Gary Y. Okihiro, ed.
In Resistance: Studies in African, Caribbean, and Afro-American History
Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts P, 1986

6

Fugitive Slaves: Resistance to Slavery in the Sokoto Caliphate

PAUL E. LOVEJOY

Resistance and Property

The contradictions inherent in slavery offered slaves the opportunity to resist their subjugation; foremost of these contradictions was that slaves were both chattel and human.* In theory slaves lacked control over their selves; they were exposed to coercion that could be used at will; their labor was at the complete disposal of their masters; they were denied the right to their own sexuality (and by extension, to their own reproductive capacities). Orlando Patterson has characterized this powerlessness of slaves as a form of "social death"[1]—slaves were outsiders, aliens by definition. Masters could grant their slaves limited rights, which could provide a semblance of choice, individuality, or privilege for particular slaves in specific situations (hence slaves could be generals, court officials, concubines who were exempt from most household work, and so on), but the underlying characteristic of slavery remained the same. In most places and at most times, slaves were property: They could be bought and sold, bequeathed, inherited, used as collateral or otherwise exploited for their monetary value.

The property nexus was so fundamental to slavery that slaves discovered that they could use their chattel state as a weapon against their masters. Resistance,

* I would like to thank Russell Chace, Martin Klein, Robert Ross, Richard Roberts, and Joseph Ernst for their comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

itself was challenged. This distinction offers a useful comparison for the history of slave resistance in the Sokoto Caliphate, and perhaps other parts of Africa too. The central Sudan also underwent a transition in the nature of resistance to slavery. When slavery was recognized in the Islamic ideology of the caliphate, it became possible for slaves to justify resistance on the basis of adherence to Islam. Ideology influenced the actions of slaves in a manner that was different from earlier periods in the northern savanna. Escape to the ranks of Muslims—whether in the *jihad* or in subsequent millennial movements that challenged the caliphate—became an acceptable response to slavery, acceptable, that is, to those encouraging such flight. Muslim slaves who responded to Usman dan Fodio's appeal, the Liptako slave soldiers who were promised their freedom, and the Isawa converts in Ningi had a common grievance. Their loyalty to Islam, as they defined it, was a legitimate reason for their freedom, and flight enabled them to realize that freedom.

Fugitives often joined existing communities that were opposed to the caliphate, in some cases old ethnic groups that had to defend themselves against slave raids and in other cases new polities that had regrouped after the dislocations of the *jihad*. The fugitive phenomenon did not result in maroon settlements, in the sense that the term is used in the Americas. Rather, escaped slaves took advantage of the state of belligerency prevailing in a land wracked by holy war. By fleeing, slaves were choosing sides, but they were not opposing the institution of slavery as such. Very often their host societies were actively involved in slave raiding on their own, usually against the caliphate but often against other opponents too. Although the maroons of the Americas also raided plantations, sometimes seizing slaves, especially women, these raids were a survival tactic, not part of institutionalized enslavement for purposes of economic exploitation. Plantation America obtained its slaves through trade with Africa, whereas the caliphate generated its own slave supply within the central Sudan. Fugitives in Africa found themselves caught up in the larger political issues concerning enslavement, and throughout the nineteenth century—indeed earlier too—raiding, war, and kidnapping begat raiding, war, and kidnapping as reprisals. Maroons attempted to maintain their independence *from* the larger slave society; fugitives in Africa had to join communities that were trapped in a larger web of enslavement. The justification of escape on the basis of religious belief introduced a new dimension that was not fundamentally different from the older pattern. Slaves could claim that they deserved to be free as Muslims, but such legitimization of action did not threaten a social order based on slavery.

A second, more profound change came with the spread of abolitionist doctrines, and because this change challenged slavery itself, it represented a potentially revolutionary situation similar to the one Genovese has identified for the

Americas during the abolition era. The introduction of antislavery ideas can be traced to Hugh Clapperton, whose visit to the caliphate in the 1820s was partly designed to secure an antislave trade treaty.[47] This early mission had little effect; the caliphate was opposed to the sale of slaves to Christians anyway.[48] But later European missions, as well as contacts with other states in West Africa, North Africa, and the Middle East demonstrated to caliphate officials, if not to some slaves too, that hostility to slavery was a European trait. Still the encouragement of desertion must have been minor, despite the flight of some slaves to the model farm at the Niger-Benue confluence in 1841. The Mahdist revolt in the Turko-Egyptian Sudan during the early 1880s, which was a local reaction to the abolition movement and foreign intervention, may have alerted caliphate officials to the potential danger, but this uprising and antislavery agitation among Christian Africans in West Africa probably had only a marginal, if any, effect on thinking among slaves in the caliphate.[49] Real change only came in the 1890s, as the British, French, and Germans advanced inland, and the reaction in the caliphate came slightly later than in the western Sudan because the conquest of the caliphate proceeded later.

The imposition of colonialism created a revolutionary situation that slaves were quick to exploit, but the slaves were unable to transform their actions into a successful revolutionary movement. Massive flight, both by concubines and farm laborers, altered the nature of resistance, so that it is possible to talk about a "revolt," but despite the threat to the old regime and severe dislocation in the social order, caliphate society survived the transition to colonial rule. Because slaves could reestablish ethnic ties with existing communities, flight was a logical means of attacking the slave system without the necessity of much armed confrontation. The return of slaves to their homes and the recreation of ethnic communities by the Yagba and others dissipated the revolutionary potential of the revolt; the fugitives looked to the past for models of the life to come rather than seeking a new society that transcended their experience. The movement was ultimately restorationist, not revolutionary, which thereby facilitated colonial aims. Only when masters attempted to stop the flight or to recover fugitives did slaves react violently. Otherwise, the political vacuum neutralized the masters, thereby eliminating the necessity of fighting. Nonetheless, the social and economic structure of caliphate society was severely shaken. It took the concerted action of the British (and the French and Germans in their spheres) and the Fulbe aristocracy to prevent the complete destruction of the caliphate.

The fugitive crisis differed considerably from previous conditions of revolt and escape. Earlier actions had not threatened the institution of slavery as such. Whether rebellious slaves rose against the caliphate or whether they joined existing enemies of the caliphate, their actions only benefited themselves if they

were successful, and only they suffered if they failed. After 1897, the exodus enabled even those slaves who did not flee to improve their condition. Lugard's reforms tried to contain this struggle, but not without dramatically altering the terms of servility. It is difficult to assess the relative importance of slave initiative and administrative pressure in this process, for both were instrumental in the development of a new social order. Nonetheless, slavery was transformed.

The colonial regime and the caliphate officials who accommodated themselves to British overrule were terrified that the slave exodus might get out of hand. Fears were centered on millennial uprisings, particularly Mahdism, a popular ideology that was prevalent at the time of Usman dan Fodio's *jihad* and continued to attract adherents throughout the nineteenth century. Sultan Attahiru's flight eastward after the British march on Sokoto in 1903 was perceived in Mahdist terms, and it appears that slaves, as well as disaffected aristocrats and many peasants, joined the movement.[50] But this resistance to the colonial conquest only involved slaves indirectly and incidentally. The real threat came from other Mahdist preachings that condemned submission to colonialism *and* renounced allegiance to the caliphate government. Clerics with Mahdist sympathies were reported in a variety of places, and in at least three cases—near Garoua in northern Adamawa, in Djerma country to the west of Sokoto, and at Satiru, twenty kilometers south of Sokoto—Mahdism directly challenged the colonial occupation (German, French, and British rule, respectively).[51] Of these uprisings, the one at Satiru bears closer analysis, because fugitive slaves played a major role in the revolt.

