An Assyrian Successor State in West Africa

The Ancestral Kings of Kebbi as Ancient Near Eastern Rulers

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Abstract. – On the basis of newly discovered documents in the Hausa state of Kebbi (Nigeria), the present article argues that the foundation of the state was the result of a conquest by Assyrian immigrants towards 600 B.C. All the major sources of the history of the state support this theory: a chronicle derives the origin of the Kabawa from Madayana, a name probably referring to Assur and Nineveh, the Kanta tradition postulates an immigration of the state-building ancestors from Arabia, the long king list has 33 names of kings which can be shown to have ruled in the ancient Near East, and the short king list concentrates on Kebbi and omits nearly all the non-African kings. From the names included in the long king list it appears that the early kings of the Kabawa were ancient Near Eastern rulers and that the author of the list believed in a continuity between Assyria and Kebbi. In chronological order the names refer to the Akkadian-Amurrite and to the Neo-Assyrian period. The departure of the Assyrian refugees from Syria-Palestine is referred to by the name of the Babylonian conqueror of Assyria and the name of the last Assyrian king. *[Nigeria, Assyrians in Africa, migrations, state foundation, conquest state, African king lists, ancient Near Eastern king lists, traces of ancient Near Eastern kings in Africa]*

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Postcolonial African historiography depicts the rise of sub-Saharan states as a purely indigenous process (Curtin et al. 1978: 30–32; Ehret 2002: 309–313). This has not always been so. Taking up the thread of earlier research, the academic founding fathers of African history, Roland Oliver and John Fage, devoted one chapter of their influential "Short History of Africa" to the Sudanic civilization. Basing themselves explicitly on the work of Hermann Baumann and his findings concerning the structural similarities of African kingdoms, they suggested that during the early post-Meroitic period, propagators of Egyptian and southwest Asian ideas of the state moved southwest and established states with the aid of the horse and cavalry warfare by conquest among the agricultural people immediately to the south of the Sahara (Oliver and Fage 1975: 52f.). Later they modified their concept, and instead of widespread conquests they favoured a process of infiltration by which pastoralists, influenced by Meroitic ideas of the state, and agriculturalists accommodated each other, the resulting states being the outcome of a harmonious borrowing rather than of forceful imposition (Oliver and Fage 1988: 37f.).[1] The shift from the notion of a conquest state to that of peaceful accommodation, perceptible from the different editions of the "Short History," resulted mainly from the growing opposition to the idea of foreign inputs to the state formation process in sub-Saharan Africa.

Apart from the general tendency of African history to assert the independence of African developments, the transformation of the conquest theory

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1 Prior to Oliver and Fage, Baumann (1940: 56–58) and Westermann (1952: 30–32) believed that African states were created by immigrants from the east in the pre-Christian period.

to a vague diffusionist conception was also based on methodological considerations concerning the fragility of oral traditions with respect to Islamic feedback. Indeed, while Oliver and Fage mention solely the widespread Yemenite tradition of origin and this only *en passant* in their "Short History," Fage pays in his own "History of Africa" considerable attention to the legends of Sayf b. Dhī Yazan of Kanem-Bornu, Kisra of Borgu, and Bayajidda of Daura (Hausaland) which all indicate Near Eastern origins. Considering first the possibility that they reflect real movements of people, he finally came to the conclusion that keepers of traditions in African kingdoms incorporated Near Eastern folklore into their recitations in order to establish connections to the prestigious world from which Islam had sprung (Fage 1978: 62–67). He thus follows the proponents of the feedback theory who suppose that tales of Arabic folklore were adopted as a whole by African traditionists regardless of their own orally transmitted history (Henige 1982: 81–87). But instead of suspecting local historians of dismissing their own traditions by inventing spurious origins with the help of foreign tales, it seems to be more appropriate to recognize them as *bona fide* keepers of indigenous traditions attempting, with the help of Arab notions of ancient history, to convey an understandable meaning to their locally transmitted accounts of genesis. According to this more positive approach, local traditionists took advantage of the knowledge gained from Arab traders and local literati, in order to appropriately situate within the wider geographical and chronological context provided by Arab historiography the cryptic original message inherited from their own forefathers. The traditions that have come down to us in Islamic West Africa are, therefore, often twofold: they contain an ancient and genuine message of Near Eastern origins and an overlay of embedded Arab-Islamic reinterpretations (Lange 2008b: 259f.).

A second major reason for the disrepute of the Sudanic state theory in recent years was the inability of its promoters to discern any convincing historical push factor, which might explain the spread of people in the Sudanic belt from east to west during the first millennium A.D. One might have thought that the collapse of Meroë in the middle of the fourth century A.D. constituted such a major event, but it appears that the southern outpost of the Egyptian civilization dwindled away rather as the result of western infiltrations by Nubians than in consequence of eastern Axumite military campaigns (Adams 1977: 388). Also, neither oral traditions nor specific culture traits of West African kingdoms point to diffusion from Nubia or Egypt (Fage 1978: 63–65). Hence, it is quite unlikely that large numbers of people left the upper Nile valley early in the Christian period and carried the idea of the Pharaonic state to West Africa.

