officers and the interventions by police and troops repeatedly caused social as well as political flashpoints, for instance, when African members of the Frontier Police made liaisons with local women, or assisted enslaved people (Fyfe 1962: 553ff.). Such actions threatened the positions of senior elites and also the maintenance of households as nodal institutions. Rulers, lesser authorities, and ordinary traders frequently wrote letters of protest to Freetown administrators, tried to curtail the police, and otherwise opposed what they saw as unwarranted interference with their movement, rights, and social institutions. Marking bodies of elites as well as common people was common and caused indignant, often furious reaction. For instance, when in 1892 customs agents who were trying to halt "smuggling" stopped and searched *Bai* Sherbro, ruler of Mambolo, he angrily wrote to the Department of Native Affairs

expressing his shame at being accused and mistreated in the sight of his people.⁵⁰ There were many such incidents.

The spatial patterns of the Sierra Leone-Guinea macro-region were fundamentally altered by the colonialists' advance. Stamping the colonial boundary upon the land was both a technical and a military operation: uniformed officers from the two imperial countries, accompanied by patrols and assistants, surveyed the line dividing the Sierra Leone Protectorate and Colony of French Guinea, drawing upon maps, taking names of villages on either side of the border, recording notes on physical features, and erecting stone pillars or other signs of sovereignty (Howard 1972:413-418; Goerg 1980). Thus formal regions were created. In a curving arc conforming with the boundary both powers installed customs posts, their flags symbolizing territoriality. The French harshly diverted *jula* with cattle and other goods away from the British sphere toward Conakry, thereby sharply cutting the volume of traffic on the main corridors leading to Kambia, Port Loko, and Freetown. Officials confiscated goods and chased down "smugglers." The bodies of those who violated the new spatial order were marked: they were shot at, jailed, or forced to use uncleared bush paths where they suffered wounds. In the past, rulers levied charges on traders and brigands robbed them. Now traders complained about exactions by colonial troops, new taxes, and disruptions to their patterns of movement. While links between the upper Niger and Futa Jalon, on the one hand, and the northwest, on the other, were not totally severed, trade was greatly reduced, in effect breaking up the Sierra Leone-Guinea system⁵¹.

New capital investment and administrative arrangements also changed the spatial structures of the northwest. By laying the Sierra Leone railroad line, putting down feeder roads, stringing telegraph lines, and erecting new shops and storehouses, the government and private foreign companies invested capital inland that was comparable to and connected with the building of wharves and commercial facilities in Freetown. Space and time were compressed in that commodities could be moved up and down the rail at much greater

⁵⁰ SLA/NAMP 169/1882. Such incidents had increased since 1879 and especially the mid-1880s as the British had expanded their customs sphere and patrols.

⁵¹ The French efforts to divert trade to Conakry, using coercion where necessary, is documented in the accounts of many traders; see, for example, SLA/NAMP 401/1891; SLA/NAMP 496/1893; SLA/NAMP Confid. MP 60/1894.

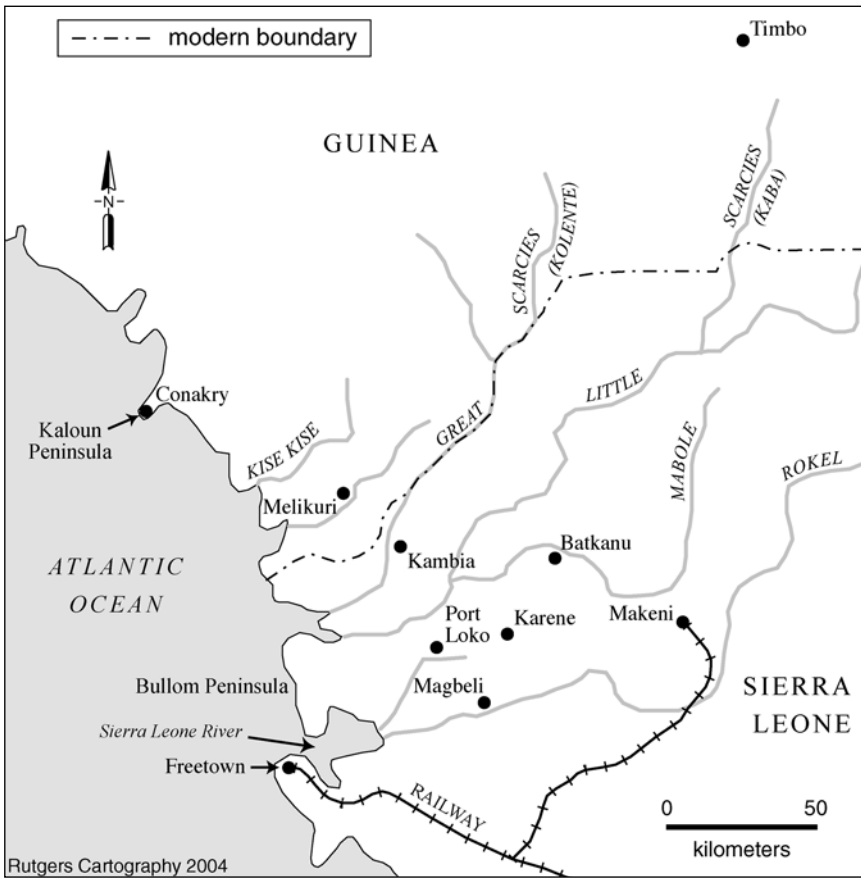


Fig. 23 Towns and Sierra Leone Railway, ca. 1920

speed and lower costs than they had been by head portage (Harvey 1989: 211–267). Passengers and price information, too, traveled at an expedited rate. Almost immediately after a station was established on the rail as it was extended eastward and northward, European and other traders set up businesses there.⁵² African traders used to walking to the coast, also oriented themselves to new rail centers like Makeni (see fig. 23).⁵³ The rail enabled foreign firms that were more heavily capitalized than African businesses to set up buying stations inland, gain a major share of traffic, and push their rivals down the business ladder. These structural changes brought a fundamental alteration in the spatial patterns of commerce and a new central place ranking among towns. Magbeli, Rokon, Forodugu and others places in the cluster on the Rokel river were, in the long run, doomed as exchange centers because the traffic of their hinterland was drained away by the main rail which ran roughly parallel to the river's lower section and by the northern rail extension that cut directly through the river's drainage basin. However, that did not happen immediately, and the governor and other officials were deeply concerned about the resiliency of the trade system oriented toward the river towns, which threatened to reduce railway revenues.⁵⁴ The government's solution was to push the rail inland toward Makeni as quickly as possible and to take other measures to weaken the river-oriented system. Even when the rail reached Makeni and then Kamabai beyond, Port Loko, Mange, and Kambia, as well as lesser river towns to the north of the Rokel remained viable commercially. Thus, the impact of colonial structures and capital was very uneven. River towns located far enough beyond the spatial imprint of the rail and its feeder roads were able to rely on improved water transport (and eventually lorries) to challenge the new, imposed order. Because their transport costs remained competitive with the rail and they had well-established personal and business connections inland, African traders in Port Loko, Kambia, Mange, and some sites lower down the rivers were able to maintain sources of commercial wealth,

⁵² SLA/DC Ronietta MP 9/1914 and SLA/Karene MP 37/1914.

⁵³ Howard interview with Pa Gbonko, Kamabai 22 October, 1968.

⁵⁴ SLA/CSMP 843/1910, encl. report of ADC Vergette, 16 February, 1910; SLA DC Karene 83/1911; SLA DC Karene 23/1912, Annual Report for Karene District, 1911. In the 1920s Africans began to use lorries on the roads to the ports of the northern rivers, as well as motorized launches (Howard in preparation).

even with reduced hinterlands and European competition. Thus, in this period, colonial rule, the modern transport system, and Atlantic capitalism brought only a partial transformation of the region's spatial economy.

The capacity of some of the precolonial centers to reassert their regional influence could also be seen in the way the British sited their administrative centers. The first headquarters town they established in the region was at Karene, partly because of its strategic location. Chiefs and ordinary people were obliged to orient themselves to the new center to pay taxes, attend the district officer's court, obtain licenses, and for other reasons. However, Karene was located in one of those areas that had been a late-nineteenth century back land of production and commerce; economic and other spatial realities worked against it, and it was replaced by Batkanu after a decade. Batkanu, too, was artificial in terms of precolonial patterns, but it survived as the center of a much shrunken administrative district. By 1920, as the transitional period ended, the British began to create smaller districts out of the large ones. While two of the new districts headquarters were on the rail, another was Port Loko and later Kambia joined; the district Kambia administered covered part of the lower section of the old Futa-Scarcies Corridor. The more lasting arrangement of districts expressed a combination of older spatial patterns reasserting themselves and newer ones emerging along with the new transport system and areas of export production (Clark 1966:31–31; Northern Province, *Annual Report for 1920*).

As Allan Pred writes, such structural changes conditioned but did not determine new forms of individual and collective action (Pred 1990:9–12ff.). People changed their patterns of settlement and network formation, as well as production and trade, both in the short and long term. For instance, some of *Almami* Samori Toure's commercial agents, who had been based in Kankan, Bissandugu, and elsewhere in the upper Niger, settled in the region, boosting the households and communities of Mande-speaking settlers and of others with whom they traded or intermarried. Yet, connections with major towns of the upper Niger such as Kankan were substantially weakened. Futa Jalon gradually became re-integrated with the northwest and other areas of Sierra Leone as migrants settled in Freetown and certain other towns in order to trade (Jalloh 1999:1–14; Bah 1995:43–69, 97–105). These shifts in turn had a major impact upon the reformation of ethnic communities in Freetown and elsewhere,

the reorganization of cattle trading, the growth of “stranger” communities in the northwest, and other activities centered in nodes and played out along extensive networks (Howard 1999; Howard in preparation).

Paul Nugent has noted that in some territories the existence of colonial and national boundaries stimulated people to forge a zone of interaction spanning both sides (Nugent 1996:35–67). Such a pattern existed for several decades *prior* to formal rule in a section of the northwest bounded by Kambia and Melikuri and the ocean. People took advantage of opportunities to trade in alternative sites in that zone depending on how British and French customs duties and other factors generated price differentials. As discussed in the section above on *Almami* Bokari, precolonial politics also bridged the two emerging European spheres of influence. It would appear, however, that at least for some decades after the fixing of the border the interaction in the zone around the line decreased rather than intensified, although some new boundary opportunities arose.

Once the British established colonial rule, they introduced certain changes that rigidified spatial patterns to a degree not previously known. Barrie Sharpe has demonstrated how the British conquerors, as well as anthropologists, imposed an artificially dichotomous distinction between “states” and “tribes” upon the politics of north central Nigeria (Sharpe 1986). That did not happen in Sierra Leone. Rather, the British found “chiefdoms” everywhere, filling in all the space in the Protectorate with territorially demarcated units (Clark 1966:32–33). The fluid boundaries and overlapping authority that had characterized the 1800s were eliminated through investigations that assigned land and subjects to one chiefdom unit or another. By throwing administrative weight behind those authorities who became known as paramount chiefs (some of them formerly “kings”) and so-called section chiefs, and by fixing chiefdom borders, the British failed to recognize and develop policies that were consistent with the overlapping, multilevel authority of the past. Instead they created fixed hierarchies and an artificial symmetry among chiefdom units.