The Satiru community was founded in about 1894 on the borders of four fiefs, and thereby beyond the effective administration of caliphate officials.[52] Its leaders were poor Muslim scholars engaged in farming and teaching. In preaching Mahdism, they implicitly challenged caliphate authority; soon they attracted poor peasants and fugitive slaves; some reports indicate that the community, which numbered an estimated ten thousand in 1905, was "nearly all run away slaves."[53] The ethnic composition of the community reflected this social background; there were virtually no people associated with the aristocracy (Fulbe). Instead the fugitives identified with humble origins (Zamfarawa, Gobirawa, Gimbanawa, Kabawa, Azbinawa, Arawa, and Katsinawa). According to Sokoto Muhammad, the Satiru leaders "encouraged the emigration of slaves."[54] Local tradition has it that "the leaders of Satiru abolished slavery and as a consequence of which slaves flocked to them. The freedom of these fugitives was effectively and strenuously guarded."[55]

The community refused to pay taxes to the caliphate, even after the British conquest, and because of the disturbed political climate in the early years of colonial rule, the Sultan did not dare even to try to collect taxes there. By 1905 the community was causing considerable unrest; neighboring villages were harassed, robbery was common, and Satiru agents were infiltrating the countryside. The only recourse was a frontal attack by colonial troops, with the open support of the caliphate aristocracy. Thousands of people were killed, and the captured women and children were distributed among the aristocracy in a thinly disguised measure designed to re-establish the authority of masters over their slaves.[56]

The incidence of escape—whether in its revolutionary form at Satiru or its restorationist form elsewhere—serves as an indicator of the progress of this revolt, just as the success of the reforms introduced by Lugard demonstrates the extent to which the British regime was able to prevent the revolt from becoming a revolution. The colonial forces served as a catalyst for the revolt; it is no coincidence that the exodus of slaves increased immediately after the conquest. Although colonial officials realized that "the inauguration of British rule has had the unavoidable effect of disorganizing to some extent the social relations previously existing,"[57] resistance itself was largely an internal affair between slaves and masters. The British knew that many slaves would run; indeed it was "inevitable that large numbers should have done so."[58] The fifty-five thousand slaves freed through the courts by 1917 represented the success of the containment policy; this was clearly a major factor in preventing the spread of revolutionary doctrines. The many more slaves who actually fled were isolated from those who stayed behind. Except at Satiru, there was little possibility of concerted action, and hence the evolution of class consciousness was undermined. In the end the British outlasted the revolt and thereby prevented more radical change; millennialism was curtailed and the aristocracy was kept in power. Colonialism had established itself as a paternalistic force, albeit dictatorial and repressive, and those slaves who did not flee had to endure more gradual change.

The colonial state assumed an ambiguous role in the events surrounding the collapse of slavery. The commitment to end judicial and political restrictions on the economy, particularly in the play of market forces, which would allow entry of European commercial interests, and the elimination of warfare as a means of resolving disputes and recruiting labor and clients instituted different principles of adjudication and power that invariably weakened the foundations of the precolonial political economy. The colonial state could not stop slaves from leaving their masters, despite efforts to contain the exodus, but the very attitude of the colonial regime toward the slavery issue was consistent with the generally passive intention of colonial ideology. European notions of social engineering were concerned with removing restrictions on access to markets, resources, and property—preferably without causing unnecessary social dislocation.[59]

This ideological orientation differed sharply from the setting for revolution

in St. Domingue one hundred years earlier. As Genovese has argued, the St. Domingue revolution marked the turning point in the history of slave resistance in the Americas. For the first time slaves articulated the ideology of a new social order, and to that extent they participated in the implementation of the principles of the French Revolution. Liberal ideals of freedom, equality, and liberty motivated slaves in a frontal attack on slavery as an institution. By the end of the nineteenth century in Africa, by contrast, these ideals had lost much of their revolutionary significance and instead were harnessed to imperialism as a means of justifying conquest and political subordination. Slaves seized the moment but not Western ideology, stripped as it was of its revolutionary clothing. The leaders of the Satiru movement consciously tried to establish a new revolutionary society based on an Islamic millennial vision that incorporated abolitionism. But it was easily crushed and most slaves moved to communities based on past relationships, or they demanded limits on the extent of their exploitation. Despite the restorationist quality of slave resistance, the exodus and the alteration in the status of slaves who did not flee contributed to the evolution of a new society, one that looked like the product of a revolution and counter-revolution. Only the revolution had been destroyed in embryo. Colonial society was indeed different, but slaves and former slaves were largely ineffectual in helping to shape resistance to foreign control and capitalist domination.

The experience of 1897–1910 in Northern Nigeria sheds new light on the collapse of slavery in Africa during the period when European regimes imposed colonial rule. The exodus of slaves in the western Sudan, analyzed by Roberts and Klein, and the turmoil on the Gold Coast after the British defeat of Asante in 1874, discussed by McSheffrey, had certain similarities to the exodus from the Sokoto Caliphate.[60] The revolutionary potential in each of these crises did not result in an organized and sustained challenge to the old order on the part of slaves, even though flight helped to undermine the authority and wealth of the former masters. The colonial regimes were able to resurrect the weakened ruling class, removing individuals from power but permitting the existing class structure to survive. The fugitives chose to reestablish old ties with kin and ethnic groups whenever possible, with the result that ethnicity rather than class was reinforced. In many cases, this choice restricted the possibilities that fugitives would benefit from the limited opportunities of the colonial regime. More often than not the homes to which fugitives returned were far from the centers of power and economic development. Yagba country, the Mada Hills, and other such refuges from the caliphate became backwaters in the tide of colonial change. Fugitives in the western Sudan also fled to peripheral areas and subsequently found it necessary to migrate to seek employment in the colonial sector. On the Gold Coast, the fugitives were closer to areas of economic

growth, but because they did not own land, they too were confined to a marginal status in the colonial economy.[61] These limitations on the opportunities for fugitives were important in setting the stage for a later act—the emergence of a working class and the expansion of the peasantry—but the revolutionary script that might have been presented in the early colonial era had a short season. After Satiru, the colonialists were left center stage to manipulate the ruling class, like puppeteers directing their puppets.

As the African data demonstrate, massive flight worked against the formation of a revolutionary movement; revolt too was similarly discouraged, unless, as is argued here, a large-scale exodus can be characterized as a type of revolt. Understandably, historians have sought out the highly visible revolts and revolutions, not the less-spectacular forms of resistance, including flight, because these actions are more difficult to document. Only when fugitives have created maroon communities has flight received the attention given to rebellions. All these acts of resistance shared a common characteristic—the destruction of the master's property, most dramatically displayed when slaves denied their master their own persons through the removal of themselves from their master's control. Flight constituted a sudden loss of property for slaveowners. Burned fields, broken equipment, and stolen goods could be restored, and even escaped or dead slaves could be replaced, but because slaves constituted such a major portion of the property of masters the acts of resistance that reduced these holdings were the most serious challenge to the authority and power of the masters. Flight increased during periods of political unrest or collapse, but, above all, topography probably played the most important role in determining the frequency and success of escapes. It may well be that there is a correlation between ease of flight and frequency of revolt; where flight was difficult because of the topography or the political power of the masters, the tensions that could lead to revolt probably increased. The extent of this correlation needs to be tested; all that is claimed here is that there probably was *some* correlation. The African data only establish that flight was more common than has often been thought; when flight was on a large and steady scale, organized rebellion was less likely and revolution was virtually impossible.