Owing to the shortcomings of diffusionist ideas in explaining the setting into motion of the state-building process in West Africa, alternative views have gained widespread acceptance among scholars of African history in recent years. Most prominent is the notion that states emerged in Sahelian West Africa in consequence of contacts between pastoral and agricultural people in the border zone between the Sahara and the Sudan. Either the interaction between these people or the need for defence are now thought to have contributed significantly to the unification of large communities and to the emergence of kingdoms (Fage 1978: 65–72). Another factor, supposed to have stimulated the rise of kingdoms, is the intensification of regional and trans-Saharan trade, subsequent to the spread of the camel early in the Christian period and to the Arabic conquest of North Africa (Curtin et al. 1978: 84–87). But considerations concerning regional contacts between different people and the intensification of trade as a stimulating factor for state formation cannot account for the traditions of origin pointing to the Near East and the structural similarities which anthropologists have noted between sacred kingships all over Africa (Baumann 1940: 58–65; Westermann 1952: 34–43). Since serious objections may be raised to theories of the purely local emergence of states, it might be useful to turn our attention to detailed studies of the sources available for individual kingdoms in the Sahelian zone, where states are supposed to have first emerged in sub-Saharan Africa (Curtin et al. 1978: 84; Fage 1978: 70f.).

Situated east of the River Niger between the Songhay-Zerma people and the Hausa city-states, one of the major surviving polities of the Sudanic belt is Kebbi. In terms of the Hausa tradition of Daura, Kebbi belongs to the *banza bakwai* "seven illegitimate" states, because the Hausa language here has been superimposed on a preceding language which resisted assimilation for a long time (Barth 1857: 472). Cut off geographically from direct contact with North Africa, the state is first mentioned by an external source with respect to the military conquests of the Songhay King Sonni ʿAlī (1465–1492), and Islam made hardly any progress in the country before the sixteenth century (al-Kaʿti 1913: 43/82, 46/90). Although the remains of the large capital cities Surame and Gungu bear witness to a polity of considerable importance, the history of Kebbi before the second half of the fifteenth cen-

tury is entirely shrouded in darkness (Harris 1938: 34b, 351d; Hogben and Kirk-Greene 1966: 239 f.). Also, up until now, no attempts have been made to use the available internal evidence in order to throw light on the foundation period of Kebbi history. It is mostly assumed that the state was founded slightly earlier than the period of its subjection to Songhay (Hogben and Kirk-Greene 1966: 138–142; Adamu 1984: 277 f.), but in view of the two large capital cities dated to A.D. 1470–1520, it is hardly conceivable that there was no preceding period of imperial growth.[2]

Field research on the history of Kebbi has revealed the existence of a rather uniform legend of origin, told all over Kebbi and also in the neighbouring region of Ader in northern Hausaland, which attributes the foundation of the state to a figure called Kanta.[3] Comparisons with other legends of origin have shown surprising similarities with the Assyrian state legend centred on the historical figure Sargon of Akkad (2334–2279 B.C.).[4] Considered without regard to similar evidence for Assyrian influences in other states of the Central Sudan, such results were met with considerable scepticism. In particular, they could not challenge the established canon of Hausa history, according to which the Hausa states rose only towards the end of the first millennium A.D.[5] Meanwhile, further research on the emergence of a complex society in the Central Sudan has buttressed the idea of a significant Assyrian contribution (Lange 2008a: 101–104; 2009a: 4–12; 2009b). In this context a detailed analysis of the sources of pre-Islamic Kebbi history might throw more light on the Assyrian factor in the West African state-building process.

Internal Sources of Kebbi History

Since Islam became firmly established in Kebbi towards the middle of the sixteenth century, written sources in Arabic might date from that period. As in other Hausa states, the country has an important tradition of king lists. There is a long list in Kebbi comprising between 81 and 85 names, according to how it is counted. Three kinds of king lists in full length should be distinguished: lists which consist only of successive names and provide at the end some supplementary information,[6] lists which distinguish between pagan and Muslim periods (Rattray 1913: 16–21; Mischlich und Lippert 1903: 196–198), and lists which add to the names of kings their supposed fathers – insofar as they have reigned – and the presumed length of the reign in years. More importantly, the latter lists contain supplementary information with respect to the origin of the Kebbi kings, and from the middle of the seventeenth century onward they provide some indication of each of the successive reigns (Harris 1938: 230–247). Since the accounts given differ only in small details, they have to be treated as a single king list or rather chronicle.

The chronicle of Kebbi has been transmitted in two versions, an undated version in Hausa called "Asalin Kabawa" (Origin of the People of Kebbi) and an Arabic version called "Ta'rīkh Kabi" (History of Kebbi) dated to the reign of Yakubu Nabame (1849–1854). According to the words of Hassan Ghuni, the author of the "Ta'rīkh Kabi," his account is based on information and books written in Hausa. It may be assumed that he refers to king lists with a few Hausa words and the "Asalin Kabawa."[7] From this earlier Hausa version of the chronicle four slightly diverging manuscripts are today available in Argungu, the capital town of the king of Kebbi.[8] The largely concordant Hausa and Arabic versions of the chronicle, which both insist on the Near Eastern origin of the Kabawa, therefore, seem to go back to a Hausa version which was supposedly written in the late eighteenth century.[9] Altogether the chronicle conveys the impression that it resulted from an extension of the king list on the basis of the oral Kanta legend, or perhaps more likely on the basis of extra information transmitted parallel

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2 The dates are from the archaeological excavations conducted by Gerhard Liesegang during several campaigns from 1990–1993 (1993: 161 f.).