Seeing that such administrative changes threatened their share in decision-making and heightened the importance of certain offices while weakening others, individuals and families put forward competing claims to chieftaincies and lesser positions. Such claims often had been submerged for many decades. Chiefs formed new congregations to lobby for certain policies, at first maintaining direct ties

with the Governor in Freetown. Increasingly, however, politics became reoriented around administrative districts. With the suppression of warfare and raiding, a fundamental source of power, wealth, and status was lost for many big men. Their capacity to maintain households and networks correspondingly declined unless they were successful in commerce or gained a place in the new system of chiefs that enabled them to command their subjects' labor and gave them a cut of revenues flowing through the tax system. The value and space-organizing capacity of extensive networks declined for most big men: it is difficult to find political alliances that matched the scale of the late nineteenth century when war leaders from Yoni on the far southern side of the region were involved in Moria on the far northern end, and when personal and professional linkages stretched from Freetown to Biriwa Limba and beyond. District and colonial borders fragmented politics by replacing a functional region with several formal ones.

Many space-forming and space-maintaining processes remained in the hands of Africans, however, even though they were responding to new structural realities. For a short period of time, the membership of many farming households seems to have grown as people congregated to avoid house taxes, but over the longer run the tendency was toward smaller units. While a portion of enslaved people abandoned their masters, the majority did not do so during the first two decades of the century, and big men and others continued to use the labor of dependents in support of their households. Legal emancipation in 1928 added significantly to other changes that were bringing a diminution in the average size and importance of that nodal, space-forming institution (Grace 1975:220–262).

The growth of trade in exports and foods and the resulting income meant that peasants often gained the means to reduce their clientage ties with big men, although years of food shortage may have countered that tendency. Many people expanded and reconfigured social and economic networks. Freetown became an even greater lure for youth and women who sought opportunities in trade and other sectors, and joined ethnic communities. On the waterfront and elsewhere they, like other marketers, faced new competition over space as large firms and colonial officials sought to regulate access (Howard 2001). Whereas youth no longer moved about the region in substantial numbers as warmen, ever greater numbers migrated for economic and social reasons, particularly to Freetown and rail

and river towns. Those big men and families who had depended upon warfare and the pre-colonial social and political order and ideology declined in importance unless they were able to adjust by gaining positions in the new administrative and chiefly hierarchy or by enlarging their production and trade. While many *jula* lost connections in Guinea and other African traders faced new competition from foreigners, it appears that those who dealt in indigenous commodities, such as cattle, kola, and rice, and even some cash crop exports, often were able to maintain or enlarge their businesses until about the First World War, as demand in Freetown and elsewhere grew.⁵⁵ From the mid 'teens, however, Syrians took hold of the higher levels of kola exporting and rice wholesaling and retailing. Mandespeakers and others continued to do well in the kola business around certain towns such as Makeni.⁵⁶

Although colonial authorities undermined the political support for Islam that had been provided by the great *almamates* in Futa and the upper Niger and hindered the cross-border commercial connections between Guinea and Sierra Leone, Islam was strengthened in northern Sierra Leone and in the colony as a whole. Conversion and increased immigration, especially from Futa Jalon, added significantly to the number of Muslims in the region. People built more mosques and schools, and they further institutionalized communities, especially in Freetown. Muslims created more dense networks within the northwest and more extensive ones in Sierra Leone overall. If the rail brought the formation of a new hierarchical, dendritic spatial pattern, extensive networks among Muslims preserved more of the multi-centric, horizontal qualities of the past. Most important for their capacity to shape social and cultural space, Muslims were able to maintain and enhance networks that cut across imposed chiefdom, district, and colonial boundaries in the fluid fashion of the precolonial era. By moving from Kambia to Bo, sending a boy to be trained in Kankan, serving as a leader of a women's *jamat* in a Freetown "ethnic" mosque, setting up a kola business in Makeni,

⁵⁵ The complex chronology of the rise and decline in African participation in the various commercial sectors is charted in Howard (in preparation).

⁵⁶ For information on Syrians gaining property leases in the rail and river towns, see SLA/Gov. Desp to S.O.S. 10 May, 1916 and SLA/Port Loko ID 1920, leases 1921–1925; for discussions of Syrian replacement of Krio and European buyers and suppliers, Howard interviews with Pa Suba Kabbia and others, Magbeli, 1 April, 1968 and interviews in Makeni.

allying with the new chief of the cattle traders in Bullom, learning English at a Christian school in Port Loko, or taking higher degrees abroad, Muslims shaped and re-marked on space locally, regionally, and globally (Harrell-Bond, Howard, and Skinner 1978; Howard interviews with several people).

This chapter has attempted to meet a challenge posed by Michael J. Watts to apply the combined disciplines of history, geography, and anthropology to cases—and to theorize the results (Watts 1992). I have used, yet criticized, elements of spatial analysis that deal with material life and structures, especially central place theory. In particular, I have focused on the social production of places and regions by emphasizing the flow of resources into nodal institutions and along networks. Resource flows and spatial patterns took particular form because of cooperation and conflict among people of the dominant class, between that elite and those of lower rank, and among commoners. The chapter also has combined a material and social analysis with cognitive mapping by revealing how people perceived space in terms of individuals and families, events-in-places, and sites with special meaning. The forces of colonialism and Atlantic capitalism increasingly shaped spatial structures in the early twentieth century. Some changes connected with the end of warfare and the planting of an administration apparatus were immediate and universal in their impact, but many other effects were felt in a temporally and spatially uneven manner. Overall, the basic centralizing and network building institution, the household, experienced a long term loss of nodality; but in 1920, roughly the terminal date for this study, the abolition of slavery, with its profound impacts, was still on the horizon. The households of traders in indigenous commodities and of influential Muslim big men seem to have, on average, remained sizeable in membership and important in shaping space. Similarly, many such people modified but sustained their networks. Certain infrastructural changes that increased the primacy of Freetown, particularly improved port facilities and shipping, had been occurring through most of the period examined here, and people from the region had accommodated accordingly. The laying of the rail line altered space quite radically, yet unevenly. Some towns and settlement clusters saw a precipitous decline in centrality, and residents' ability to obtain resources fell accordingly. Even the households of elites suffered. But other towns were boosted, and the decline of their commercial notables from competition by large foreign firms occurred later, or not

at all in the case of some sectors like the cattle trade. Many of the greatest changes in the region came in the 1920s and thereafter, following the transitional era. With some important exceptions, it is incorrect to argue that people in the northwest simply responded to introduced spatial changes, in part because the evolving spatial patterns represented a complex mix of newer and older elements and in part because people continued to shape space. From their varying social positions, they made decisions in the context both of imposed structures and of spatial patterns and landscapes that they generated through local and regional social processes and discourse. People continued to re-mark upon space locally and regionally within a dynamic framework.

REFERENCES

- Agnew, John. 1993. "Representing Space. Space, Scale, and Culture in Social Science," in James Duncan and David Ley, eds. *Place/Culture/Representation*. 251–271.
- Bah, M. Alpha. 1998. *The Fulbe Presence in Sierra Leone. A Case History of Twentieth-Century Migration and Settlement among the Kɔ̄ssi of Koindu*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Barnes, T. J. and J. S. Duncan, eds. 1992. *Writing Worlds: Discourse, Texts, and Metaphors in the Representation of Landscape*. London: Routledge.
- Barry, Boubacar. 1998. *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Crowder, Michael, ed. 1970. *West African Resistance*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Denzer, LaRay. 1970. "Bai Bureh" in Michael Crowder, ed. *West African Resistance*. 233–267.
- Duncan, James and David Ley, eds. 1993. *Place/Culture/Representation*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Falola, Toyin and Paul E. Lovejoy, eds. 1994. *Pawnship in Africa. Debt Bondage in Historical Perspective*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Fyfe, Christopher. 1962. *A History of Sierra Leone*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fyfe, Christopher and Eldred Jones, eds. 1968. *Freetown: A Symposium*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fyle, C. Magbaily. 1981. *The History of Sierra Leone. A Concise Introduction*. London: Evans Brothers Limited.
- . 1988a. "Fula Diaspora: The Sierra Leone Experience," in C. Magbaily Fyle, ed. *History and Socio-Economic Development in Sierra Leone*, 101–123.
- . 1988b. "Indigenous Commerce and Entrepreneurship" The Sierra Leone Hinterland in the Nineteenth Century," in, C. Magbaily Fyle, ed. *History and Socio-Economic Development in Sierra Leone*, 61–80.
- Fyle, C. Magbaily, ed. 1988. *History and Socio-Economic Development in Sierra Leone*. Freetown: SLADEA.
- Goerg, Odile. 1980. "La destruction d'un réseau d'échange précolonial: l'exemple de la Guinée," *The Journal of African History* 21:4, 467–484.
- Grace, John. 1975. *Domestic Slavery in West Africa with Particular Reference to the Sierra Leone Protectorate, 1896–1927*. New York: Barnes and Noble Books.
- Harvey, David. 1989. *The Condition of Postmodernity. An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell.

- Hirsch, Eric. 1995. "Landscape: Between Place and Space," in Eric Hirsch and O'Hanlon, eds., *The Anthropology of Landscape: Perspectives on Place and Space*, 1–30.
- Hirsch, Eric and Michael O'Hanlon, eds.. 1995., *The Anthropology of Landscape: Perspectives on Place and Space*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hoffer, Carol. 1974. "Madam Yoko: Ruler of the Kpa Mende Confederacy: in M. Z. Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, eds., *Woman, Culture, and Society*.
- Howard, Allen M. 1968. "The Role of Freetown in the Commercial Life of Sierra Leone," in Christopher Fyfe and Eldred Jones, eds. *Freetown: A Symposium*.
- . 1972. *Bigmen, Traders, and Chiefs: Power, Commerce, and Spatial Change in the Sierra Leone-Guinea Plain, 1865–1895*. Ph. D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, Madison.
- . 1976. "The Relevance of Spatial Analysis for African Economic History: The Sierra Leone-Guinea System," *The Journal of African History* 17, 365–388.
- . 1979. "Production, Exchange, and Society in Northern Coastal Sierra Leone during the 19th Century," in V. R. Dorjahn and B. L. Isaacs, eds., *Essays on the Economic Anthropology of Liberia and Sierra Leone*, 45–61.
- . 1981. "Trade without Marketplaces: The Spatial Organization of Exchange in Northwestern Sierra Leone to 1930," *African Urban Studies* 11:1, 1–22.
- . 1994. "Pawning in Coastal Northwest Sierra Leone, 1870–1910," in Toyin Falola and Paul E. Lovejoy, eds., *Pawnship in Africa. Debt Bondage in Historical Perspective*, 267–283.
- . 1997. "Trade and Islam in Sierra Leone, 18th-20th Centuries," in Alusine Jalloh and David E. Skinner, eds., *Islam and Trade in Sierra Leone*, 21–63.
- . 2000. "Mande Identity Formation in the Economic and Political Context of North-West Sierra Leone," *Paideuma* 46, 13–35.
- . 2001. "Race, Capital, and Regulation in Freetown: Small-Scale Traders, Companies, and Officials 1870–1930," paper presented at the conference on "Contesting African Cities: Authority, Social Movements, Cultural Expressions," Rutgers University, New Brunswick, March, 2001.
- . 2003. "19th Century Coastal Slave Trading and the British Abolition Campaign in Sierra Leone," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, Boston.
- . In preparation. *Traders, Accumulation, and Spatial Power: Commercial Change in Sierra Leone and Guinea, 1780–1930*.
- Howard, Allen M. and David E. Skinner. 1984. "Network Building and Political Power in Northwestern Sierra Leone, 1800–1865," *Africa* 54:2, 2–28.
- Ijagbemi, E. Adeleye. 1973. *Gbanka of Yoni*. Freetown: Sierra Leone University Press.
- Jalloh, Alusine. 1999. *African Entrepreneurs. Muslim Fula Merchants in Sierra Leone*. Athens, Ohio: University Center for International Studies.
- Jalloh, Alusine and David E. Skinner, eds. 1997. *Islam and Trade in Sierra Leone*. Trenton: Africa World Press.
- Jones, Adam and Marion Johnson. 1980 "Slaves from the Windward Coast," *The Journal of African History* 21, 17–34.
- Lovejoy, Paul E. 2000. *Transformations in Slavery A History of Slavery in Africa, Second Edition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Nugent, Paul. 1996. "Arbitrary Lines and the People's Minds: A Dissenting View on Colonial Borders in West Africa," in Paul Nugent and A. I. Asiwaju, eds. *African Boundaries: Barriers, Conduits, and Opportunities*, 35–67.
- Nugent Paul and A. I. Asiwaju, eds. 1996. *African Boundaries: Barriers, Conduits, and Opportunities*. London: Cassell.
- Pred, Allan. 1990. *Making Histories and Constructing Human Geographies. The Local Transformation of Practice, Power Relations, and Consciousness*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Robertson, Clair and Iris Berger. 1986. "Introduction: Analyzing Class and Gender—