Notes

1 Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*, Cambridge, 1982.
2 Igor Kopytoff and Suzanne Miers, "African 'Slavery' as an Institution of Marginality," in Miers and Kopytoff (eds.), *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives*, Madison, 1977, 7–12.
3 Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, New York, 1983.
4 Eugene Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making*

of the Modern World, Baton Rouge, 1979; and *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*, New York, 1974.

5 I am aware that many slaves who ran away in the Americas stayed in the vicinity of their home plantations. In studying the fugitive phenomenon in the Americas, this factor must be taken into account. Less is known about the ultimate destination of fugitives in Africa, but it seems that most fugitives attempted to get as far away from their place of captivity as possible.

6 E. Adeniyi Oroge, "The Fugitive Slave Crisis of 1859: A Factor in the Growth of Anti-British Feelings among the Yoruba," *Odu*, 12 (1975), 40–53; and "The Fugitive Slave Question in Anglo-Egba Relations, 1861–1886," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 8 (1975), 61–80. Also see B. A. Agiri, "Slavery in Yoruba Society in the Nineteenth Century," in Paul E. Lovejoy (ed.), *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa*, Beverly Hills, 1981.

7 Philip A. Igbafe, "Slavery and Emancipation in Benin, 1897–1945," *Journal of African History*, 16:3 (1975), 417–424.

8 Richard Roberts and Martin Klein, "The Banamba Slave Exodus of 1905 and the Decline of Slavery in the Western Sudan," *Journal of African History*, 21:3 (1980), 375–394.

9 Ibid., 393.

10 G. M. McSheffrey, "Slavery, Indentured Servitude, Legitimate Trade, and the Impact of Abolition in the Gold Coast: 1874–1901," *Journal of African History*, 24:3 (1983), 349–368.

11 Frederick Cooper, *From Slaves to Squatters*, New Haven, 1982. Also see Roger Frederic Morton, "Slaves, Fugitives, and Freedmen on the Kenya Coast, 1873–1907," Ph.D. dissertation, Syracuse University, 1976.

12 See Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*, Cambridge, 1983, 246–268. Also see W. G. Clarence-Smith, "Slaves, Commoners, and Landlords in Bulozi, c. 1875 to 1906," *Journal of African History*, 20:2 (1979), 228, 231.

13 Robert Ross, *Cape of Torments: Slavery and Resistance in South Africa*, London, 1983. Also see Peter Delius and Stanley Trapido, "*Inboekselings* and *Oorlams*: The Creation and Transformation of a Servile Class," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 8:2 (April 1982), 232–235, 238, although Delius and Trapido describe resistance to a modified form of slavery.

14 A full study of slavery in the Sokoto Caliphate is being undertaken, but for a preliminary overview see my "Slavery in the Sokoto Caliphate," in Lovejoy (ed.), *Ideology and Slavery*, 200–243, and "The Characteristics of Plantations in the Nineteenth-Century Sokoto Caliphate (Islamic West Africa)," *American Historical Review*, 84:4 (1979), 1267–1292.

15 Paul E. Lovejoy, "Problems in Slave Control in the Sokoto Caliphate," in Lovejoy (ed.), *Africans in Bondage: Studies in Slavery and the Slave Trade*, Madison, 1986.

16 See *Bayān wujūb al hijra 'ala 'l-'ibād* (The exposition of the obligation of emigration upon the servants of God), where Usman dan Fodio cites numerous Muslim authorities to support his ruling that fugitive slaves were free if they fled to the side of *jihad*, and that free Muslims who had wrongly been enslaved could also claim their liberty. See the edited and translated version by F. H. El Masri, Khartoum, 1978, 117–120.

17 Murray Last, *The Sokoto Caliphate*, London, 1967, 14n.

18 Paul Irwin, "An Emirate of the Niger Bend: A Political History of Liptako in the Nineteenth Century," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1973, 155.

19 Robin Law, *The Oyo Empire, c. 1600–c. 1836: A West African Imperialism in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade*, Oxford, 1977, 258; also see pp. 255–256.

20 Hugh Clapperton, *Journal of a Second Expedition into the Interior of Africa*, London, 1829, 204.

21 Richard Lander and John Lander, *Journal of an Expedition to Explore the Course and Termination of the Niger*, New York, 1832, II, 71.

22 Clapperton, *Second Expedition*, 143–144.

23 Adell Patton, Jr., "The Ningi Chiefdom and the African Frontier: Mountaineers and Resistance to the Sokoto Caliphate, ca. 1800–1908," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1975; and "Ningi Raids and Slavery in Nineteenth-Century Sokoto Caliphate," *Slavery and Abolition*, 2 (1981), 114–145.

24 Joseph Paul Irwin, *Liptako Speaks: History from Oral Tradition in Africa*, Princeton, 1981, 159–160.

25 Ian Lindin, "Between Two Religions of the Book: The Children of the Israelites (c. 1846–c. 1920)," in Elizabeth Isichei (ed.), *Varieties of Christian Experience in Nigeria*, London, 1982, 79–98; and Irwin, *Liptako Speaks*, 159–160.

26 I am indebted to M. B. Duffill, who examined the Hausa text of *Asalin Mutanen Yelwa Kasar Chandam* in the Nigerian National Archives at Kaduna for this information.

27 Nigeria National Archives, Foulkes, Bornu Report, 1902, SNP 15/1 Acc 18.

28 J. S. Hogendorn and I are examining the end of slavery in Northern Nigeria, 1897–1912; a preliminary summary will appear in a forthcoming volume edited by Suzanne Miers, Richard Roberts, and Igor Kopytoff, and a full-scale treatment will follow. In the meantime, see Louise Lennihan, "Rights in Men and Rights in Land: Slavery, Labor, and Smallholder Agriculture in Northern Nigeria," *Slavery and Abolition*, 3:2 (1982), 111–139, although it should be noted that Lennihan considerably underestimates the importance of slavery in the Sokoto Caliphate at the end of the nineteenth century.

29 Michael Mason, *The Foundations of the Bida Kingdom*, Zaria, 1983, chap. 7; and "The Nupe Kingdom in the Nineteenth Century: A Political History," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Birmingham, 1970, 394–395; "Report of Sir George Goldie," encl. in Morley to Salisbury, 29 April 1899, C.O. 147/124, as quoted in Mason, "Captive and Client Labour and the Economy of the Bida Emirate: 1857–1901," *Journal of African History*, 14:3 (1973), 464n.

30 BIDANA 6, B 655, as quoted in Dirk Kohnert, *Klassenbildung im Landlichen Nigeria. Das Beispiel der Savannenbauern in Nupeland*, Hamburg, 1982, 91.

31 Ade Obayemi, "The Sokoto Jihad and the 'O-Kun' Yoruba: A Review," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 9 (1978), 81–82, 85; and Michael Mason, "Population Density and 'Slave Raiding'–The Case of the Middle Belt of Nigeria," *Journal of African History*, 10:4 (1969), 551–564; and "The *Jihad* in the South: An Outline of the Nineteenth-Century Nupe Hegemony in North-Eastern Yorubaland and Afenmai," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 5 (1970), 193–208.

32 G. W. Webster, Nassarawa Provincial Report, September 1904, SNP 7/5, 285/1904.

33 F. L. Lugard, *Political Memoranda: Revision of Instructions to Political Officers on Subjects Chiefly Political and Administrative, 1913–1918*, 3d ed. by A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, London, 1970.