3 Hogben and Kirk-Greene (1966: 240 f.); Lange (1991: 141–148); FN 89: 25–181.

4 Lange (1995), reprinted in Lange (2004: 319–341).

5 Hogben and Kirk-Greene (1966: 33); Smith (1971: 191); Adamu (1984: 271).

6 Edgar (1913: 141 f.): information on the number of drums used; Sölken (1959: 138–143): information on the division of the kingdom in 1827 in Kebbi-Argungu and Keßße-Gwandu.

7 The Arabic text was written by Ghuni Ḥassan al-Barnawī during the time of Yakubu Nabame (1849–1854) and it is now in the custody of the Imam of Argungu, Alhaji Mohammadu (Lange 1991: 146).

8 Two manuscripts are held by the Sanƙira, a third by the family of Tajuddini, and a fourth by the Imam Alhaji Muḥammad, all living in Argungu. Harris's translation appears to be based on the Tajuddini manuscript (Harris 1938: 230–261). On the request of the late Emir Muḥammad Mera, the proprietors of the manuscripts allowed the author to photocopy their texts.

9 This estimation is based on the internal evidence of the chronicle (Harris 1938: 241) and the external evidence of the Fulani Jihad (Hogben and Kirk-Greene 1966: 247 f.). The Hausa manuscript of the Imam provides the same account of an origin from Madayana as his Arabic manuscript (fol. 1).

to the king list by its official caretaker, who might have been the *Sankira*.[10]

Apart from the long king list and the chronicle, various local *malams* (scholars) hold a short king list of which people occasionally ask for a copy to be made on account of their personal interest in the history of Kebbi. It begins with four predecessors of Kanta to whom the chronicle – as we shall see – attributes the leadership of a great migration from Egypt to West Africa. Hence, the shortened list distinguishes itself from the long list by the suppression of all 42 kings prior to the migration. Quite logically for an African state it eliminates those kings said to have lived elsewhere before the great migration and only takes into account the kings said to have actually ruled in Kebbi itself (Harris 1938: 230–233). It further insists on the conversion of Kanta to Islam, thus projecting Islam to the beginning of the state (Edgar 1913: 142–149). Similarly the long list, which distinguishes between successions of pagan und Muslim rulers, only takes into account the local Islamic factor. But while the author of the short list indirectly acknowledges the foreign identity of the omitted kings by having Kanta preceded by the "four kings of the migration," the author of the Islamic elaboration of the long list disregards the explicit message of the chronicle and the Kanta legend with respect to the older history of Kebbi kings and gives them the appearance of local rulers.[11]

Next, there is the orally transmitted Kanta legend which is told among the Hausa-speaking Kabawa, the Fulani of Kebbi, and the Hausa-speaking Aderawa. According to all versions of the legend, Kanta was a cattle-grazer who by the fulfilment of a prediction made to his Fulani master rose to great power (Harris 1938: 24–29; Hamani 1975: 80f.). In spite of Kanta being an orphan, the Kebbi versions of the legend from Argungu, the present-day seat of the kings of Kebbi, insist on his genealogical link with the Kabawa rulers of whom the last immigrated from the Near East.[12] However,

it should be noted that outside of Argungu Kanta is only vaguely associated with foreign origins. Kabawa and Fulani traditionists of the villages of Kebbi consider his father to have been an Arab from Timbuktu or a Jew from Futa Toro.[13]

Finally, we have to consider the rituals reenacting the Kanta legend during the installation ceremonies of a new king. In fact, each king of Kebbi is considered to be a reincarnation of the great state-founding Kanta. Thus, he is continuously addressed by the Kanta praise song as a Kanta with all his attributes (Harris 1938: 236–238; Hogben and Kirk-Greene 1966: 245f.). In order to ensure the transmission of the quality of being a Kanta, the newly appointed king is introduced into his role as a ruler by undergoing a cult-dramatic initiation. The eight great officials of the kingdom – Kokani, Magaji, ɗan Gara, Inname, Galadima, Dikko, Sarkin Burmi, and Kunduɗa – go to the palace together, taking with them a white ram. In remembrance of the calf in the Kanta legend, they sacrifice the ram and put the skin partly on the king and partly on Kokani, who pretend to fight each other. The king wins and subsequent to his victory he is dressed in the royal turban and gown. All officials and all the people prostrate themselves before their Sarkin Kebbi who has now become the legitimate descendant and successor of the great Kanta (Harris 1938: 28f.). This embedding of the Kanta legend into the enthroning ceremony and the subsequent reaffirmation of the king's new identity by the praise song clearly manifests the close connection between the orally transmitted legend and an age-honoured institution of the pre-Islamic kingdom of Kebbi.