- African Perspectives," in Claire Robertson and Iris Berger, eds., *Women and Class in Africa*.
- Robertson, Claire and Iris Berger, eds. 1986. *Women and Class in Africa*. New York: Holmes and Meier Publishing, Inc.
- Rosaldo, M. Z. and Louise Lamphere, eds. 1974. *Woman, Culture, and Society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Sharpe, Barrie. 1986. "Ethnography and a Regional System: Mental maps and myths of states and tribes in northcentral Nigeria," *Critique of Anthropology* 6:3, 33-65.
- Skinner, David E. 1976. "Islam and Education in the Colony and Hinterland of Sierra Leone, 1750-1914," *Canadian Journal of African Studies*. 10, 499-520.
- . 1980. *Thomas George Lawson. African Historian and Administrator in Sierra Leone*. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press.
- Watts, Michael J. 1992. "Space for Everything (A Commentary)," *Cultural Anthropology* 7:1, 115-129.
- Wurie, Ahmadu and Elizabeth Hirst. 1967. *Rassin*. London: University of London Press, Ltd.

ABSTRACTS

ALLEN M. HOWARD AND RICHARD M. SHAIN, EDITORS

Chapter One: Allen M. Howard, “Nodes, Networks, Landscapes, and Regions: Reading the Social History of Tropical Africa 1700–1920”

This extended essay applies a wide range of spatial theory to middle Africa over a period of two hundred years in an effort to offer a new perspective on social history. The major tools employed and critically assessed are central place theory, node and network analysis, concepts of place and landscape, and discourse analysis, as applied spatially. While the study looks at the local and global levels, it particularly focuses on regions as defined interactively. Among the topics examined are: the dynamic nature of households and cities, which often were the primary centralizing institutions; the ways in which people created frameworks for spatial action through alliances and other networks; and how people mentally mapped and contested the meanings of places and regions. Spatial analysis is also used to offer new interpretations of the organization of states, to compare how residents responded to environmental crises, and to assess the role of violence in the maintenance and alteration of regional patterns. The essay concludes by looking at structural changes introduced by colonial rule and also at how Africans continued to shape space. It argues that spatial analysis reveals a long transitional period rather than a sharply demarcated colonial era.

Chapter Two: Jan Bender Shetler, “‘Region’ as Historical Production: Narrative Maps from the Western Serengeti, Tanzania”

This chapter explores the oral traditions of several small ethnic groups in the western Serengeti area of Tanzania as culturally grounded internal sources for recovering past “narrative maps” that define historical and shifting regions of social interaction. A study of regions over time presents a useful lens for perceiving shifts in all kinds of social identities as networks of interaction changed over time. In the distant past western Serengeti oral tradition defines an interactive region of interdependent farmers, hunters and herders spread over an ecologically diverse landscape. As the farmers became

dominant the narrative map of region shifted to one in which the crucial process of establishing ritual authority in relation to the land defined individual points of power controlled by various descent groups. By the end of the nineteenth century relationships to the west, along the shore lands of Lake Victoria, set the boundaries for a new region as western Serengeti people sought refuge from famine and raids, developing trade relations along the lake. The earlier image of the region characterized by reciprocal networks connecting individual settlements was finally superceded by the image of the region as a conglomeration of bounded ethnic territories in the colonial period. These various and shifting definitions of region over time demonstrate how oral tradition can be used as “narrative maps” to recover an internal perspective on how regions have been defined in terms of social interactions in the past. This approach allows historians to analyze the much more subtle and complex patterns of interaction in regional histories throughout Africa where there are no defining political hierarchies, discrete ethnic entities or central markets.

Chapter Three: John M. Cinnamon, “Mobility, Genealogical Memory, and Constructions of Social Space in Northern Gabon”

This chapter explores ways that clan genealogies and traditions indicate historical processes of identity construction, individual and group mobility, and spatial history in northern Gabon. The history of northern Gabon has long been portrayed as the ethnic history of Fang migrations and the encounter with Europeans. This approach distorts dynamic processes of identity construction and shifting dimensions of social space that do not easily fall into ethnic categories. Recent scholarship in both history and anthropology has sought to problematize ethnic groups as units of analysis and instead to underline individual mobility and the fluidity of identities and social groups. The present chapter draws on African history, anthropology, and the social geography of the forest in an effort to reconceptualize the history of northern Gabon during the turbulent 19th century. This approach, based on fieldwork in Gabon and Cameroon from 1988–1991, also relies on oral traditions and genealogies. These oral sources contain encoded social memories of individual and group mobility, shifting social identities, and the history of commercial and matrimonial alliances. Genealogies, which are ostensibly about temporal connections of descent, also emerge as vital maps of spatial relationships and trading networks.

Chapter Four: Christopher Gray, "The Disappearing District? Territorial Transformation in Southern Gabon, 1850–1950"

A critical historical question is whether or not European colonial rule destroyed African spatial structures. Christopher Gray applies the concept of territory to analyze the "district," which was the most important spatial entity in precolonial southern Gabon, and shows that outcomes varied greatly. Before about 1850, a district was a "functional region" containing villages whose inhabitants intermarried and exchanged goods. Alliances generated clans, and clan ideology facilitated relations between distant districts. With the growth in overseas trade, a marked difference developed between those trade-oriented coastal districts where "big men" gained wealth and power, and were able to impose territoriality, and those inland districts where people avoided engagement. As concession companies collected taxes and forced people to work, the old district structure provided a basis for resistance. In the trading areas, district leaders facilitated a transition to a modern, territorial structure in which an ethnic identity arose, while the inland areas, judged by the French to be "backward," disappeared. Or did they? Gray shows that residual elements lasted throughout the colonial period. Thus, physical location, actions by leaders, and the way people imagined identities shaped the spatial transformations.

Chapter Five: Richard M. Shain, "The Salt That Binds: The Historical Geography of a Central Nigerian Regional Identity"

This chapter questions two common *a priori* assumptions about ethnic identities: that they lack histories and that they always are spatially contiguous. The focus of the chapter is the Apa peoples of central Nigeria. All the Apa peoples were once part of the Kwararrafa polity. Kwararrafa was a state held together by a shared allegiance to a cluster of regional religious cults. Although the state radically contracted during the nineteenth century, the Apa identity associated with it survived and flourished. This identity in its spatial logic contrasted with other central Nigerian identities. It was based on an archipelago spatial model with spatially discrete groups bound together through a common history and loyalty to similar regional cults. The identities of the neighboring Tiv and Hausa speakers were constructed along different spatial lines. Tiv spatial identity emphatically embraced spatial contiguity while the Hausa identity conformed to a hierarchical central place model. The chapter concludes by examining the

Apa renaissance of the postcolonial period where the Apa identity has been the cornerstone of regional political movements.

Chapter Six: Jan Jansen, “Habitation and Warfare Strategies in 19th Century Mande: A View from the *Kafu*”

By connecting a wide range of sources (Mungo Park’s famous travel account, colonial reports, oral traditions, and geographical characteristics), this chapter aims to establish a framework for the study of the history of the region south of Bamako, a zone which may have been the frontier of the Mali Empire after its decay in the 17th century. Within a relatively small region the inhabitants had a variety of habitation strategies. In the nineteenth century, residents had to adapt their habitations to the increasing threat of war by moving to defensible sites and collecting together for mutual protection. Because of such shifts and further changes during the colonial period, village foundation stories are, contrary to what they claim to be, rather useless for reconstructing the past when assessed by academic standards.

Chapter Seven: Allen M. Howard, “Re-marking (on) the Past: Spatial Structures and Dynamics in the Sierra Leone-Guinea Plain, 1860–1920s”

This chapter focuses on northwestern Sierra Leone and neighboring parts of Guinea to assess the applicability of theory for understanding local and regional spatial change. Central place theory, if used diachronically, can show shifts in the relative ranking of towns and in the structural framework of people’s decision-making. Node and network analysis facilitates understanding of households and of the connections among people located in households spread across the region and beyond. Wealthy and powerful people used their households and networks to accumulate and exercise domination. Big men and authorities struggled over control of ranking towns, and developed different spatial patterns for sharing authority. Peasants made commercial connections in the major nodes in order to gain greater autonomy from those with power, and women and slaves sought refuge in British-controlled territory. Space was marked on the bodies of people, by events in place, and by discourse—by remarking on the past, people changed perceptions. Colonial rule reduced the importance of many, but not all, older centers and reduced the nodality of most households, but Muslim big men, traders and community leaders, were able to preserve some nineteenth-century spatial patterns and to generate new extensive alliances.

CONTRIBUTORS

John Cinnamon holds a Ph.D. in Anthropology from Yale University and is Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Black World Studies at Miami University (Ohio). He has undertaken extensive research in Gabon and Cameroon and is currently working on a project entitled “Narrating Equatorial African Landscapes,” which explores the intersection of oral traditions, history, resource use, spatial mobility, and competing claims to the landscape of the Minkébé forest region in northern Gabon. He has presented his findings in publications and at several international conferences.

Christopher J. Gray (1958–2000) earned a Ph.D. at Indiana University and was Assistant Professor of History at Florida International University at the time of his death. In addition to long research stays in Gabon, he served in the Peace Corp in Gabon and Senegal. He was the author of *Conceptions of History in the Works of Cheikh Anta Diop and Théophile Obenga* (Karnak House, 1989) and *Colonial Rule and Crisis in Equatorial Africa. Southern Gabon ca. 1850–1940* (University of Rochester Press, 2002), and he published in the *Journal of African History*, *History in Africa*, and several edited works.

Allen M. Howard has a Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and is an Associate Professor of History at Rutgers University. He has published widely on urban life, ethnicity, African trade and traders, and other topics in edited volumes and journals, including the *Journal of African History*, *Africa*, *Paideuma*, and *Mande Studies*. He is co-author of *Community Leadership and the Transformation of Freetown, 1801–1976* (Mouton, 1978) and was guest editor for a special issue of the *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines* entitled “Cities in Africa, Past and Present” (2003). He currently is preparing a book on traders and merchants in Sierra Leone and Guinea, 1780–1930.

Jan Jansen holds a Ph.D. from Leiden University and is Associate Professor at the Department of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology of Leiden University. He has published three

monographs on griots, Mande oral tradition, and the imagination of the medieval Mali Empire: *The Griot's Craft* (LIT, 2000), *Epopée, Histoire, Société* (Karthala, 2001), and *Les secrets du Manding* (CNWS, 2002). He is the co-editor of *African Sources for African History* (Brill) and of several bi-lingual text editions of Mande oral traditions. His articles have appeared in *Journal des Etudes africaines*, *History in Africa*, *Research in African Literatures* and the *International Journal of African Historical Studies*. His current research is among blacksmiths/traditional healers in the Monts Mandingues, and a monograph on Maninka sand divination practice is in progress.