34 Goldsmith, Sokoto Province, Report for December 1906, SNP 7/8, 1643/1907.

35 E. C. Duff, Annual Report on the Nupe Province for 1906, SNP 7/8, 1520/1907.

36 Jan Hogendorn, "The Economics of Slave Use on Two 'Plantations' in the Zaria Emirate of the Sokoto Caliphate," *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 10:3 (1977), 372, 382. Hogendorn's information is based on interviews conducted on May 27, 1975, with Malam Najuma and Malam Audu Goma at Biye.

37 Webster, Nassarawa Report, September 1904.

38 Mason, "Nupe Kingdom," 383n, citing A. W. Banfield, *Life among the Nupe Tribe in West Africa*, Berlin, Ont., 1905, 14.

39 Webster, Nassarawa Report, September 1904.

40 Mary Smith (ed.), *Baba of Karo: A Woman of the Moslem Hausa*, London, 1954, 67. Also see

Duff, Annual Report on Nupe, 1906; and F. L. Lugard, *Instructions to Political and Other Officers, on Subjects Chiefly Political and Administrative*, London, 1906, 308, citing Orr.

41 See, for example, Webster, Nassarawa Report, December 1904; and Lugard, *Instructions*, 145.

42 Lugard, *Political Memoranda*, 222.

43 Lugard, *Instructions*, 144–145.

44 As translated by Abubakar Sokoto Mohammad, "A Social Interpretation of the Satiru Revolt of c. 1894–1906," M.S. thesis, Ahmadu Bello University, 1983, 170.

45 W. C. Moore, Balala District, Reassessment Report, December 1917, Yolaprof G. 24, as quoted in Muhmud Madibbo Tukur, "The Imposition of British Colonial Domination on the Sokoto Caliphate, Borno, and Neighbouring States," Ph.D. dissertation, Ahmadu Bello University, 1979, 833. Also see Lugard, *Instructions*, 149.

46 Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution*.

47 Clapperton even told people in Kano about the slave revolt in St. Domingue (*Second Expedition*, 172). For Clapperton's diplomatic mission to secure the abolition of the slave trade, see p. 235.

48 Lovejoy, "Slavery in the Sokoto Caliphate," in Lovejoy (ed.), *Ideology of Slavery*, 213–214.

49 Gabriel R. Warburg, "Ideological and Practical Considerations regarding Slavery in the Mahdist State and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan: 1881–1918," in Lovejoy (ed.), *Ideology of Slavery*, 245–269; and Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, 249–268.

50 For a discussion of mahdism in the caliphate, see Mohammad Ahmad Al-Hajj, "The Mahdist Tradition in Northern Nigeria," Ph.D. dissertation, Ahmadu Bello University, 1973. Also see Mohammad, "Satiru Revolt."

51 See Ahmadu Bossoro and Eldridge Mohammadou, *Traditions historiques des Foulbe de l'Adamaoua, No. 3. Histoire de Garoua, Cité Peul de XIX^e siècle*, Garoua, 1977; Idrissa Kimba, "Les populations du 'Niger' Occidental au XIX^e siècle et leurs reactions face à la colonisation," Thèse de doctorat de 3^e cycle, Université de Paris, VII, 1979; and Mohammad, "Satiru Revolt."

52 Mohammad, "Satiru Revolt," 183–184.

53 Mohammad, "Satiru Revolt," 164; the quotation is from Resident Burdon, C.O. 446/53, p. 115. Mohammad provides considerable evidence from oral sources to support this claim.

54 Mohammad, "Satiru Revolt," 171.

55 Mohammad, "Satiru Revolt," 171, quoting Maidamma Mai Zari of Dutsen Assada ward, Sokoto, interviewed by Saleh Abubakar, August 14, 1975.

56 For details, see Mohammad, "Satiru Revolt."

57 S. Neely, Memorandum on Cotton, Lokoja, 25 May 1904, in F. Lugard to Lyttelton, 28 July 1904, F.O. 879/84, Public Record Office, London.

58 Neely, Memorandum on Cotton. It should be noted, however, that two earlier studies of the decline of slavery in the central parts of the caliphate minimize the importance of slave resistance. Polly Hill in "From Slavery to Freedom: The Case of Farm-Slavery in Nigerian Hausaland," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 18 (1976), 408–409, underestimates the fugitive question, whereas M. G. Smith in "Slavery and Emancipation in Two Societies," in *The Plural Society in the British West Indies*, Berkeley, 1965, 150–156, emphasizes the ease of transition from slavery to freedom. Neither Hill nor Smith explores the fugitive crisis, and neither scholar attempts to understand the evolving relationship between slave and master after British occupation as a continuing struggle over the terms of servility.

59 I am particularly grateful to Richard Roberts for his assistance in elaborating these ideas.

60 Roberts and Klein, "Banamba Slave Exodus," 375–394; and McSheffrey, "Abolition in the Gold Coast."

61 The Yoruba case is slightly different; Oroge concentrates on the flight of fugitives to Lagos, not elsewhere in the interior, and consequently it is not possible to trace the subsequent history of these people until further research is done (see his "Fugitive Slave Crisis," 40–53, and "Fugitive Slave Question," 61–80). Similarly, Igbafe explores the fugitive crisis in the context of British military policy, not Benin society as such ("Emancipation in Benin," 417–424).

in whatever form, reduced the worth of slaves to their master. Slaves could work more slowly than their masters wanted; they could feign sickness, misunderstand directions, cheat, lie, and steal. In all these ways, slaves thwarted the ability of masters to realize the full value of their property. Slaves bargained over the terms of bondage and thereby forced masters to temper their theoretical power. Because slaves were human too—not just property—they could and did transform slavery from a situation of powerlessness and "social death" into a struggle for individuality and personal rights. In practice, slavery involved a give-and-take between master and slave over how far the slave could be pushed and how much the slave could resist exploitation.

The incompatibility of the two dimensions of slavery—slaves as property and slaves as human beings able to struggle with their bonds—has long been recognized by students of slavery, although in recent years some scholars have begun to challenge the importance of property as a fundamental component of slavery. Igor Kopytoff and Suzanne Miers, for example, examine the institution in terms of "rights in persons," not property, which they consider a concept inapplicable to many societies.[2] Their approach, most recently adapted and expanded upon by Patterson, has emphasized the marginal status of slaves, whose benefits for masters are realized through the exercise of power. The present analysis, which focuses on a particular form of resistance to slavery (flight), reinserts the property element into the equation. As will become evident, some of the ways by which slaves struggled against their bondage struck at their identity as things, thereby reinforcing their existence as people, and it was precisely because of the challenge to proprietary rights that their resistance had effect.

As property, slaves often constituted the major investment of their masters, but as humans they could reduce the value of themselves as property. This chapter draws attention to this dimension of struggle through an analysis of slavery in the Sokoto Caliphate, the largest state in nineteenth-century West Africa, where slaves undermined the wealth and authority of their masters through flight. It is argued that flight was an effective means of destroying property because flight struck directly and thoroughly at the property element of slavery. Escape represented an absolute loss of property, and even if slaves were recaptured, their worth could be reduced because they had been fugitives. Slaves thereby could destroy value merely by removing their own persons from the control of their masters.