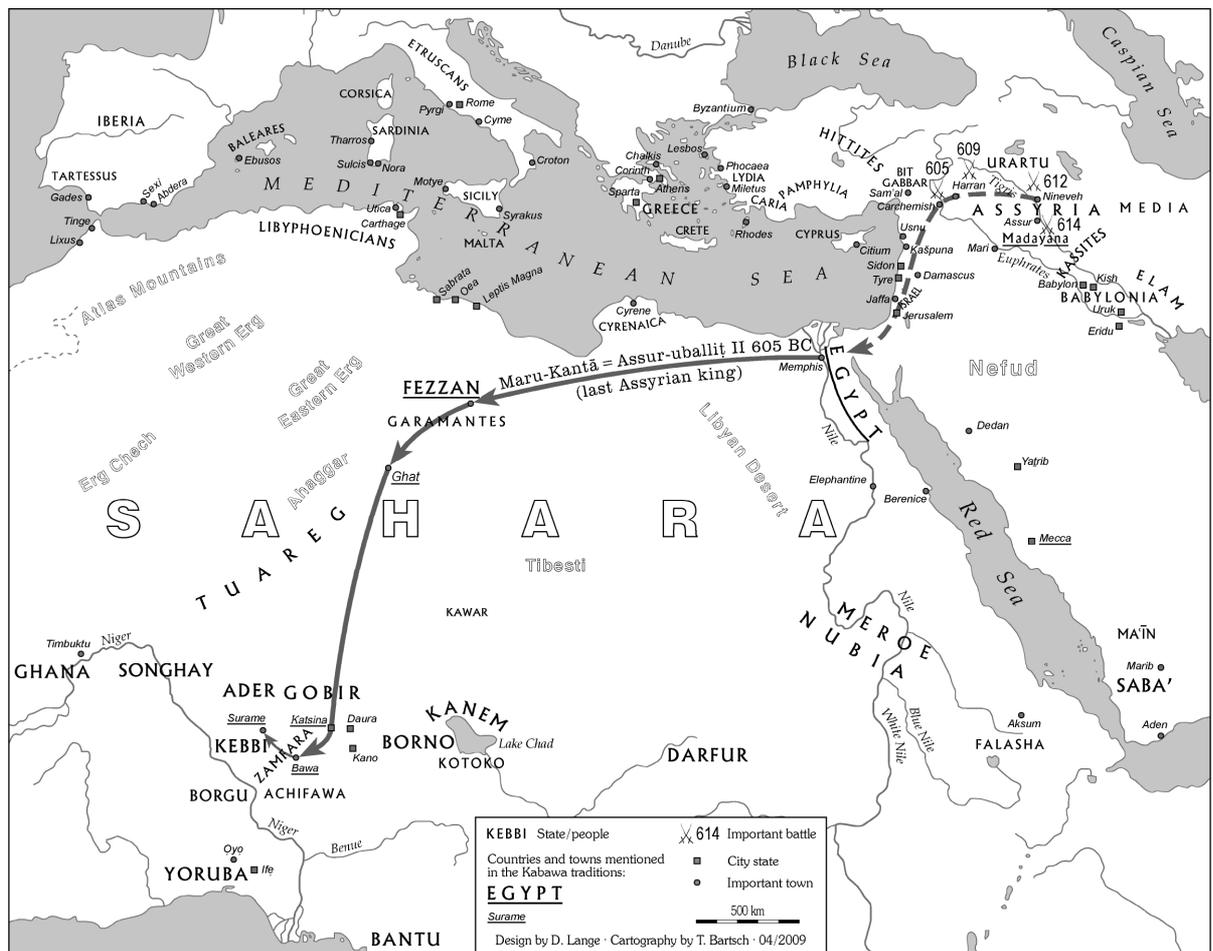## Immigration of the Kabawa According to the Kebbi Chronicle

The beginning of the chronicle of Kebbi provides an account of the origin of the Kabawa which all knowledgeable people of Argungu consider to be valid. Besides indicating a starting point it distinguishes between four stations of a migration, all recognizably distorted by Islamic ideas and as such historically suspect. Nevertheless, in spite of these alterations, under its Islamic overlay it contains discernible older elements of information which may be used for an historical assessment of the origin of the Kabawa and of the state-building process in Kebbi.

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10 The *Sankira* is the singer of the royal praise song (*kirari*) of Kanta. He possesses two copies of the "Asalin Kabawa." The political organization of the state has suffered from its virtual extinction during the years of harassment by the Fulani jihadists between 1831 and 1849 (Hogben and Kirk-Greene 1966: 249f.).

11 Many lists begin with Kulai, Sakai, Ginba, Makata, and Kotai, thus duplicating Kulai/Kotai (Edgar 1913: 142–149).

12 Dan Ayi/Dankanawa and Suleman/Lailabawa most clearly deny that Kanta had any relatives. Nevertheless, all five available versions of the legend from Argungu insist on the origin of the Kabawa from the Near East (Galadima/Lekawa, Suleman/Lailabawa, Alhasan/Lailabawa, Dan Ayi/Dankanawa, Natukku/Lailabawa).

13 The two versions indicating an Arab origin from Timbuktu are those of Dikko/Fulani and of Samna/Maleh. Yaya/Gande, whose parents came from Ader, has him come from Futa Toro.

Map: The great migration of the Kabawa according to oral and documentary evidence.