Jan Bender Shetler, Biography received a Ph.D. in History (1998) at the University of Florida and is Associate Professor of History at Goshen College, Indiana. She has gathered numerous oral histories in the western Serengeti region of Tanzania, and an edited and translated collection of histories written by local elders was published as *Telling our Own Stories: Local Histories from South Mara, Tanzania* (Brill, 2003). She was recently awarded a National Endowment for the Humanities grant to return to Tanzania for more research toward a book that chronicles the long-term environmental history of the region, particularly on the borders of the Serengeti National Park. Part of that study appeared as an article in the *Journal of African History* (2004), and she also has published in the *International Journal of African Historical Studies* and elsewhere.

Richard M. Shain received his Ph.D. from The Johns Hopkins University. He has lectured in universities in Nigeria and Senegal and presently teaches history and cultural studies at Philadelphia University. He has carried out extensive field research in the middle belt region of Nigeria. His research interests include the shifting relationship between religious and ethnic identities in Africa and the role of music in helping create 'local' modernities. He has published in the *International Journal of African Historical Studies* and elsewhere.

GENERAL INDEX

- Abakwariga 249, 253
 Abubakar, Sa ad 11
 accumulation 117, 120 *See also*
 resources
 Adamu, Mahdi 11
 Adjaye, Joseph 79
 Afolayan, Funso S. 45
 Agaja, King of Dahomey 44
 age groups/age mates/age sets 48,
 63, 93, 96, 146, 163–165, 167,
 169–171, 285, 312n15
 agents, trading 65
 agency in space 35, 45, 263
 Agnew, John 27–28, 292, 302
 agriculture/agriculturalists *See*
 farmers/peasants
ajele 8, 93n35
 Akan 45
 Alagoa, E. A. 11
 alcohol, trade in 298, 323, 323n30
 Alexander, Pierre 191
 allies/alliances 105–106, 116, 215,
 292, 305, *See also* networks
 space-shaping influences 315–316,
 316n21, 320–322, 331
 colonial era decline in scale 343
 Allman, Jean 103–104
 al-Mauli, Suleiman bin Abdalla 90
 Ambler, Charles 63–64
 Amselle, Jean-Loup 95, 261
 Anene, J. C. 107n45
 animals, trade in 61, 224
 Annales School 263, 286
 Appadurai, Arjun 32, 214, 248
 Arab-Africans/Afro-Arabs 98, 105
 Arabs/migrants from Arabian
 peninsula 99, 190, 190n22
 archaeology 144, 150
 artisans (carpenters, masons, smiths,
 etc.) 98, 100–101, 277, 306
 artistic forms and styles, spatiality of
 69n27
 Arusha people 48, 96
asafó companies 100
Asantehema 45
Asantehere Kwaku Dua Panin 82
Asantehene Osei Bonsu 79
ashe 27
 Asi hunters 155, 157, 159, 164, 171
 assimilation within regional systems
 94, 96
 association(s) 38, 99

 Baba, Sheikh Sidiyya 127
babakerere 83
Bai Bure/Kibali 319, 327–329
Bai Farima 321
Bai Inga 328–329
Bai Simera 320–321
 Balanta 92
 Bamba Mbaake, Sheikh Ahmadu 127
 Bambara 300
 Bantu languages/speakers 181, 224
 bargaining capacity 39, 335
 Barnes, Sandra T. 70
 Barry, Boubacar 88
 Barth, Heinrich 7
 Basel Mission 100
 Bauer, Dan 73
 Bay, Edna 45n13
 Bazin, A. 261
 Bello, Alhaji Ahmadu 256
 Bello, Muhammad 85
 Ben Amos, Paula Girshick 70
 Berger, Iris 71, 72n28, 84n33, 86, 309
 Berman, Bruce 117
 Beti-Bulu-Fang 181, 183, 186 *See also*
 Fang
 big men/notables 41, 98, 100, 189,
 200–202, 205–210, 207n45, 212,
 212n51, 214–215, 225, 232–233,
 292, 304, 314n19, 330 *See also*
 chiefs, senior males
 households supported by slaves
 304–305
 networks of 225, 304–311
 rivalry, competition 199, 208, 225,
 318–325
 trade of 225, 305–306, 336, 344
 and colonial rule 343–344
 and spatial dynamics 225–226, 304,
 315–324
 Bilali, leader of slave uprising
 330–332

- biographies in place 291
 bi-polar/dyadic analysis 102
 Blyden, Edward W. 330, 332
 Bloch, Marc 263
 boats/ships 296, 298, 305–306, 336
 body, control of and place/space 27,
 124, 337–338 *See also* slavery,
 marriage
 Bokari Biro, *Almami* of Futa Jalon
 337
 Bokari Toure, *Almami* of Moria
 326–330
 borders/boundaries, territorial
 106–107, 171, 173, 271, 338, 344
 customs stations 106, 113, 338
 internal colonial 108–109, 113
 patrols 106–107, 338
 zones of interaction along borders
 342
 and ethnicity 171
 of kingdoms 44, 70
bori 68
 boundaries, social 34–35, 97, 143,
 154, 169, 171
 and ethnicity 107n43, 107–108
 Bourdieu, Pierre 210–211
 Bowditch, T. Edward 196, 196n31,
 198, 200, 216
 Braudel, Ferdinand 263
 bricoleur idiom 70
 British colonialism and policy 75,
 115–116, 121, 294, 311, 340
 African administrators and civil
 servants 311
 1898 war of resistance against
 British in Sierra Leone 328
 policy toward slavery and internal
 slave trading 332–333
 brokers, commercial/cultural 63, 98
 Brooks, George E. 61
 bulking of commodities 301, 336
 Bwana Heri 99

 Camara, Seydou 270, 276, 282
 camwood, trade in 296
canton 240–241
 capitals as sites 43, 80, 82–85, 91,
 120, 128, 320–321
 capital/capitalism 110, 112, 128,
 302–303
 capital accumulation/fixed capital
 investment and space 35, 302,
 305–306, 338–341
 working capital 306, 336n49

 capitalist farmers 119
 caravans 57, 63, 99, 163, 224, 236
 Carter, Paul 188, 188n19
 cash crop exports 344 *See also*
 particular commodities
 cattle/livestock 96, 117, 153, 163,
 296
 trading 340, 344, 346
ceddo 93n35
 center(s) (*see* city, node)
 center in relationship to center 54,
 59, 74, 109, 120, 301, 303 *See*
also central place theory
 center in relationship to surrounding
 area 302–303, 334–335
 clusters of 301, 340
 competition among 69, 71, 80–86,
 320–322
 dis-aggregation of 303, 306
 functions of 58, 300–301, 301n7
 meaning of 303 *See also*
 trading 42, 334–335
 and perception 66–67, 72–74, 87,
 292
 central place(s) 36, 55–59, 128, 142
See also centers
 central place theory 55–60, 300–303,
 319, 335, 345
 applied synchronically 303
 modified by application of network
 analysis 308, 322, 335
 Chagga 119
 chief(s) and titled office holders 42,
 44, 76–77, 82–84, 113, 116, 171,
 207n44, 211, 212n51, 214, 269,
 275, 279, 281–283, 315
 alliances with colonial authorities
 117, 240–242, 343
 colonial creation of 240–241, 342
 and spatial dynamics 76–77, 226,
 233, 315, 341–342
 children, as household members 116,
 306, 310, 315n20, 335
 as captives, pawns, *talibe*, wards 89,
 93, 96, 311, 315
 Chilembwe, John 126
 Chiwa speakers 183, 191, 191n24,
 194n28, 196, 198, 205 *See also*
 Maka-Njem, Mekè
 Christaller, Walter 57n19
 Christians 27, 101, 123–126
 Christianity
 conversion to 113, 124–125
 Coptic 73

- missionaries, proselytization, and space 240
 separatist and syncretistic churches 125–126
 and time 79
 churches and space 124–125 *See also* sacred sites
 Church Missionary Society (CMS) 103
 Cinnamon, John 6, 14, 29, 74–75
 city(ies) 36, 87, 98, 104, 120,
 126–127, 299 *See also* individual city
 names, capitals, centers, towns
 communities in 120
 coastal 104, 120 *See also* enclaves
 urban chiefs and headmen, 113, 120
 urban life and landscapes 90, 120
 civil servants 98, 101
 clan(s) 40, 83, 161, 171n1, 187, 25,
 191n25, 193, 201, 202n39, 215–216
 endogamy 40
 genealogy 192–193, 201, 215
 identity 189, 201, 213
 inter-ethnic clans 216
 in southern Gabon
 languages spoken 226–236, 240;
 names 224, 228
 facilitated long-distance relationships
 222, 224
 governing procedures 232
 lacked boundaries 224
 and trade/flow of goods 228–229
 membership 204n41, 224
 misunderstanding of 222
 origin narratives of 189–190, 208,
 215
 clan elders/leaders in Southern Gabon
 229–230
 class tension 98
 clients/clientage/clientship 83, 100,
 153, 164, 189, 201–202, 202n38,
 204–208, 207n45, 211, 214n53,
 215–216, 305
 cloth 230
 production of 118, 123
 trade in 58, 123, 298
 Coastal Corridor of Sierra Leone-
 Guinea 301, 320
 Cohen, David W. 11, 40
 collaboration, competition, and space
 formation 68 *See also* alliances, big
 men, centers, chiefs, families
 colonial economy, southern Gabon
 241
 colonies/colonial rule and rulers,
 colonial state 103–112, 171, 241,
 302
 administrative headquarters and
 units 108–109, 113, 120, 128,
 171, 240
 distinction of states and tribal areas
 107, 342
 imposed boundaries 35, 104, 337
 negotiation with Africans 103ff.,
 128
 and spatial change 75, 103–112,
 119, 128, 239–242, 302, 336–338,
 341–342
 colonization 186, 194n27, 213,
 213n52, 213
 Combes, Lt. 278
 commodities, production and trade in
 miscellaneous 119, 121, 216, 225,
 236, 241, 296, 334
 commerce *See* trade
 communication/exchange of ideas and
 information 70, 300, 314, 334–335
See also networks
 companies, European 11, 236, 239, 340
 complementary opposition 178, 180,
 198n3 *See also* lineage theory,
 segmentary lineage
 compound(s) 45–46, 304, 320
See also households
 constraints on spatial action 35
See also structures
 consumption/consuming populations
 299
 Cooper, Barbara 38
 Cooper, Frederick 90
 Cottes, A. 186, 201
 cotton 59, 111
 craft production 44, 46, 81, 271, 302
 Crampel, Paul 198, 198n29, 201
 credit, commercial 302, 306, 335,
 336n49
 Creole people and communities
 100–102
 cult(s) non-regional 71
 cult(s) regional 70–71, 246, 248–250,
 252, 255
 “culture areas” 71
 Cultural Studies 3
 Curtin, Philip D. 56, 94
 Cwezi 83
 daily practice 292, 303
 Danjuma, Theophilus 256