This point may seem obvious, but it is one that is frequently overlooked in the study of slavery, especially in the Americas. The more dramatic examples of slave revolt and sabotage are sought after, and it is thought that the absence or the infrequency of revolt and armed confrontation can be used as a gauge of the relative mildness of slavery in a particular setting. One reason that Herbert Aptheker sought to document the prevalence of slave revolts in the United

States was to counter this bias.[3] He reasoned that if slave revolts and conspiracies could be documented in large numbers—which he succeeded in doing—then he could demonstrate that slavery was indeed harsh, and even more to the point he could prove that slaves acted in their own defense. Where revolts were missing, the corollary would have it, slavery was somehow different, more benign, more acceptable to slaves themselves. Slavery in Africa would seem to confirm this interpretation. Relatively few slave uprisings have been recorded; yet the importance of flight has been largely overlooked. The evidence from the Sokoto Caliphate shows that fugitive slaves were a major problem. Consequently, this study challenges—indeed offers a startling revision—of interpretations of slavery by Africanist scholars. For students of slavery in the Americas, it serves as a warning that the study of slavery in Africa must be taken seriously for its comparative insights. Flight could be—and was in Africa—a major form of resistance, largely unconnected with the violence of armed struggle.

Slaves could sabotage property in ways other than running away; they could burn fields, break equipment, and steal crops and other valuables.[4] But whenever they undermined or destroyed their own value, they successfully twisted the fundamental contradiction of slavery around the necks of their masters. By manipulating their value as commodities, slaves invariably asserted their identity as human beings, even if they suffered as a consequence. Slaves carried out this attack on the property of their masters through abortion and other forms of birth control, suicide, and revolt, as well as through flight, but masters did not always want the expense of raising slave children and suicide appears to have been always less frequent than flight. Hence neither birth control nor suicide was as effective as flight, except perhaps on the personal level. Revolts were more dramatic than simple flight, but they were relatively rare and often involved escape too. Certainly in the Sokoto Caliphate and probably in many other slave societies too, flight was perhaps the most effective form of resistance against slavery.

Slaves did not flee because escape undermined their master's property, even though flight had that impact. Slaves fled because they wanted freedom from their bondage, and flight—desperate as such action often was—offered some hope that freedom, however tenuous, might be attained. Suicide, abortion, and infanticide, though even more desperate, also demonstrated the extent of the struggle involved in slavery. Although as effective in destroying the property of their masters, these more extreme acts registered the futility some slaves felt at the prospects of successful escape. The intention of slaves, no matter what the form of their resistance, must be distinguished from the impact of their actions on their masters. The most effective form of resistance attacked property, but slaves were not necessarily motivated by a desire to destroy property. Despite

the level of awareness of the effectiveness of their actions, slaves were involved in a struggle. They were active agents in the attempt to undermine their bondage.

Slave fugitives were an ever-present phenomenon in most slave societies, but their numbers became much greater during moments of political crisis, precisely when the control of the masters was at a low ebb. At such moments, slaves found it easier to escape, and masters were less able to attack fugitive sanctuaries. This opportunity presented itself whether the refuge areas were the Ningi Hills of Northern Nigeria, the Guyana backlands, the Florida swamps, or, for that matter, Canada or New York City. If masters could not pursue their slaves, then it was worth the slaves' while to attempt to reach safe territory. Even on small islands—Barbados in the West Indies or Pemba on the East African coast—slaves could flee by boat or raft. Perhaps there were areas in the southern United States where the degree of control made long-distance flight a difficult proposition, but the places where flight was almost impossible were certainly few. For virtually all places, the borderlands of slave societies were almost always an attraction to slaves.[5]

The geographical and spatial dimension of slave flight obviously has to be separated from a consideration of political collapse, whether the breakdown occurred during the French Revolution in St. Domingue or during the British conquest of Nigeria. In the Americas, both political and geographical factors have been in evidence though not always clearly delineated. A comparison with the African data helps to distinguish the relative importance of these variables. Despite the relative paucity of source material for the study of slavery in Africa—or perhaps because of that relative lack—students of Africa have to approach the topic of resistance from a different angle. It is easier to start with an appreciation of political collapse or the geographical potential on the possibilities for flight, rather than from an internal analysis of slavery itself. One result of this necessary, but different, approach is a greater understanding of the dynamics of the relationship between slaves and masters as one involving struggle. In the African context, resistance to slavery demonstrates that the oft-repeated claim of a benign institution—which is implicitly contrasted with the harsh regime of the Americas—is a gross oversimplification. Slavery in Africa certainly differed from slavery in the Americas, but the forms of resistance establish quite clearly that the similarities were far more important than is usually thought.

Slave Flight and the Colonial Conquest of Africa

The importance of resistance in Africa first became apparent in the identification of the fugitive slave crisis that accompanied the colonial conquest of Africa.

Political upheaval facilitated the escape of slaves. E. A. Oroge and Philip A. Igbafe, in separate studies of British penetration of Southern Nigeria, discovered that slaves seized the opportunity presented by the defeat of their masters to run. Oroge documented the flight of slaves from their Yoruba masters in the last four decades of the nineteenth century.[6] The exodus, which followed the British occupation of Lagos in the 1850s, was associated with European commercial expansion, Christian missionary activity, and the rivalry between the various Yoruba states in the struggle to establish political hegemony. Oroge's work is all the more significant because he has established what will surely remain a dominant theme in the study of resistance—the correlation between the abolition movement and the independent actions of slaves themselves to end slavery. Igbafe has examined the impact of the British conquest on neighboring Benin, where colonial forces occupied the capital city in 1897, only to find it deserted. In order to encourage its resettlement, Resident Alfred Turner offered slaves their freedom should they reach the city before their masters.[7] In this case, expedience removed the necessity of catering to the wishes of slave masters. The resistance of the slaves was used to bring the masters, with whom the British eventually cooperated, into line. Both the Yoruba and Benin cases demonstrate, nonetheless, that political collapse provided opportunities for mass escapes.

Richard Roberts and Martin Klein have identified an even larger exodus in their study of the massive desertion of slaves in the western Sudan from 1895 to 1908.[8] Indeed the scale of slave escapes was so great that by 1908 at least two hundred thousand slaves—perhaps many more—had left. Although Roberts and Klein do not do so, we may characterize this slave exodus as a gigantic slave revolt, probably one of the largest in history. Flight in itself cannot be classified as revolt, but the scale of this exodus indicates a social movement of a different order than simple escape or even marronage. As Roberts and Klein note, "slave labour could no longer be the basis of a productive economy," for "the departures weakened the power and destroyed the wealth of the richest families in the colonial empire."[9] Whether or not the exodus is characterized as a revolt, Roberts and Klein have correctly identified a major social upheaval at the time the French consolidated colonial rule. The full implications of their discovery remain to be studied in detail, but in the meantime it is important to examine other areas for a similar exodus.

Gerald McSheffrey has undertaken just such a search in his study of the fugitive slave problem on the Gold Coast after 1874, although he too falls short of labeling the exodus of slaves a revolt.[10] Again, the formal occupation of the Gold Coast by a colonial power—in this case the British after their defeat of Asante—set the stage for the turmoil on the coast. Despite British efforts to contain the exodus, slaves took the initiative in undermining slavery in those

areas closest to British outposts. Missionaries were a catalyst in this movement, and Christian communities received large numbers of fugitives—both slaves and pawns.

Frederick Cooper has provided the fullest analysis of slave resistance during the period of colonial conquest in his study of the transition from slavery to other forms of labor on the Kenyan coast and the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba from the 1890s through the 1920s.[11] Cooper demonstrates that slaves were active participants in the redefinition of labor relations on Zanzibar after the termination of slavery. Slaves became squatters, and the terms of their obligations shifted in their favor. Where once masters and slaves had struggled to define their relationship, now landlords attempted to meet their labor requirements through a combination of migrant workers from the mainland and former slaves who continued to live on the island. On the Kenyan coast, slaves deserted into the interior in large numbers; there it was necessary to encourage the settlement and migration of people who had lived immediately beyond the frontier of coastal, plantation society.