According to the only available text of the Kebbi chronicle, the original home of the Kabawa was Mecca (Harris 1938: 230). Historians will at first sight suspect a religious bias behind this name – omitted by Hogben and Kirk-Greene (1966: 239) – but in view of its similarity with Makata, the epithet of the Mesopotamian Kanta (see below), they will be more careful – though still not subscribing to an origin of the Kabawa from the holy city of Islam.[14] Moreover, a complete copy of the "Asalin Kabawa" has prior to Mecca the name of Maddāyana whence the Kabawa are said to have originated. It clearly states, with respect to the origin of the Kabawa, that "they came out of Maddāyana" (*daga Maddāyana suka fito*).[15] Ḥassan Ghuni in turn provides in his

"Ta'rīkh Kabi" the supplementary information that the people "came out of the fortress of Madayana" (*kharajū min ḥiṣn M.d.y.n*).[16] Usually the Arabic term *ḥiṣn* designates a "fortress," but when applied to the point of departure of a great migration it should rather refer to a "heavily fortified city" (Lane 1863–93/II: 586). Three versions of the Kanta legend likewise mention an origin of the migration from Madayana.[17] On account of the departure from a "fortified town" it would appear that the ancestors of the Kabawa retreated from their original hometown after a military defeat.

Which town is referred to as Madayana? At first sight one might have thought that the town in ques-

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14 Similarly, the name of Mecca mentioned in the prologue of the *Dīwān*, may derive from Makāta (Lange n. d.).

15 See manuscript (f. 1) in the possession of Imam Mohammadu. The three other available copies of the "Asalin Kabawa" have Mekka as the point of departure of the migration.

16 The name in the "Asalin Kabawa" has an *alif* after the *dāl*. The name in Ghuni (1850) omits the *alif* and has a *yā'* after the *dāl* which can be read as a *hamza*.

17 Dan Ayi/Dankanawa, Alhasan/Lailabawa, and Suleman/Lailabawa. The latter has "the town of the Prophet Shuʿayb" for Madayana.

tion was the capital of the Parthians and the Sasanians, which was first mentioned in Aramaic as Medīnāthā (the towns) in 211 B.C. and which was known to the Greeks as Ctesiphon and to the Arabs as Madā'in Kisra (cities of Kisra).[18] On account of the phonetic closeness, the Arabic *madā'in* appears to be the most likely original form of Madayana. However, it is difficult to conceive of a migration of Persians from Ctesiphon having reached the Central Sudan in great numbers. In view of the destruction of a fortified city implied by the Kebbi chronicle, it appears more likely that we are dealing here with the Aramaic term *madînāh* (town) designating the capital town Nineveh of the Assyrian empire, the proper name of which might have been little known by the common people in the western provinces. This hypothesis is supported by information from the biblical books of Jonah and Judith according to which Nineveh was called the "great city" (Jon 3:3; 4:11; Jth 1:1). Similarly the "Table of Nations" has the reference to a "great city" of Assyria which many scholars think to be Nineveh (Gen. 10:12).[19] Hence, the exodus from a heavily fortified city would seem to correspond to the conquest of Nineveh by the Babylonians and Medes in 612 B.C. after a three months siege. Furthermore, the apparently plural form of Madayana (*medīnāthā/madā'in*) might refer to the conquest of all three capital cities of Assyria between 614 and 612 B.C. – Nineveh, the administrative centre, Nimrud, the military headquarters, and Assur, the religious metropolis. Parallel to al-Ya'qūbī's account of the exodus of Noah's descendants from the land of Babylonia (*arḍ Bābil*) and to the Bayajidda legend's tale of the migration of the king's son from Baghdad with half of his father's troops, the Kebbi chronicle would, therefore, seem to begin its account of the origin of the Kabawa with an allusion to the flight of the remnant Assyrian army from the heartland of Assyria to the west to Harran and further to the south.[20]

The first station of the great migration mentioned by the chronicle following to the departure from Madayana is Mecca, a town to which the Kabawa were led by 'Uthmān b. Mas'ūn and where they helped the prophet Ibrāhīm to build the Kaaba.

Apart from the Makata epithet of the great dynastic hero, the reference to Mecca seems to have been suggested by the resemblance of the proper name of the Kabawa to that of the Kaaba.[21] As the name of the leader to Mecca is derived from that of 'Uthmān b. Maẓ'ūn, the companion of the Prophet, it must also be supposed that the reference to Nabi Ibrāhīm is based on the Koranic mention of Ibrāhīm's and Ismā'īl's building of the foundation of the Kaaba.[22] Hence with respect to the reconstruction of the historical migration of the Kabawa, the information relating to Mecca must on different grounds be rejected as secondary.[23]