- dead zones between village clusters 228
- “deep” cultural beliefs 71
- decentralized communities 92
- defense works 91, 284, 287
- deity(ies) 44, 49, 68, 70, 72
- delegations, commercial and diplomatic 310–311, 314n19
- demographic change 58, 62, 104–105, 230
- Denzer, LaRay 319n26
- dependents/dependency 49 *See also* households
- Deschamps, Hubert 222n3
- desert-side economies 61
- de Sousa, Francisco F. 43
- development 119
- Devès family 98
- diachronic analysis 59
- diaspora 94
- diatigi See jiatigi*
- Dickson, Kwamina B. 10
- Dinguiray, *almami* of 314n19
- Dinka 94
- discourse
- about history/the past 97, 324n31, 325
 - about identity 97, 240, 242
 - about place and space 35, 125, 242, 291, 325
 - about regions 63
- disease 62, 92, 94, 104–105, 146, 163–164
- districts
- in equatorial Africa
 - institutional organization of space 221
 - translation of Western Bantu “ground” or “territory” 221
 - in northern Gabon 187–188, 187n18
 - in Southern Gabon (*bisa* and other words) 221, 232–233, 237
 - characteristics under usual conditions 222, 225–226
 - defined 222
 - differentiated under French 239–240
 - Ngosi districts 230, 240
 - Tsogo-speaking clans districts 231, 234–235, 237–238, 240–242
 - functioned as a territory
 - pre-colonially 225–227, 231–233, 236–238
 - locations 226–227
 - meanings of names 231, 231n11
 - misunderstandings of 222
 - names of:
 - Etavo 237
 - Ghesuma 236–238
 - Kamba 233, 235–238
 - Kele-speaking 224 *See also* clan
 - Mitongo 236
 - Ngosi 229–230
 - Samkita 224
 - Okandé-speaking 224
 - question of disappearing districts 238–242
 - perceived in terms of big men 226
 - transformation of 221, 225, 230–231, 239–242
 - and colonialism 232, 234, 237
- diviners 73
- docks, wharves, and facilities 302, 306
- drama(s)/rituals, and space 234–238, 294, 320–325, 337
- epoboué* war preparation 236
- drought 61–62, 104, 146, 163, 167
- Du Chaillu, Paul 198, 198n32, 228–231, 233–234, 240
- Dumbuya, *Almami* of Kukuna 330
- Dynamique 211–213
- ebandja* (men’s public houses) 230
- ecological regions/systems 61–62, 151, 153–155, 161, 163, 169 *See also*
- desert, forest
 - border zones 61
- Egba 113–114
- elder men and women 292
- See also* seniors
- elementary structures of space 186–188, 188n19
- El Hajj Umar Tal 85, 263, 272
- elites
- indigenous/ranking families 115, 314–315 *See also* big men, chiefs
 - “Western educated” 100–101, 120
- empire *See* Asante, Benin, Oyo, Sokoto
- caliphate
- enclaves, coastal 98–102, 113
- Eno-Belinga, Samuel 180, 213n52
- environment 61, 169, 171, 264, 286, 298
- crisis, spatial aspects of 61–62, 72, 146–147
 - environmental change 61, 163, 266
- Equatorial (African) tradition 181, 184, 213, 213n52

- ethnic boundaries
 fluidity of 94–95
 and clan boundaries 192, 201, 204
- ethnic groups/communities 34, 47,
 100–102, 142, 161, 165, 170–171,
 173, 314
 European invention of 107–108
 inter-ethnic alliances 189
- ethnic identity/ethnicity 21, 69n27,
 94–96, 191–192, 196n31, 215–216
 invention of and space 95–96, 240
- Etulo 245–246, 249
- Eurafricans/*metis* 98
- Europeans 31, 56, 95, 99–100,
 104–112, 128, 305
 explorers' accounts 189, 196
- Evans-Pritchard, E. E. 94, 177,
 180
- events-in-space/space shaping events
 53, 74 (see places, events-in-place)
- exchange of
 commodities/food/labor/prestige
 goods and spatial organization 63,
 70, 81, 98, 209, 222, 300–301
- factories/forts, trading and spatial
 patterns 42–43, 236, 298, 298n5
- Falaba Road Corridor 299, 320
- famine/starvation 104–106, 146, 155,
 157, 159, 163–164, 199n36, 213,
 239
- farmers/peasants 61–63, 81, 111,
 117, 143, 150–151, 153–156,
 163–164, 167, 169, 171, 239, 334
 and spatial organization/contestation
 307, 334–335
 carrying and trading commodities
 334–335, 334n48, 343
- Fairhead, James 30
- Fang/Fang speakers 183, 183n10,
 185, 191–192, 194, 196, 198,
 201–202, 204–205
 migration 190, 190n22
 origins/identity 190–191, 190n22,
 195n30
- Fardon, Richard 88–89
- Feierman, Steven 76, 146n11,
 159n36
- Fernandez, James 193, 193n26
- firms, trading *See* traders
- firstcomers 52, 153, 155–156,
 158–159, 222, 222n6, 263
- floods 94, 267, 280
- Folmer, P. 262
- food
 forced delivery of 106
 production of 59, 85, 104
 trade in 57, 122, 296, 334
- Fortes, Meyer 177, 180
- fortification 87, 91–92, 271–272, 282
- Fourneau, Alfred 198–200
- Freetown 100, 113, 126, 293–294,
 296–297, 299–300, 302, 305, 311,
 314, 314n19, 332–335, 338,
 343–344
 centrality of 302, 345
 ethnic (“Tribal”) headmen and
 notables 314, 316, 316n222
 migration of women, slaves, and
 youth to 332–334, 343–344
 and spatial systems 299, 302, 343
- French 43, 85, 115, 263–264, 269,
 273, 277–280, 282–283, 299
 colonialism and policy 99, 108,
 239–241 294, 342
 imperial intervention in space
 236–239, 338, 338n51
- frontier 153–155, 158
 “Internal African Frontier” 51–52
- Fulani/Fulbe/Foulahs 56, 85, 88–89,
 95, 102, 271, 341
- functional analysis 55
- Futa Jalon, *almami* of 314n19, 337,
 344
- Futa-Scarcies Corridor 299, 301, 320,
 328
- Fyle, C. Magbaily 11, 319n26
- Ga 100
- Gallieni, J. S. 268, 272–273
- Gbebe 103n4
- genealogies 178–180, 183–185, 189,
 192–193, 196, 201–202, 205, 212,
 215
- genealogical
 charters 185
 fictions 210–211
 idiom 179, 183–184, 188, 201,
 206, 208–211, 213–214
 knowledge 179, 212n51, 212–213,
 215
 memory 178, 189, 199, 204, 207,
 214–216
- gender *See also* women
 boundaries 71
 identities 121, 125
 and space 27, 73, 128–129, 153
- generation sets 63, 157, 160, 167, 170

- German administrators and military 105–16
 Giddens, Anthony 50n14
 Giles-Vernick, Tamara 185n13
 Ginzberg, Carlo 215
 global economic forces/level of analysis 54, 112, 115–116, 118–119, 128, 130
 glottochronology 183n10
 Gold, mining and trade in 57, 85, 89, 121, 242, 242n28, 265, 271, 276, 279, 296
 Gollnhofer, Otto 231n11, 237
 Gowon, Yakuba 256
 grain 90, 98, 115
 Gray, Christopher viii–ix, 3, 7, 14–15, 29, 32, 106
 Greene, Sandra 40, 72, 75
 Guyer, Jane 180, 180n7, 213n52
 Guinea, Colony and Republic of 29, 30, 48, 110, 269, 279–280, 287, 291
 Guinea, Portuguese (Guinea Bissau) 110, 122
 guns and gunpowder 92, 298
 Guthrie, Malcolm 181

 habitation 261, 284, 286–288
 Hall, Stuart 248
 Hamitic hypothesis 193
 Harley, J. B. 239
 Harms, Robert 208
 Harvey, David 25n4, 106, 258
 Hay, Margaret Jean viii
 Hausa 42–3, 56, 61, 68, 94, 107, 246, 255
 head of navigation town(s) 298, 301, 320–322
 herders 61, 151, 153, 155–156, 160, 163, 169, 171
 hierarchy/hierarchical
 administrative hierarchies 342
 non-hierarchical patterns 57, 69, 71, 80–81, 87, 147, 173, 335
 organization of commerce 110, 112, 142, 336
 organization of power 80, 128
 social relations/social inequality 54, 57–59, 65, 71, 207
 historical consciousness 193
 history
 invention of 74, 83, 107
 re-marking on the past 291, 303
 Social History 3
 and space 41, 129, 141, 179, 183, 185–186, 216, 291
 Hodgson, Dorothy 47, 67
 Hoffer, Carol 311
 Holy Ghost Fathers 240
 homestead 37, 154, 158, 169
 horizontal integration 81, 87
 hosts *See* landlords
 house(s) 37, 41–42, 65
 House in equatorial Africa 222n5
 in northern Gabon 187, 187n17, 1898, 205, 207–209, 212, 214
 in southern Gabon 222
 household(s) 37–50, 64–67, 118–119, 292, 301–307, 312 *See also*
 compound
 and accumulation 304–305
 bargaining within 114–118, 125, 304
 formation, expansion, restructuring 47, 65, 119–120, 304, 320, 341
 head of 47, 64, 116, 304
 labor and skills of members 304–307
 women-centered 67, 123, 304
 and colonialism 111–112, 114, 117, 125
 and display of wealth 65
 and gender ideology 67, 114
 and slaves/slavery 64–65, 305–306, 343
 and synergistic processes 305, 312
 of elites 118–119, 305, 320
 of traders 42, 64–65, 99, 301–302, 304, 314
 of warmen 329
 households and centrality/nodality 65, 114, 117, 303–304, 343, 345
 households and meaning/social perception 66–68, 117, 315, 320
 Howard, Allen M. 7, 13, 16, 29, 58, 66, 80, 222n4
 hunters 81, 150–151, 153–156, 163–164, 169, 171

 identity(ies), place, and space 68–69, 86, 92–102, 105, 125, 129, 142, 145–147, 154, 165, 169, 171, 173, 204–205, 207, 216, 237–238, 240–241
 regional 246–250, 252, 255, 344
 Igbo 68
 Iliffe, John 105n43
 Imbangala/Jaga 88
 Indians 109

- infrastructure, colonial 110, 294
 informal economy 120
 initiation societies 292, 304
 Bundu and *Sande* 311
 Bwété 234–235
 Poro 322
 Ya-mwei and Kono 235
 epoboué *See also* dance/ritual
 inter-regional trade 56, 65
 invention of tradition 263, 283, 286
 iron 92
 Islam/Islamic 22, 72, 318, 326 *See also* Muslim
 centers 292, 300
 Islamic governments 22, 84–86
 madrasas 123, 300
 mosques 79, 123
 prayer 73, 79
 reform movements 22, 84–86
 and slavery 330–332
 and time 79
 Islamic law 64
 ivory, trade in 198–200, 224–225, 236, 296

 Jakhanke 56
 Jamaican Maroons 100
jamana 264
 Jansen, Jan 5, 16, 91
jiatigi/diatigi/yatigi 306, 314
 jihad 254, 263, 270–271
 Johnson, Douglas H. 93–94
 Jukun, Wapa 245–246, 249
jula 95, 102, 302, 316
 households/trading firms 305–306
 and mental maps 314
 junior(s)
 kin 39, 64
 male 38, 47, 167
 bargaining with/conflict with seniors 96, 98, 117, 311–312, 334
 migration to cities 343–344
 networks 311–312, 333, 343
 resource accumulation 311, 333
 through being a warman 329–330

Kabaka of Buganda 43
 Kabba, Hajia 315n20
kafu 261, 263–264, 272, 275, 279
 Kamara 264, 266, 276–277, 287, 320
 Kamwana, Elliot 126
 Kanu 320
 Kanuri 61
 Kea, Ray A. 57