Finally, I have discussed other examples of resistance to slavery—many of these scattered in the literature—to establish a preliminary survey for various parts of Africa.[12] It is clear that in other places where the concentration of slaves was particularly high (the Niger Delta and Cross River area, the lakes region of Central Africa, elsewhere on the East African coast, and the central Sudan), slave escapes accompanied European penetration.

This survey has identified the imposition of colonial rule as one of the crucial points at which slave resistance exploded. Established authority was in abeyance; the new regimes, though not fully in place, were publicly opposed to slavery and the slave trade. Despite European ambivalence over the slavery issue, colonial officials were still committed (no matter how lukewarm that commitment) to liberal ideals that were incompatible with the political economy of precolonial Africa. Both the British and the French tinkered with the foundation of the old order, thereby eroding the basis of authority under slavery. Antislavery ideology was certainly not introduced uniformly or fully consciously; nor were its consequences even, but the collapse of the political order provided an opportunity for slaves to escape. Too little is known about the actual thinking of slaves themselves, but enough is known about their actions to assess the probable impact of events on slave motivation. Slaves knew the system was in disarray, and they ran. The correlation between the colonial conquest and the flight of slaves is clearly established as a major theme in the demise of slavery in Africa, although local studies will surely demonstrate the extent of the exodus and identify variables in the response of slaves.

The study of resistance has barely ventured beyond a recognition of the exodus accompanying colonial occupation, however. With the exception of Robert

Ross's study of slave resistance in the Dutch colony of Cape Town in the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, there are virtually no studies of resistance in Africa before the era of European conquest.[13] Even Ross's excellent analysis belongs to the literature on European slave regimes, despite the African setting. Nonetheless, Ross adds to our understanding of slave resistance in a way that is applicable to black Africa as well as to the Americas. Through a careful analysis of court cases and other documents, primarily from the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, he is able to demonstrate that flight was a common response among slaves at the Cape. It is instructive that the geographical conditions at the Cape facilitated escape; the large interior offered sanctuary even though hostile Khoi tried to intercept fugitives. Slaves at the Cape could flee by land because of the terrain—and also by stowing away on ships—far more easily than could slaves in many parts of the Americas. Ross is to be credited with the clearest statement of the physical and geographical factors in slave escapes.

The flight of slaves during the chaotic days of transition to colonial rule demonstrates that mass resistance can erupt when the political order collapses. It stands to reason that other periods of disorder provided opportunities as well. Invasion, civil war, dynastic struggle, drought, and famine could facilitate escape on a large scale, just as these same crises also resulted in the enslavement or reenslavement of people. Warfare and raiding were the most common means of acquiring slaves; economic dislocation associated with drought and famine frequently contributed to the slave supply too. In short the conditions for enslavement were often identical to those in which slaves could escape.

The Fugitive Problem in the Sokoto Caliphate

The problem, therefore, is to identify periods of rapid political change when resistance to slavery could have blossomed. Such an exercise must involve an examination of a specific historical context, in this case the nineteenth-century Sokoto Caliphate. All of the potential situations for mass escape were present: The *jihad* of 1804–1808 initiated a revolution in government throughout the central Sudan as every major political unit was overthrown; periodic unrest, including rebellion and civil war, shook the new empire, particularly Zamfara in 1817–1818; Hadejia in 1848–1863; Bauchi in 1881–1882; and Kano in 1893–1894; and droughts and famine, although not as serious as in the middle of the eighteenth century, nonetheless undermined the ability of masters to hold slaves. Finally, the colonial conquest, which began in 1897 near the confluence of the Niger and Benue rivers and lasted until 1903, was a period of particularly severe political instability.

As in most parts of Islamic Africa, slavery in the Sokoto Caliphate was a

complex institution that shared many similarities with slavery in the Americas but nonetheless had many features that were not found in the Americas.[14] These similarities and differences must be taken into account in understanding how slaves struggled with their bondage. First, most slaves were employed in agriculture, either on small farms in which they worked alongside their masters or on plantations of varying sizes, from those with a dozen slaves to huge estates with hundreds, even as many as a thousand slaves. Clearly the relationship between slave and master differed in these contexts. More slaves appear to have escaped from large holdings, partly because they were more impersonal and partly because the problems of control were often greater. Second, slaves were employed in craft production and trade on a large scale, sometimes working alongside their masters in spinning thread or weaving cloth but often working on their own, in exchange for providing a regular payment to their masters. Because of the seasonal nature of work, slaves usually pursued a craft or participated in trade in addition to farming. The acquisition of craft or commercial skills was an important factor in flight; on the one hand slaves were tied more closely to the local economy and society and thereby had reasons not to escape, but on the other hand acquired skills could allow fugitives to melt into distant communities along the many trade routes that crisscrossed the caliphate and its neighbors.

Third, slaves participated in government; they were soldiers, tax collectors, messengers, retainers, and administrators at all levels, from the closest advisers and high officials to the lowest stable boy. These officials included eunuchs and slave generals, whose identification with the far more numerous field slaves was minimal, to say the least. Many palace slaves had more loyalty to the aristocracy and the perpetuation of slave society than to the struggles of the majority of slaves. Fourth, many slave women were concubines, sometimes in large harems of as many as one hundred women. Prosperous men—merchants and government officials alike—took concubines, who were almost always slaves. Sometimes men married slave women, but more often than not slaves were confined to the inferior status of a concubine. Caliphate law, based on Islamic precedent, held that the children of concubines were free, and indeed many important caliphate officials, including several caliphs, were the sons of concubines.[15]

Clearly, therefore, resistance to slavery could not be a concerted attack on the institution by a conscious class. There was no *class* of slaves; the plight of concubines and their struggle against bondage had more similarities with the general condition of women in society than to the condition of the rural slave population, which included men and women. Field slaves, men and women, had some problems that overlapped with the free peasantry, and their interests often conflicted with those of palace slaves as well as concubines. In most cases, therefore, a concentration on flight focuses on the agricultural, craft, and petty-trade sectors, not on the slaves in the palaces and large households of officials. Concubines represented an ambiguous category, for concubines ran away, despite their attachment to palace households.

This brief overview of caliphate slavery hardly does justice to the institution—how it developed in the course of the nineteenth century, its relative importance with respect to other sectors of the population, the crucial role of enslavement and slave trading in the regeneration of the slave population, and the extent to which slaves contributed to the economy and the consolidation of aristocratic government. Despite the superficiality of this overview, a number of features still stand out. First, caliphate slavery must be understood in the context of Islamic society as it developed after the *jihad* of 1804–1808. This slave system was based on the hegemonic function of religion, in contrast to the southern United States, which Genovese has so aptly characterized in terms of the legal structures that dominated the ideological foundations of slavery there. Second, lineage structures and kinship played a relatively unimportant role in the caliphate, unlike many other parts of West and Central Africa. This slave system contained a clearly defined distinction between slave and free; emancipation was a recognized legal act based on ancient codes. Third, the status of women was far different from the plight of women under slavery in the Americas. Polygyny and concubinage, both recognized under Islamic law and widely practiced, protected women from the often unacknowledged sexual exploitation that existed in the Americas. The exploitation of women in the caliphate assumed different forms: much labor, especially spinning and carding and tasks related to cooking and child rearing, were based on gender. Women's world was much more separated from male-dominated society in the caliphate than in the Americas.