The second station of the migration was Egypt, where the Kabawa were led by Baranbaran. According to the chronicle, the first 39 kings, of whom the last nine are called by strange Hausa names, reigned in Egypt. The Kanta legends from Argungu tend to mention Egypt as a station on the way from Mecca to the Central Sudan. Only one version makes it the starting point of the migration.[24] In Egypt, the Kabawa are supposed to have received the prophecy of Shu'ayb, according to which they were to rule over the whole world until the end of time (Ghuni 1850: f. 1). Since Shu'ayb came from Madyan in Arabia, the insertion of the prophet's name and his statement into the chronicle are obviously the result of the identification of the traditional Madayana with the Koranic Madyan (Koran n. d./VII: 85; /XI: 84). In fact, the prediction of perpetual rulership may have originally been based on a title or a remark indicating for the early kings of Kebbi not the promised but the actual rulership over the four directions of the world – as in the *Dīwān* of the sultans of Kanem-Bornu – which later became inconceivable (Lange 2009a: 7). Not knowing where to localize the ancestral kings of the Kabawa, the late chronicler might have been misled by the desert environment of the Koranic Madyan inappropriate for great rulers, thus removing the kings from their hometown Madayana and inventing for them a new residence in the fertile land of Egypt,

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18 The ruins of Ctesiphon are situated 20 km south of Baghdad (Streck, Madā'in, EI[1]/V: 77f.; Streck and Morony, Madā'in, EI[2]/V: 948–950).

19 Lipiński quotes in support of this opinion H. Gunkel, J. Skinner, P. Heinisch, R. de Vaux, W. Zimmerli, and J. de Fraine (1966: 87).

20 Levtzion and Hopkins (1981: 21); Palmer (1928/III: 133); Lange (2004: 290); Roux (1992: 375–379); Oates (1991: 163–171).

21 Ghuni derives the name of the Kabawa from that of the Ka'aba (1850: f. 1). A monument of the Sasanian ruler Šābuhr I (A.D. 240–270) with an important inscription is called *Ka'ba-yi Zardusht* (Yarshater 1983: 392).

22 Wensinck, 'Othmān b. Maẓ'ūn, (EI[1]/VI: 1011); Koran (n. d./II: 127).

23 A similar distortion of the original tradition by Islamic interference may be supposed to have affected the Kisra legends of Borgu (Lange 1993: 49–51) and the Nimrod/Oduduwa legends of the Yoruba (Lange 2004: 310).

24 Alhasan/Lailabawa has two versions with respect to the origin of the Kabawa: that of his grand-father making them originate from Egypt and that of another informant mentioning Madayana.

originally just a minor station in their migration. As we will see from the analysis of the king list, there are good reasons to suppose that the first kings on the list ruled on account of the Kassite identity in Babylon and the late pre-African kings on account of their Assyrian identity in Nineveh.

The third station of the migration was Fezzan. At this point the chroniclers depicted a great migration through the Sahara and in order to give some flesh to their account they turned three late pre-Hausa kings of the list – Kotai (29), Ganbi (30), and Sakai (31)[25] – into kings of the exodus and they mentioned a succession of titles. Thus Kotai/Kulai (29), the last ruler of Egyptian times according to the chronicle, got the title of Chendi and led the people to Fezzan where he continued to rule. His successor was Sakai (31) who again got the title of Chendi and continued to rule over Fezzan. Ginba (30) to whom the people gave the title of Magaji moved with the Kabawa from Fezzan to Ghat and thence to Bawa in southern Katsina. As we have seen, the king lists have the three "migratory kings" in a position before Maru-Tāmau (32) and Maru-Kantā (33) and the nine Hausa kings (nos. 34–42), and they ascribe to them a slightly different sequence: Kotai (29), Ganbi (30), and Sakai (31). The reason for attributing them the leadership of the great migration through the Sahara was probably still remembered at that time, and it was originally close to the final position among the rulers of the imperial home country. Maru-Tāmau (32) and Maru-Kantā (33), the formerly real final kings, were apparently left in their position before the Hausa kings in order to keep them sufficiently distant from the orally known Kantā (44), and thus to avoid any confusion between the foreign and the local Kanta. But in fact, if we combine the migration concept of the chronicle with the sequence of names in the king lists, we reach the conclusion that if any king has to be pointed out as the actual leader of the great migration, it should be Maru-Kantā (33). The minor title of Chendi, which does not exist in Hausa, may originally have referred to Kanta/Sargon as "the one of the *entu* priestess" (Akk. *ša enti*). Such a derivation is supported by the fact that the major priestess of Kebbi still holds the title of *eni* (Harris 1938: 354; Lange 2004: 174). Magaji, on the other hand, is a common Hausa title, now signifying "heir." Perhaps derived from Northwest Semitic *mqdš*, "sanctuary" (DULAT/II:

568; HALAT/II: 591f.), it would appear to have designated a "priest" in pre-Islamic times (Lange 2004: 181).

The fourth and last station of the migration mentioned by the chronicle is the village of Bawa in southern Katsina, where Kantā (Ta'rīkh Kabi) or Muḥammadu Kanta (Asalin Kabawa) was born. According to the chronicle, there were two kings in Bawa, first Makāta (43) b. Ginba and then Kutai b. Ginba.[26] The hero left Bawa after a son of Kutai, his elder cousin, had been chosen to become the successor to Kutai.[27] Not having succeeded to the ancestral kings of the Kabawa, Kanta left his people and went to the later Kebbi, where he was likewise offered the title of Magaji which he refused. Having received the title of Sarkin Kebbi instead, he began his career as an empire builder: he erected the capital Surame and led military expeditions in all directions. During a war with Daura he was wounded and died in Rimin dan Asita, from where his body was carried to Surame to be buried there.[28] On the reign of Kanta there is a considerable agreement between the chronicle and the Kanta legends with respect to the building of Surame, the wars, and the death of the hero.[29] However, as we will see, the legendary Kanta was an historical nobody (see below). As for the Hausa title *sarki*, it should be noted that it is derived from the Akkadian title *šar kiššati* which was indeed first used by Sargon of Akkad (Seux 1967: 308, n. 233; Lange 2008a: 99).