 Keita, Daouda N. 261n1, 274, 283, 287
 Kiisi 30
 Kikuyu 64, 117
 Kimbangu, Simon 126
 kin and kinship 21, 38, 49, 154, 224, 305, 312 *See also* juniors, lineage groups 40, 156–161, 163–165, 169–171
 lineage and clan 21, 154, 158, 169
 kin group *See also* families
 elders/heads 81, 160, 163, 167 *See also* seniors
 king (s)/ruler(s)/kingship 43–45, 72, 80–84, 98, 275–277, 315–316, 323, 326 *See also*
 individual rulers, kingdoms
 kingdom(s) 43, 70, 79, 120 *See also*
 particular kingdoms
 King Solomon and Queen Sheba 73
 King Leopold of Belgium 108
 Klieman, Kairn 183n10, 191n23
 kola trading 58, 89, 94, 121–122, 296, 335, 344
 Kolapo, Femi J. 103n41
 Komo ceremony 276, 281–282, 285
 Kongo kingdom 82–83
 Kopytoff, Igor 51–53, 222n6
 Kouyate, S. 275
 Krapf-Askari, E. 44
 Krio of Sierra Leone 100–102, 122, 300, 305–306, 311 *See also* Creoles
 Kru 100–102
 Kuper, Adam 180
 Kuranko 30
 Kwélé (Bekwil) speakers 191

 labor
 command of 38, 85, 96, 110, 117, 306
 forced colonial 106, 116, 121
 and space formation 54, 63, 87, 96–98, 302, 306, 335
 unions 121
 wage 65, 116–118, 121
 land 45, 106, 110–112, 251
 landlords 99, 269
 landscape 80, 313n16, 318–319
 defined 4, 29–31
 European appropriation of 106–107
 dynamic quality of 314
 gendered 67
 perceptions of social landscape 66–69, 74, 80–81, 106–107, 123,

- 126, 129, 179–180, 183, 192,
198–199, 205, 211, 215–216, 279,
283, 286, 313–15, 318–319,
324–325
- Lawson, Thomas George 324–325
- Leach, Melissa 30
- Lebanese 109
- Lefebvre, Henri 25n4
- Lewis, I. M. 71
- Liberated Africans 100
- life cycle 39, 66
- Limba/Limbaness 75, 97, 300
- lineage 177n1, 184, 184n11
- lineage ideology 181, 181n8,
183–184, 207n45, 208, 210
- lineage mode of production 178,
178n4
- lineage theory 177, 178n4, 180, 211,
215, 216n32
- local, defined 31 *See also* community,
household, village
- locality, production of 27, 179, 189,
208–210, 214–215
- Loko 300
- Lomnitz-Adler, Claudio 35, 87, 97,
142
- long-distance trade *See* trade
- Lovejoy, Paul 1n2, 58, 94
- Luo 29
- Maa/Maasai 48, 63, 96–97, 124,
146, 151, 155, 163–164, 167,
167n45, 171, 173
- Mabogunje, Akin L. 10, 56, 59
- Mackenzie, A. Fiona D. 64
- Maclatchy, Alain 241
- Maji Maji 105–106
- Maka-Njem languages and speakers 183,
192, 194n28 *See also* Chiwa, Mekè
- Malinowski, Bronislaw 178n5
- Manchuelle, François 97
- Mandala, Elias 112
- Mande 16, 74, 97, 263, 264, 266,
267–269, 272–273, 277–278, 280,
283, 287–288
- migrant settlers 327, 341
- languages/speakers 74, 95, 102,
300, 327
- world 74, 261, 265, 271, 278,
285–287
- Mandingo/Maninka 95, 300
- Mandesira 270, 276, 278, 285, 288
- Mansiya ([Bala] Mansaya) 269
- map(s)
- mental
- African 32–33, 75, 78–79, 107,
141, 143, 148, 171
- European 106–108, 143, 171
- narrative 75, 141, 143–145,
147–148, 151, 154, 156–157,
159–160, 163, 165, 167, 170–171,
173
- physical/scientific 9–11, 239
- mapping
- African mapping techniques 78–79
- Africans assisted European 78, 107
- European colonial mapping 106,
239, 338
- social 34, 47
- Maraka 65, 115, 118
- markets/market places 27, 41–42,
55–58, 68, 229, 255
- market forces 90
- market theory 55
- marriage, inter-marriage 39, 40, 47,
49, 70, 230
- alliances 195, 200–201, 203n40,
310
- defining districts 222, 234
- materiality and space 26 *See also*
resources, trade
- matrilineages 233
- matrimonial compensation (bridewealth)
195, 210, 212, 214
- Mba-Abessole, Paul 211n48
- Mbeere 63
- Mbombé Mondjo 236–237
- Mbot, Jean-Emile 191
- McIntosh, Roderick J. 12, 81,
266n7
- McIntosh, Susan Keech 81
- McKaskie, T. C. 82
- meaning and space 66–69, 72–73,
129, 331–332 *See also* place as a site
of meaning
- eradicated meaning 107, 239
- imposed meaning 75, 107–109
- medicine/charms 236–237
- mediums, spirit 71–73
- Mekè 194, 194n28, 204–205 *See also*
Maka-Njem, Chiwa
- memory, historical/social 69, 74–79,
144, 147–148, 184–185, 215, 279,
281
- remembering and forgetting 75–76,
144, 156–157, 160
- social construction of 75–76, 147
- men *See* big men, new men

- merchants 58, 98–100, 110, 120, 268, 303, 335–336, 340, 342
See also traders
- Mende/Mende-speakers 330
- mental landscape *See* landscape
- Meru 48, 96
- metropole, as defined by Kopytoff 51–53
- middlemen 188, 198
 and spatial strategies 228, 230
- middle Niger (see Niger River)
- migration 40, 58, 85, 92, 101–102, 114–120, 179, 185–187, 186n14, 200, 205, 299, 343–344
 migratory cycles 98, 101, 121
 narratives 179, 185, 189, 190, 192, 196
- migrants 51, 99–101, 104, 300, 322
- migrant labor 97–98, 101–102, 112, 116–117
- Mijikenda 39, 90
- military leaders 83
- Miller, Joseph C. 1n2, 87
- mobility, spatial 87, 183, 195, 202, 205, 207–209, 211, 307, 334
- models
 spatial 34, 54–59, 69, 69n27, 86–87, 300
 structural-functional 300
- modernity and space 240
- modernization 119
- Monson, Jamie 105–106
- Monteil, C. 262, 285
- Moore, Henrietta L. 39, 141n2
- morimen 98
- mosque(s) 41, 69, 85–86
- motor lorries 338, 338n54
- Mourambo Ngungu, *canton* chief 240–241
- Mouride *tariqa* 127
- movement through space 66, 92–97, 109–110, 113, 224, 230, 291, 299, 312
- multi-level analysis 26
- murran* 96, 167
- Mursi 93
- Muslims 27, 42–43, 68, 73, 98–99, 101, 125, 127, 294, 299, 322, 324n30
 households and networks of 305, 344–345
 imams/judges/shaikhs 42, 59, 68, 86, 99, 120, 316
 ja ama/communities 120, 316
 Qur'anic teachers and *talibe* 59, 85–86, 99, 300, 305, 311
- Mvet epic 190, 190n21
- myths of origin 73–75, 145, 148, 154n25, 155, 171, 173
- Nankoman (a.k.a. Konkoman) Keita 269, 282, 285
- narrative(s)
 of migration 74, 156, 163
 of origin 74–75, 148, 150–151, 155, 157, 159, 161, 173, 203
- nation/nationalism 102, 129, 171
- negotiation 310–311 *See also*
 colonialism, household, slavery, women
- network(s) 28, 37, 46–50, 63, 80–2, 89, 97, 99–102, 112, 114, 116–117, 119, 121–122, 130, 142–143, 147–148, 147n15, 154, 156, 161, 165, 167, 170, 173, 195, 224, 229–230, 290, 307–310, 327–328, 342, 344 *See also* big men, women
 changes over time 224, 308n12, 309
 flow of social and material resources through 224, 308, 312–313, 332–336
 horizontal/lateral 312, 333–334, 344
 marriage 49, 310–311
 patron-client 83, 89, 103, 120, 129, 170, 312
 religious 49, 123–126, 322
 typology of 308–309
 vary in extension and nodality 292, 308, 312
 and wealth and power 308–310
 of elites/notables 119, 308–311
 of peasantry and petty traders 309, 333–334
 of Muslims 311, 346
 of secret society members 311
 of slaves 330, 332
 of traders 122–123, 196, 198, 224, 229, 234, 308–309, 311, 335, 336n49
 of warmen 308–309, 311–312, 326–327
 of women 120, 122, 333 *See also* women
- networks and contestation in space 322, 333–334 *See also* other entries under networks

- networks and discourse, social
 perception/meaning 66–69, 97,
 312
- Newbury, Catharine 95
- Newbury, David 95, 146n11
- newcomers 45 (see strangers)
- new men 64
- Nguema, Isaac 207
- Njem speakers 194, 194n28–29, 201
See also Chiwa, Maka-Njem
- nodality 46, 114, 199n36 *See also*
 centrality, place, and particular
 nodal institutions
- nodal institutions 86, 101–102, 116,
 123, 303
- and network analysis 304, 308,
 312, 334
- and resource accumulation and
 investment 303–306
- Ntumu speakers 184, 184n11, 207
nyama 27
- nyara/signares* 98
- Nyabingi 72
- Nyigbla 49–50, 75
- Odhiambo, E. S. Atieno 11, 29
- Ogot, Bethwell 11
- Ogun 70, 123
- oral histories/narratives/traditions
 4–8, 63, 141, 143–145, 147–148,
 171, 173, 185, 189, 202, 263–264,
 267, 274–275, 279–283, 285–287,
 294, 310n13, 312n15, 313–314n17,
 315n20, 324, 333n47, 336n49
- origins 63, 70
- orisha* 68, 70, 123
- Orza de Reichenberg, Capt. 284
oyo mesi 44
- Pa Conditto Fofana 314n17
- palace, royal 43–44, 49, 275–276
- palm kernels and oil, collection and
 trade in 90, 239, 296, 335
- Park, Mungo 7, 263–265, 268–269,
 271, 273, 276–277, 284–285, 288
- Parti Démocratique Gabonais (PDG)
 211
- pastoralism(ists) 47, 63, 93, 163 167
- patrilineal/patrilineage 100, 165, 167,
 169
- patrilineal society 216
- patrilineal system 183
- patron 89, 202, 207–208
See also big men
- patron-client ties *See* networks
- pawning/pledging 309
- peanuts, trade in 89, 296
- peasants 112, 116, 118
- perception(s)
 of places and regions in terms of
 people and families 66, 225,
 241, 292, 313, 313n16, 318–325
 of events in places 313, 322–325
 of physical and social space 222
- Person, Yves 276, 278–279
- Piel, Margaret 59
- pilots 100, 302
- place(s) *See also* center, household,
 perception, specific cities and towns
 conceptualizing place 26–27, 292,
 302, 345
 as a locus of social action and
 practice 26–27, 42, 292
 as a location of contestation 27,
 38, 292, 331–332
 as a repository of contested memory
 28, 74, 303, 324–325
 as a site of social reproduction
 26, 38, 303, 306
 as a site with meaning 4–5, 26,
 66, 69, 128–129, 156–160, 163,
 292, 303
 discourse about places and events-in-
 places 26, 291–292, 294, 303,
 324
 people-in-places 26, 291–292, 294,
 313–315, 330–332
- plantations 65, 89, 115
- platforms for action 26, 129–130 *See*
also center, network, place
- poisoning, poison ordeals 230
- population *See* demographics
- port(s) 99–100, 109, 302
- porters 65, 89–90, 99, 298
- Pourtier, Roland 186–187, 188n19
- Portuguese 43, 88, 111
- poverty 89
- power
 ideological 52
 points 80
 social 36, 89
 and space 52, 63, 113, 230, 291,
 303, 303, 343
- Pratt, Mary Louise 8, 106
- Pred, Allan 50, 54, 141n2, 258, 291,
 3–7n11
- priests/priestesses 71–72
- production 46, 89, 299