Resistance by means of flight can be examined in the context of three stages in the history of the Sokoto Caliphate. First, escape was common during the *jihad*, which spread to new areas after the initial phase ended in 1808, lasting in some places as late as midcentury. Second, slaves fled on a smaller scale during the period of caliphate ascendancy, especially during the last half of the century. There were at least two revolts in this period. Finally, a massive exodus—comparable to those identified by Roberts and Klein for the western Sudan and McSheffrey for the Gold Coast—occurred immediately following the conquest of the central caliphate by Great Britain between 1897 and 1903. This exodus lasted until about 1910. The slaves who escaped appear to have acted for different reasons in these three situations, although in each it is clear that slaves effectively challenged the authority of their masters and consciously or not undermined their wealth.

Usman dan Fodio, the Muslim scholar who founded the caliphate, appealed

to the slave population of the various Hausa states that were overthrown in the course of the *jihad*. He accepted fugitive slaves in his ranks; flight was recognized as sufficient adherence to Islam to justify freedom. In his call for his supporters to join the Muslim camp—known as the *hijra* (emigration)—Usman issued a series of regulations that included

> the law concerning giving freedom to slaves of unbelieving Belligerents if they flee to us; . . . the law concerning one who has been found as a slave in the hands of unbelievers and claims to be a freeborn Muslim but has not emigrated: And the law concerning one who has been brought from a land where the selling of free men is commonplace and claims to be a freeborn Muslim.[16]

At least one settlement, Gimbana, appears to have become a center for ex-slaves who heeded Usman's appeal.[17] It is likely that many fugitives merely joined the armies of individual leaders and hence cannot be identified further; at least they are lost to the historical record in the central emirates of the new caliphate.

In Liptako, Oyo, and Nupe—three emirates to the west and south of Sokoto—slaves were a significant factor in the success of the *jihad*. Yobi Katar, a fugitive who joined the Muslim faction in Liptako, led an armed force that appears to have been composed almost entirely of escaped slaves.[18] In Oyo, a revolt among Muslim slave soldiers was responsible for the final destruction of the Oyo Empire, which had been a major exporter of slaves to the Americas since the last half of the seventeenth century.[19] When the rebels entered the capital of Oyo, sometime in the early 1820s, they gave "liberty to all the Mahometen slaves, and encouraged others to kill their pagan masters and join them."[20] Fugitives were also a factor in the *jihad* in Nupe, where in 1831 it was reported that "all runaway slaves are encouraged to join the ranks on condition of receiving their freedom; and they are joined by a vast number from the surrounding country."[21]

The link between the *jihad* and resistance to slavery demonstrates a departure from previous conditions in which escape was possible. Usually slaves had not been part of political struggles, although it can be assumed that war and dynastic dispute enabled slaves to escape. Indeed slaves had to flee, for they were seized as booty. Reenslavement had long been a problem for slaves who sought accommodation with their masters' society. By appealing directly to slaves, asking them to join the Muslim cause, Usman dan Fodio introduced ideology into slave resistance, perhaps for the first time. Now slaves could flee because they were Muslims; not to flee left slaves open for reenslavement, as before. Adherence to Islam, as defined in terms of political support for *jihad*, became a basic loyalty in the new regime. The corollary—opposition to *jihad*

and unbelief—became the justification for enslavement. Conversion to Islam was not sufficient grounds for emancipation in the new state, but it was a necessary condition. Moreover, escape from slavery during the *jihad* on the claim of Islamic belief was sufficient reason to be accepted as a free person.

Non-Muslim slaves had to resolve the contradiction between accommodation via conversion and resistance through flight. While it became more difficult for slaves to assume the status of free Muslims through flight, slaves could improve their status if they became Muslims, even if they were not recognized as being as good Muslims as their masters. But slaves could also shun Islam, seeking to rejoin their home communities or to establish a new relationship with a community in active resistance to the political hegemony of the Sokoto Caliphate. In either case, slaves had to adapt their strategies to an Islamic context, one that was propagated by the dominant class of the caliphate.

Caliphate society lost a steady stream of slaves through flight. The geography of the central Sudan facilitated such escapes: The open savanna stretched outward, offering few natural barriers that could contain slaves. Even the Niger and Benue rivers were not serious obstacles to slaves who wanted to cross over to reach home country. As Hugh Clapperton noted in 1827, "Those who are taken when grown-up men or women, and even boys and girls, run whenever an opportunity offers, and, whenever they can, they take their owner's goods or cattle to assist them on their journey. Instances of this kind happened every night."[22] Clapperton's observations were made at Kulfu, in northern Nupe, which in the 1820s was the principal market town between the Hausa cities and the Niger River. The major problem for slaves was distance itself. It was not always possible to return to one's village, even if the village was known to exist. Journeys for new captives were often long, and it was difficult for recent captives to retrace their steps, even if they knew the way. Nonetheless, large expanses of territory were underpopulated, and it was possible to become lost from caliphate authorities. It was more difficult to attach oneself to a functioning community, although one can assume it was not impossible.

In at least two situations, fugitives joined dissident Muslim clerics who were attempting to organize broadly based movements against the caliphate. In the late 1840s, Hamza, a popular Muslim mystic from Tsakuwa, located in southeastern Kano emirate, had to flee to the nearby Ningi Hills after attacking the tax collectors of the central government. From a base in the hills, Hamza and his successors—known as Isawa, a millennial sect awaiting the second coming of Isa (Jesus)—raided the neighboring emirates (Kano, Bauchi, Zaria, Katagum) in search of slaves and other booty, but they also provided sanctuary for escaped slaves who were willing to join their cause.[23]

A similar movement, although apparently not with millennial overtones,

erupted in Liptako in the 1860s. Seeku Diagourou, another Muslim cleric, acquired a local following, including slaves, that proved an embarrassment to the Liptako authorities, especially when he disagreed with their interpretation of Islamic law. Perhaps because Diagourou may have had political ambitions as well, he was forced to leave Liptako in 1869–1870. The group sought refuge with the traditional enemies of Liptako, Koala, and Tera, which had been sanctuaries for escaped slaves for several decades; hence Diagourou's collection of fugitives and other dissidents received a ready welcome.[24]

In both Ningi and Liptako, slaves received their freedom because they joined a Muslim cause. Caliphate authorities did not consider the Isawa and the Diagourou group legitimate—indeed the Kano government persecuted the Isawa (adherents were impaled in the Kano market in the 1850s) and Liptako attacked Diagourou's community in 1876–1877.[25] Nonetheless, fugitive slaves took advantage of a political situation that was reinforced by ideology in the same way that earlier slaves had responded to Usman's call for *jihad*. Slaves claimed that they deserved their freedom because of their adherence to Islam, and both the Isawa and Diagourou accepted these confessions as sufficient.

Open revolt broke out in the Bauchi emirate twice in the second half of the nineteenth century. At Wase, a dependent town to the south of Bauchi, an estimated three thousand slaves rebelled in the 1850s or 1860s. They retreated west into the hills of the Jos Plateau, where they found sanctuary first with the Yergam and then with the Shendam, both of whom were hostile to Wase. Eventually, these fugitives established their own town at Yelwa.[26] The second revolt occurred about 1870, when an estimated seven hundred slaves rose near Bauchi, about half of whom fled to Duguri, where they founded the village of Yuli.[27] In both cases, the revolts were little more than mass escapes; the aim was to reach safe territory beyond the borders of Bauchi emirate. Although neither band of fugitives appears to have had millennial or Islamic interests, their struggle had ideological overtones, nonetheless. Resistance against the caliphate had to be based on opposition to its Islamic ideology; repeated attacks on these refugee communities demonstrate that the caliphate, at least, considered the presence of fugitive sanctuaries a danger. Yelwa and Yuli were not isolated maroon settlements that had to come to terms with slave society. Because fugitive settlements could find allies among local enemies of the caliphate, they could enter into larger patterns of resistance.