In conclusion, it appears from the early part of the Kebbi chronicle that the traditionists of Kebbi were convinced that their ancestral kings had ruled over a powerful kingdom before the great migration to the Central Sudan. The capital city from where their ancestors came was Madayana, a city called in Aramaic "the towns." It more likely corresponded to the central towns of Assyria than to Madā'in Kisra of the Parthian and Sasanian periods. For this and other reasons the ancestral kings of Kebbi had certainly been ruling in Mesopotamia and not in Egypt, a country crossed by the migrants on their

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25 The numbering is according to the king lists which place Kotai (29), Ganbi (30), and Sakai (31) before Maru-Tāmau (32) and Maru-Kantā (33) and the nine Hausa kings (nos. 34 to 42).

26 When the chronicler realized that Kutai (29) was identical with Kutai (43a), they changed the first name into Kulai (29).

27 Harris (1938: 233f.). Ghuni gives no reason for the appointment of Kutai (1850: f. 4).

28 Harris (1938: 235); Hogben and Kirk-Greene (1966: 244f. – death at Jiriwa); Arnett (1922: 14 – death at Jirwa/Zurmu).

29 Apart from the Argungu versions of the legend, other versions also relate the story of the building of Surame (Dikko/Kura and Samna/Gande). Bello mentions the wounding, the death, and the burial in Surame (Arnett 1922: 14) and ʿAbd al-Qādir notes the story of the sand brought by Tuareg from Tinshama (Palmer 1916: 263). The story of sand or water brought by Tuareg is also known to Suleman/Argungu and by Samna/Gande.

way to the Central Sudan. Situated on the way to Mecca, Egypt was better known to the Muslims of Kebbi in later times, and, therefore, eclipsed the memory of the former ancestral home lying further to the east. As for the name of the great leader of the exodus from the Near East to the Central Sudan, the original tradition most likely had the name Maru-Kantā (33), which is in the final position of the ancient Near Eastern section of the Kebbi king list (see below), instead of Kotai (29), Ganbi (30), and Sakai (31).

The Kanta and the Sargon Legend – Two National Sagas Compared

The Kanta legend is widely known among the Hausa-speaking Kabawa, the Fulani cattle herders living in and near Kebbi, and the Hausa-speaking people of Ader, north-east of Kebbi.[30] In Kebbi, where the kings consider themselves as descendants and incarnations of Kanta, it is closely linked to kingship. Providing legitimacy to the rulers, it is particularly cherished by the two royal clans, the Lekawa and the oppositional Lailabawa. There is no other historical legend of similar importance told among the people (Lange 1995: 351–358).

All the available versions of the Kanta legend deal with the amazing rise of an orphan to a powerful ruler. They relate the story of Kanta who grew up without mother and father by herding cattle for a Fulani master.[31] The young hero happened to hear the prediction made by a *mallam* to his master, according to which the person who slaughters a newborn calf from a certain cow, drinks from the cow's milk, and sits on the hide of the calf will take over the world and become a great ruler.[32] In the absence of his master, Kanta fulfilled the prediction and became a powerful boxer, defeating everybody. He

gathered a great following, boasted of himself as "being the slave of the Fulani",[33] overcame the Fulani, built Surame, was acclaimed as Sarki (king) of Kebbi, and made war in all directions until he was finally killed and mysteriously buried in his capital (Harris 1938: 26–28; Hogben and Kirk-Greene 1966: 240f.).[34] The importance of the legend for the kings of Kebbi is shown by the enthroning ceremony, which reenacts the main elements of the cow story. With this cult-dramatic endorsement of history, the new king becomes the reincarnation of his illustrious predecessor.[35]

As a state saga providing legitimacy to a usurper, the Kanta legend of Kebbi may be compared to the Sargon texts of Mesopotamia which relate the rise to power of Sargon, the founder of the Akkadian empire (Lewis 1980: 275; Edzard 2004: 207f.). The Sumerian king list describes Sargon of Akkad (2334–2279) as a date grower and cupbearer of Ur-Zababa who became independent, founded his own city, Akkad, and finally, having defeated and captured Lugalzagesi, became suzerain of all Babylonia (Jacobsen 1939: 111, 178f.). The text Sargon-Lugalzagesi depicts the hero as the son of La'ībum who was employed by the pastoral king Ur-Zababa of Kish. After a number of lost lines, we learn that he confronted Lugalzagesi, the king of Uruk, and then the text is broken off (Güterbock 1934: 37f.). The Babylonian chronicle of the temple Esagila claims that Sargon's rise to kingship was the result of his refusal to execute a royal command by Ur-Zababa to exchange a libation sacrifice for Marduk, and that the god's favour was bestowed on him for this reason (Güterbock 1934: 54f.). During the reign of Sargon II (721–705) there was a revival of interest in his great namesake who had ruled one and a half millennia previously, and there was the same need to foster an illusion of legitimacy for a king whose origins were questionable (Lewis 1980: 103). Therefore, it is generally supposed that the Sargon-birth-legend was written down at the time of Sargon II (Lewis 1980: 2f., 104–107; Van de Mieroop 1999: 71f.). The partially lost text of the legend provides a brief account in the first person of the rise to power of Sargon of Akkad: his fa-