- prophets/prophetesses/prophesy 71,
 87, 146, 153, 158, 170
 Pudup, Mary 143
 "pygmies" (becü, bayaga) 190–193,
 191n23

 quarter(s) of towns and cities
 See sections
 queen mothers 45

 Raponda-Walker, André 233, 235,
 240
 race and ethnicity 99, 109, 125
 raids and raiding 63, 87–88, 91, 96,
 146, 155, 163–164, 167, 189, 209,
 215, 271
 railroads 99, 108–109, 113–114, 119,
 119n48, 338, 344–345
 rainforest 37, 47
 Ranoké, Azonda 224
 Rashid, Ismail 330
 Ray, Benjamin C. 76
 region(s)
 colonial modification of 107–112
 conceptualized 6, 12, 31–33,
 50–54, 87, 142–144, 148, 170,
 173, 205, 221n2
 formal region defined and theorized
 32, 221, 295, 338 *See also*
 territoriality
 functional region
 defined and theorized 32, 69–72,
 74, 83, 95, 101, 111, 118–119,
 222n4, 295
 examples 48, 64–65, 70–72,
 85–86, 156, 163, 222, 224, 295,
 312–313, 335
 converted to formal 225–226
 macro- 35, 295, 299
 sub- 291, 313, 322
 and meaning/identity 69–72,
 86–87, 92–98, 126, 129, 170–173,
 286–287
 and social formations 95–96
 regional dynamics 50, 53–58, 63, 71,
 102, 115, 118–119, 126–130, 167,
 170, 205, 291–292, 321–323,
 345–346
 regional system, location in 64, 114,
 142, 154, 163–164, 170–171
 religion and space 49–50, 69–74,
 124–127, 292, 322, 326–327
 reproduction, social 46–47 *See also*
 households, networks, places

 resources
 material 38, 47, 81, 89, 105, 325
 human 38, 89, 332, 335 *See also*
 kin, slaves
 resources and space-formation 27, 63,
 89, 113, 170, 302–305, 309–310,
 312–313, 345
ribat 86
 rice production and trade 92, 334,
 344
 ritual 27, 45, 156–157, 159–160,
 169–171, 236 *See also* drama/ritual
 and space
 rivers and space 108, 224, 226, 229,
 301 *See also* specific rivers
 roads/routes 59, 63–64, 99, 108–109,
 119, 119n48, 121, 189, 196, 198,
 198n34, 199n 35, 224, 269–270,
 276–278, 298–299, 320–322, 331,
 338, 340
 Roberts, Richard 261
 Robertson, Claire 309
 Robinson, David 127, 273
 Royal Niger Company 115
 Rozman, Gilbert 57
 rubber, extraction and trade in 121,
 199–200, 225, 236, 239

 Sack, Robert David 25n4, 32, 83, 86,
 225
 sacred sites 69, 72, 84, 123–125, 158,
 281
 Sada, Pius 59
 Salleé, Pierre 242
 salt, trade in 58, 295, 224, 234, 334
 Samori Toure, *Almami* 263, 277–279,
 281, 336, 341
 Sanaga-Ntem region, speakers 181,
 183–185, 186n13, 197, 215
Saro 101–102
 Sattan Lahai 317, 321
 Sattan Lahai I 310, 318–319, 321
 Sattan Lahai II 319, 310
 Sautter, Gilles 221, 242
 scale 31, 142, 161, 169, 171
 Scheffler, Harold 181n7, 216n54
 Schmidt, Elizabeth 89
 schools/schooling 79, 114, 123
 sections of towns and cities 42–4,
 68, 99, 119–120, 292, 294, 320
 segmentary lineage/models/societies
 177–178, 178n3, 180, 183–184 *See*
 also lineage
 Segou, *almami* of 314n19

- senior males
 alliances with colonial authorities
 114, 116
 control over/bargaining with juniors
 40, 96, 116–117, 129, 335
 and space 310, 332, 335, 337
 Serakuli 314n19
 settlement(s) 41, 47, 52, 58, 91, 232,
 271, 279, 281, 284–285, 292, 300,
 315 *See also* centers, towns
 Shain, Richard M. 5, 15, 17, 32
 Shambaai 76–77, 79
 Sharpe, Barrie 107, 342
 Shetler, Jan Bender 6, 13, 28, 62,
 75, 96, 141n1
 shops/stores 314
 shrines 27, 41, 43, 45, 50, 54,
 68–69, 71, 123, 318
 Sierra Leone, Colony and Protectorate
 of 291–292, 295, 300, 303, 306,
 310–311, 314n18, 314n19, 324, 327,
 332–333, 344
 policies 332–333, 341–342
 taxation 302, 336
 and space 303, 324–325, 336–338,
 341–343
 Sierra Leone-Guinea commercial
 system 298–299, 301–302, 326,
 338, 340–341
 Sierra Leone-Guinea macro-region
 293, 295–297, 322, 337–338, 344
 Simone, AbdulMaliq 25n130
 site(s) 27–28, 54 *See also* center, city,
 town, sacred site
 situational analysis 92
 Skinner, David E. 48, 312
 slave(s)/slavery 61, 85, 90, 93n35,
 198, 198n33, 207–208, 232
 abolition of slavery 114–116, 333
 escapees/freed slaves 90, 98, 115
 330, 332–333, 332n44,
 resistance 330–333
 and households/compounds 49,
 114–115, 128, 315
 and space 27, 38, 49, 90, 93,
 114–116, 232, 330–333
 slave-holding class 65, 85, 100,
 115–116, 330–332
 slave raiding 87–89, 106r44
 slave trade 1, 57, 186
 internal 87, 105, 224, 228, 333
 overseas 87, 98, 296
 Smith, M. G. 42
 smuggling 106
 social composition 180, 202, 204,
 206, 209, 215
 social contestation 27, 95
 social mobility 179, 195, 205,
 207–208, 211, 213
 social reproduction 27, 128, 303, 345
See also households, women
 social structure, concept of 50
 social stratification 292
 society, concept of 52
 Soninke 56, 98, 101–102
 Soyinka, Wole 11
 space
 agency in space 27, 163–169,
 188–189, 294, 316, 318, 334–335,
 343–346
 colonial restructuring of space and
 responses 107–109, 112–113, 128,
 171–173, 239–242, 255, 337–346
 African contestation over space
 113–114, 155, 163–164, 200–202,
 229–230, 235, 291–292, 315–322,
 325, 335, 345
 African cooperation to shape space
 233, 291–292, 304, 315–316,
 322–324
See also networks
 dramas of spatial order 104–105,
 316, 320, 322–323, 337
 social space 36, 113, 141, 159,
 165, 169, 204, 215
 space-time compression 338, 340
 transformed into place 37
 spatial analysis 21, 26, 38, 53–58,
 102, 141, 145, 173, 221, 225, 243,
 291–294, 300–303, 307–309,
 345–346
 three-level approach (local, regional,
 global) 3, 27, 345
 spatial division of labor 302
 spatial dynamics 37–39, 44, 49–54,
 59, 93, 104–108, 112, 229, 233,
 236–242, 292, 303, 315–316, 337,
 342, 346 *See also* history and space
 spatial patterns
 dendritic 344
 grid-like 94, 299
 multi-centric 344
 patchwork (of districts and dead
 zones) 231
 tiers of trading sites 335
 spatial structures *See* structures in
 space, elementary structures of space
 Spear, Thomas 48, 96

- specialists, occupational/ritual 80,
236, 305–306
- Speke, James 7
- spirits 73, 158–160, 163 *See also*
mediums, spirit
- stateless polities 22 *See also* individual
entries
- state(s) 22, 27, 52–53, 58, 79–80, 91,
100, 303, 315–323 *See also* kingdoms
and specific states
- status 92
- strangers 43, 98, 158–159, 342
- Structural Marxism 178, 178n4,
207n45
- structure and agency in space 26, 50,
54, 185–186, 291, 341–343
- Sunjata 264, 266, 287–288
- Susu 277, 300, 327
- Swahili 99
- Sy, Sheikh Malik 127
- symbols and space 68, 105, 124–125,
237–238, 241
- Syrian traders 344, 344n56
- system, global and regional 37, 73–7
See also Sierra Leone-Guinea system,
region
- tar* 250–251
- Tashjian, Victoria 103–104
- tata* (defensible enclosure) 91,
274–275, 284–285
- Tatoga 151, 155, 160, 163
- taxes 106, 114, 128, 239, 338
- Temne/Temne-speaking 300, 327,
330
- territory/territoriality 12, 30, 83,
85–86, 93, 108–109, 129, 161, 165,
167, 169–171, 173, 282, 338, 341
defined 225
for self-defense 232, 237–238
scale limited by administrative
capacity 233–234
imposed by European colonialists
239–242, 338, 342–343
to control goods and people 225,
232, 234
- time, concepts of 76–79, 161, 165,
167, 169–171, 173
and space 33, 73–74, 77, 3387
- title-holders and space 305, 318
- Tiv 245–246, 250–252, 255
- totems of clans in southern Gabon
224
- town(s) 36, 42, 56, 58, 63, 78, 91,
104, 119, 126, 240, 292, 301, 303,
340 *See also* centers, cities
and spatial patterns 291–292, 298,
301, 320–322, 340–341, 345
- trade 63, 70, 78, 104, 198–200, 206,
261, 270–271, 278–279, 294,
301–302
and space 108, 209–210, 232,
309–310, 322
- trader(s)/merchant(s) 27, 38, 56, 61,
63, 78, 94–95, 98–99, 112, 118,
188, 249, 253, 294, 301–302, 307
See also big men, companies,
households
- spatial strategies of 56, 94,
121–122, 224, 228, 230, 236, 314,
345–346
- trading firms 56, 63, 65, 301–3,
306
- trading allies/friends/partners 201,
22, 224, 234, 234n15
- transitional period (late 1800s–1920s)
24, 102–104, 171–173, 213–214,
234–241, 336–344
- translators 306
- traveling/travelers *See also* migration,
movement through space)
- “tribe”, misunderstanding of 222,
228
- Turkana 67
- Turton, David 93
- Tutsi 95
- Udzambugha (or Adzombugha) legend
190–192, 190n20
- Vallière, Lt. 268, 271–279, 281, 285,
288
- Van Binsbergen, Wim M. J. 70
- Van Hoven, E. 262
- Vansina, Jan viii, 14, 41, 47, 62n23,
69n27, 180n6, 181, 181n8, 183–184,
184n11, 187, 190n22, 207n45,
210n46, 213, 213n52, 221, 221n1,
238
- Van Young, Eric 6, 35
- village and local communities 30, 41,
79, 85–87, 89, 187, 204, 208, 222,
229–233, 240,
292, 333–334
spatial dynamics of 230–231,
233–234, 238, 240
- violence and space 87–92, 104–106,
236–237, 338 *See also* raiding, war