The Colonial Exodus

The introduction of the colonial factor altered the scale of resistance, but even more important the nature of that resistance changed. As was the case in the western Sudan and along the West African coast, the European advance offered an opportunity for escape at least on the same scale as in any similar period of political instability in the past, and probably on a greater scale. Unlike earlier cases, the Europeans were not enslaving people as they advanced. Slaves did not have to fear reenslavement, which may have helped to keep some slaves in place, but when slaves realized that their flight could not be stopped, many simply left. The ideology of abolition reinforced the exodus, even though Europeans were far from committed to that ideology. A careful distinction was made between enslavement, slave trading, and "domestic" slavery. Enslavement was rigorously suppressed, for the colonial regimes—British, French, and German—could not tolerate the indiscriminate use of power by the newly subjugated population. Slave trading, considered less of a sin, was abolished because the elimination of a distributional system would discourage enslavement, since slavers would find it difficult to dispose of their wares. It was also thought that slavery would gradually disappear if the source of slaves was removed. As for slavery itself, the effort (especially in the British sphere, which encompassed most of the caliphate) was directed at reform, not emancipation. Although colonial officers were marginally committed to an ideology opposed to slavery, the actual struggle to end slavery rested on the shoulders of the slaves themselves. The new colonial regimes became the final defense of the dying institution.[28]

The exodus began near the confluence of the Niger and Benue rivers, particularly in Nupe, and spread to neighboring areas. By late 1898, after the conquest of Nupe, the British received complaints that "all our slaves are running away to the other side of the river."[29] By 1902 all the southern emirates were experiencing a similar exodus. In the small emirates of Agaie and Lapai, along the Niger, the situation was so bad that "farms were being deserted by the slaves and such was the state of unrest that cultivation had almost ceased."[30] In Keffi there was a "constant stream of complaints . . . of slaves running away," and similar reports came from Zaria, Ilorin, Nassarawa, and elsewhere. Many of these slaves were able to reach their home countries; the slaves from Nupe generally came from south of the Niger and it was easy to cross the river and escape from their masters, who were politically powerless in the wake of the British conquest.[31] Slaves in Keffi and Abuja were also able to return home, because, as Resident G. W. Webster explained, "in both these towns the greater number of slaves have been seized from the surrounding country and most of them too recently to have forgotten their old ties so that they are naturally inclined to take advantage of our advent to run to their old homes."[32]

The most seriously affected province in the central emirates of the caliphate was Sokoto, which had received a steady stream of slaves as tribute from the eastern emirates throughout the nineteenth century. Although exact figures

are not possible to obtain, Lord F. L. Lugard, the first governor of Northern Nigeria, estimated that tens of thousands of slaves escaped from Sokoto Province.[33] Some were reported roaming the countryside as petty traders selling sheep and cloth, but most must have fled beyond the borders of the province.[34] It may well be that fewer slaves actually made their way home, in contrast to slaves in the southern emirates, for slaves who had been brought to Sokoto as tribute came from much greater distances—some from southern Adamawa, a thousand kilometers away—than was the case in Nupe and Keffi.

The size of the exodus was so great that the colonial crisis represented a new stage in the evolution of slave resistance. Previously, slaves fled in relatively small numbers, except in the revolts in Bauchi emirate and the evacuation of Diagourou's community. Now slaves traveled in groups; some reports refer to whole "tribes" on the move.[35] Plantations, such as the one studied by J. S. Hogendorn near Zaria, lost as much as half their population at once when slaves decided that they were leaving and dared their masters to stop them.[36] More often, reports only mention that "a large number of slaves ran away," as was the case in Nassarawa in 1901.[37]

Fugitives swelled existing communities or founded new settlements, usually in hill country where their new-found freedom could be protected. Pategi, a small town on the Niger, suddenly found itself with a population of ten thousand as a result of the exodus from Nupe.[38] The Mada Hills, east of Keffi, also proved to be an attractive sanctuary; fugitives founded "a regular city of refuge."[39] Some two hundred slaves flocked into one Bassa town near the Benue River. In certain parts of Zaria Province there were "whole towns peopled by ex-slaves freed by the Fulani."[40] Whether or not these slaves had been actually freed or had fled is not clear, but it seems probable that these places too were centers of refuge.

The colonial exodus also differed from earlier resistance because women—particularly concubines—left in large numbers. Scattered information suggests that women were among the fugitive population of earlier times, but the incidence of escapes appears to have increased dramatically after 1897.[41] According to how concubines were supposed to be treated, there should have been little reason for women to run; at least proponents of Islamic tradition and students of slavery in Muslim societies have often argued as much. Concubines were protected from sale, and once they gave birth to children, who were born free, they were guaranteed emancipation on the death of their master. Concubines were not free to leave their masters or marry, but their status provided more safeguards than most slaves had. That escape suddenly became more attractive to concubines indicates that the transformation caused by the fugitive crisis represented a serious dislocation in caliphate society.

The British regime tried to contain the exodus by instituting reforms that, it

was hoped, would lighten the yoke of slavery. Whereas it had been possible for slaves to buy their own freedom if a master agreed to a price, it now became a slave's right to have the courts set a price. This arrangement (*murgu*) was the cornerstone of the reformed slave edifice; by 1917 fifty-five thousand slaves had gained their freedom through court intervention, many, perhaps most, as a result of *murgu* cases.[42] Another "reform" was the reclassification of concubines as wives, thereby letting the British ignore the problems associated with the treatment of women. Unlike the British policy on *murgu*, however, it is unlikely that this legalism had much impact. Islamic law recognized the right of men to four wives and an unlimited number of concubines, depending upon ability to support them. This distinction enabled a separation of free women from slave concubines, which the tinkering of the British could not disguise.[43] Otherwise the British tried to contain the exodus through vagrancy laws, manipulation of the legal system, and other heavy-handed practices.

Despite the reforms and the determination of the colonial regime to maintain the existing class structure, slaves successfully challenged their masters and the British at the crucial moment. The attitude of slaves in the early years of colonial rule has been captured in a poem written by Imam Imoru, the learned scholar and jurist who wrote extensively on caliphate society between 1890 and the First World War. According to Imoru,

> The slaves became free with Joy,
> They were saying "We refuse to be slaves
> because the Christians are here."
> They all regained their freedom;
> They were boasting because of the Christians.[44]

Not only did many slaves leave and others avail themselves of the new opportunities under the reformed slave system, but others still pushed against their bonds in order to work out a new arrangement with their masters within slavery. Slaves refused to work; they threatened to leave; and they demanded more material incentives for the work they did do. Such actions demonstrate that the terms of servility were being renegotiated.[45] It was possible, in ways that almost certainly had never been possible before, to alter the balance between what masters demanded and what slaves were willing to give.

The Colonial Reform of Slavery: Alternative to Rebellion

Genovese has identified a sharp distinction between rebellion and revolution in the slave systems of the Americas.[46] Rebellion, escape, and marronage characterized the period before the abolition movement and the St. Domingue revolution influenced the actions of slaves. Revolution became possible when slavery