- wages/wage employment 108,
114–115, 239
- walls, defensive 91, 265, 268
- war/warfare 209, 210n46, 213, 261,
268–269, 271, 276–277, 281–282,
284, 287–288, 321–322
- civil wars 82, 85–86
- and space 87, 92, 235, 316n21, 321
- war leaders 292, 318, 325–326
- ability to shape space 235–237,
326, 329
- warmen/military/soldiers 65, 85, 87,
96, 325–330
- Wasalu/Wasalon 121
- Watts, Michael J. 61
- wealth 105 *See also* resources
- wealth in people 160 *See also*
households, resources
- weavers/weaving 99
- Webb, James L. A. 61
- West Indians 100
- Wilks, Ivor 77
- Willis, Justin 39
- witchcraft accusations 230
- wives 49, 310–311 *See also* women
- Wolf, Eric 183n9
- women 38, 40–41, 67, 84, 93, 104,
106, 123, 310, 315 *See also*
households, slaves/slavery, traders
priestesses, prophetesses and spirit
mediums 71, 73, 84
- women's authority, power,
bargaining 84, 114–118, 122, 129
- women's labor 96, 116, 118,
122–123, 333
- women's networks 120, 122, 310,
333, 343
- women's rank and status 38, 71,
314n19
- women's spatial options and
strategies 38, 40, 49–50, 64,
114, 310, 318, 325, 333–334, 343
- and slavery 38, 49, 115
- and trade 64, 122–123, 333–334
- Womunafu, Mukama 40
- Womunafu's Bunafu* 40
- working class 116
- World War, First 108, 120
- Ya* 250
- Yalunka 300
- Yews 50
- Yoni 300, 343
- Yoruba 43, 68, 89
- youth 89, 306, 333–334, 343 *See also*
juniors
- Zaramo 124
- Zigua 62, 99
- Zobel, Clemens 261, 266
- zones of interaction 21, 51, 53, 102,
342

INDEX OF PLACES

- Abeokuta 101, 122–123
 Abomey 44
 Adamawa 88–89
 Adar 61
 Air Masif 61
 Aksum 73
 Akwamu 40, 72
 Angola 87
 Anlo 40, 49, 72, 75
 Apa 15–17, 245–246, 248, 250–251, 254, 351
 Arufu 255
 Asante 45, 77, 82, 89, 122
 Asi 155, 157, 159, 164, 171
 Atlantic ocean 296, 299, 302
 Azawak 61
- Bafing river 272
 Bagamoyo 99
 Bake Loko 319
 Bakhoy river 272
 Ballanti 269
 Bamako 7, 110, 115, 263, 265, 268, 270–271, 276–277, 279–280, 285
 Bancoumana 267, 278, 281
 Banjul 101
 Bankumana 273
 Batkanu 339
 Benin, City of 44
 Benin, Kingdom of 44, 69n27, 70
 Benin, Republic of 44
 Benue river 245–246, 249–250, 252–255
 Bintanya Kamalen 266
 Biriwa Limba 97, 343
 Bissandugu 341
 Bornu 59, 94
 Bourbon and Reunion 111
 Brazil 43
 Buganda 76, 83
 Bumban 301, 301n7, 302
 Bunyoro 84
- Cameroon 88–89, 181, 186n16, 193, 195n30, 198
 Cape Lopez 224
 Casamance 68
- Central Africa 29–30, 56, 61, 65, 70, 87–88, 125
 China 57
 Coastal Corridor of Sierra Leone-Guinea 301, 320
 Conakry 299
 Congo 47, 87–88, 91
 Belgian 100, 108, 116, 123
 Congo-Brassaville/Moyen Congo 194, 194n29, 201
- Dahomey 42, 45, 70, 72, 82n32, 89
 Dakar 110, 120, 127
 Dar es Salaam 99
 Dihaou village cluster 233–234
 Dinguiray 85
 Dosita 269
- East Africa 29, 56–57, 61–65, 79, 83, 125, 154
 coast 65, 89–90
 Egypt 186, 186n15, 193
 England 100
 Equatorial Guinea 181, 186n16
 Esulalu 68
 Ethiopia 62, 73
 Etulo 245–246, 249, 253
- Falaba 299
 Fernan Vaz lagoon 229
 Fooladoo *See* Fuladugu
 Forodugu 301, 338
 Freetown 100, 113, 126, 293–294, 296–297, 299–300, 302, 305, 311, 314, 314n19, 332–335, 338, 343–344
 Fuladugu 270
 Futa Jalon 270, 295, 314n19, 318–319, 337–338, 344
 Gabon 3, 14–15, 17, 181
 northern 83, 179, 182–188, 192–193, 197–198, 202, 205, 208, 210–211, 216
 southern 106, 193, 200n37, 221–242
- Gabon river estuary 196, 196n31, 199n35, 200

- Gambia river 265
 Gbebe 103n41
 Gbilleh 300
 Gbinti 300, 301n7
 Ghana, Republic of 40, 57–58,
 See also Gold Coast
 Giriama 64
 Glehue 42
 Gold Coast 57, 109, 119 *See also*
 Ghana
 Gorée 3, 98
 Goromonzi 111, 118
 Great Britain 108
 Great Lakes 84

 Hueda 42, 44

 Ibadan 45, 83
 Ikizu 148, 151, 155, 159, 161
 Ikoma 148, 157n33, 160, 165, 167,
 171
 Ilorin 115
 Indian Ocean 87
 Ishenyi 148, 157n33, 165, 167
 Ivindo river 187n18, 192, 198–199,
 216
 Ivory Coast 122

 Jenne-Jeno 61, 81
 Jerijang 269, 282
 Jukun, Wapa 245–246

 Kaloum peninsula 299
 Kamale/Kamalia 269–271
 Kambia 42, 48, 293, 297, 301,
 301n7, 312, 314, 319, 321, 328,
 330–331, 338, 340, 342, 344
 Kampala-Kibuga 43
 Kangaba 263, 267–268, 270–271,
 273, 277–280, 285–287
 Kankan 95, 299, 302, 319, 341
 Kano 59
 Karene 341
 Karina 301n7
 Kasanje 88
 Kasse 328–329
 Katsina 59
 Keana 255
 Kenieba 278–279
 Kenieba-Congo 266
 Kenieto (Kenyèro) 269, 286
 Kenya 62–64, 117, 148
 Kinytakooro 270
 Kisongo 48

 Kita 27
 Koflatè 279
 Kolente river (Great Scarcies) 319,
 325n32
 Kongo kingdom 82–83
 Kooma 268, 271
 Kooroko 122
 Koulikoro 288
 Kouremale 279–280
 Kuba kingdom 55, 69n27
 Kukuna 330–33
 Kumase 82, 121
 Kuranko 30
 Kwango river 88
 Kwanza river 88
 Kwararrafa 15–16, 246, 248

 Lafia 255
 Lagos 101, 125–126
 Laia 318
 Lake Victoria 148, 173
 Lakoja 103n41
 Lambaréné 224, 229, 237
 Lamu 90
 Latin America 35
 Laminayah, center for escaped slaves
 331–332
 Liberia 110
 Luuka kingdom 40

 Mabole river 299–300
 Macina 289
 Magbeli 300–301, 301n7, 314n19,
 319–321
 Magbema 321
 Makeni 338, 344
 Malawi (Nyasaland) 110
 Mali empire 264, 287–288
 Mali, Republic of 122, 271, 283
 Malindi 90
 Mambroi 90
 Mandesira 270, 276, 278, 285, 288
 Mandji (French colonial post) 240
 Mange 300, 301n7, 340
 Marampa 300, 301n7
 Marakwet 39, 67
 Mara river 148
 Masimera 300, 320
 Massif Du Chaillu 228–229, 234
 Mbeere 63
 Mbundu kingdom 88
 Mecca 73
 Melikuri 300, 301n7
 Meru 96

- Mexico 86
 Middle Belt in West Africa 29
 Mombasa 90
 Moria 326–327, 343
 Mouila 237
 Mount Kilimanjoro 119
 Mount Meru 48, 96
 Mourgoula 272–273, 277
 Mozambique 111
 Musoma 171, 174
 Mvyoung river 187n18, 195n30, 204–205

 Nafadji 279
 Narena 263–264, 269–276, 278–280,
 282–285, 287
 Nata 148, 153, 155, 157n32–33,
 160–161, 165, 167, 169
 Nemacoo 269, 269n10
 Ngoreme 148, 164–165, 169
 Ngounié river 226
 Ogoulou, Onoy, and Wano
 branches 228
 Niger 61
 Niger River 263–265, 267–268,
 270–272, 278, 280
 inner delta 61
 lower 103
 middle 61, 65, 81, 115, 118
 upper 91, 98, 295, 337–338
 Nigeria 44, 58, 123, 143
 central 101
 coastal 100
 northern 61
 southeastern 123
 western 69n27, 115, 125
 Nile, upper 94
 Notsie 44, 72
 Ntem river 184, 192, 195n30
 Nupe 94
 Nyagassola 270–271, 273, 279, 284,
 287
 Nyanza district of Kenya 117

 Ogooué river 107, 183, 186, 191,
 194, 198–200, 198n33,
 Ogooué-Ivindon region/province 194,
 194n27, 203, 224, 229
 Ouenta 265–266
 Ouidah 44–45, 72, 75
 Oyo city and kingdom 70

 Pemba 90
 Port Harcourt 101–102
 Port Loko 42, 48, 293, 297,
 300–301, 301n7, 312, 313n17, 314,
 315n20, 319–322, 338, 340, 345
 Port Loko Creek 300

 Red Sea 73
 Rhodesia 111
 Rokel river 300–301, 340
 Rokon 301, 340
 Rokrifi 301n7
 Rowula 318–319, 328
 Russia 57
 Rwanda, kingdom of 72, 95

 Saadani 99
 Sahara 87
 Sahel 61
 St. Louis 98, 127
 Samaia 301n7
 Samalofida 273
 Samanyana 280
 Sanaga river 181, 186n14
 Sankaran 300
 São Salvadore 82–83
 Savi 44
 Segou 263, 268, 270, 273, 275, 278,
 288, 314n19
 Senegal 127, 265
 Senegal river 98, 270
 Senegambia 29, 122 *See also* Senegal
 Serengeti 13–14, 62–62, 143, 148,
 151, 153, 155, 167, 171, 173
 Shambaai 76
 Siaya 29
 Sierra Leone, northwest 295–296,
 298, 314–325, 337–342
 Siby 263–269, 271–272, 274,
 276–277, 281–285
 Sibydooloo 269
 Sierra Leone, Republic of/present area
 of 29, 48, 58, 75, 89, 94, 100–102,
 107, 122, 341–342, 344
 Sierra Leone-Guinea plain 291–292,
 295, 295n3
 Sierra Leone peninsula 295
 Sierra Leone river 319
 Sikasso 279
 Sitakoto 273
 Sokoto town and caliphate 5, 58, 85,
 115, 252, 258
 Somaliland 90
 Sonjo 151, 171
 Soudan/Sudan/Sudanic 61, 94, 107,
 263, 271, 273
 South Africa 111

- Southern Africa 61
Sudan *See* Soudan
Sukuma 155, 163, 171
Swahili coast 99 *See also* East coast
- Tabon 267, 276–277
Taita 117
Tanzania 39, 62, 124, 141
Tatoga 151, 155, 160, 163
Tigre 73
Togo, Republic of 40, 44, 72, 108
Touba 127
- Uganda 72, 107–108, 12
United States 56
Upper Guinea Coast 29
- West Africa 29, 56, 79, 83, 88–90,
98–99, 123, 125, 296
Whydah *See* Ouidah
Wonda 265–266, 279, 271
- Zaire river 208
Zanzibar 65, 90, 115
Zaria 59