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30 During field research in 1990, the author collected eight versions of the Kanta legend in Kebbi and a ninth was recorded for him in Ader (Niger Rep.). The Kebbi material includes a Lekawa version (Galadima Alhaji Umaru), two Lailabawa versions (Suleman Wanke, Alhasan), two Dankanawa versions (Dan Ayi, Natukku), two Kebbi versions recorded near the old capital Surame (Limam Gande, Samna Maleh), and a Fulani version (Dikko Kura). The Ader version is from Mai Kornaka near Dakoro.

31 The dynastic versions of the legend told in Argungu awkwardly combine the noble ancestry of the local Kanta – as attested by the king list and the chronicle – and the cow story (Galadima/Lekawa, Suleman/Lailabawa).

32 Versions of Imam Yaya/Gande and Alhassan/Lailabawa. Galadima/Lekawa and Suleman/Lailabawa only mention the worldwide fame. In Ader it is said that he will become the greatest man in the world (Hamani 1975: 80).

33 This detail is mentioned by Bello (Arnett 1922: 13) and ʿAbd al-Qādir (Palmer 1916: 263) and confirmed in Ader (Hamani 1975: 81), but its validity is denied in Argungu (Hogben and Kirk-Greene 1966: 241, n. 1; Suleman/Lailabawa).

34 The rise from humble origins is confirmed by Bello and ʿAbd al-Qādir (Arnett 1922: 13; Palmer 1916: 263). According to Suleman/Lailabawa, Kanta was given the title *sarkin sarakuna* (king of kings).

35 For some details of the rituals see above. Further information is provided by Harris (1938: 28f.).

ther was unknown and his mother was a high priestess (*entu*); he was exposed by his mother in a basket on the river Euphrates, which floated along until it reached a gardener named Aqqi, who lifted it out with his water bucket. Aqqi adopted the infant and later taught him to be a gardener. During his career as a gardener, Sargon formed a liaison with the goddess Ištar, resulting in his elevation to the throne and his establishment of an empire (Lewis 1980: 24–29, 152). Judging from the numerous textual testimonies, there were in all likelihood also orally transmitted versions of the Sargon tale, which must have been widely known among the people of Mesopotamia (Lewis 1980: 2–23, 130–134, 274f.; Van de Mieroop 1999: 60–75). The cult of the deified Sargon even outlived the Assyrian and Babylonian empires because offerings were still made to Sargon as a god during the Persian period (Van de Mieroop 1999: 64).

The parallels between the Sargon and the Kanta legends concern the miraculous rise of a humble orphan, the adoption of the boy by a charitable master, the boy's work in a subservient position, the unfaithfulness of the young man towards his master but his faithfulness towards the divine requirement, the foundation of his own capital, the victories in many battles, and the rise to rulership over an empire (Lange 1995: 351–358). These similarities show a certain degree of correspondence between the two legends, but taken alone, they do not prove that there was continuity between the Assyrian empire and the Kebbi state. However, the major difference between the two legends existing in different environments – in Mesopotamia the aquatic and in Kebbi the pastoral milieu – can perhaps be explained by reference to the tale of Cyrus. In the version recorded by Herodotus, Cyrus was raised by a king's herdsman and later defeated that king and thus established his own empire (1971/I: 108–130). Since the tale of Cyrus seems to have been influenced by the environment of Persia, the Kanta legend, though closer to the Sargon legend, may likewise have adopted the pastoral element from the different environment in Kebbi.[36] If the continuity between the Assyrian and the Kebbi legend can be sustained by further evidence, the transmission of the legend would show that the state-building immigrants brought with them the tradition of a common ancestral ruler called Sargon/Kanta. In that case, it would follow that instead of being the result

of purely local interactions, the state of Kebbi corresponded to a secondary state foundation.[37] With respect to the indigenous population, the promotion of the Sargon tale to a state legend would be indicative of the special need for legitimacy on part of foreign invaders who erected a new polity after having conquered and subdued the autochthonous inhabitants. Hence, the foundation of a conquest state by foreign invaders may have been the main motivation for the amplification of an important but not exclusive historical tradition to a powerful state legend.

Kanta as Sargon in the Kebbi King List

Any attempt at identification of the state founder of Kebbi has to take into account the successive names mentioned in the king list and hence also in the chronicle of Kebbi. Most significant in this respect is the name Kanta which is mentioned in the king list in four different instances by sometimes purposely modified forms. Onomastic analysis of these four names will show that the king list was drawn up in a conscious effort to record historical facts and to transmit them to future generations.

Before considering the details of the king list, it should be noted that the name Kanta corresponds to that of Sargon, which is the Hebrew form of the Akkadian name *šarru-kīnu* (Isa. 20:1; Lange 1995: 353). On account of the usurpation of power by its two bearers, the name is often read *šarru-kēnu*, "legitimate king" (Grayson 1991: 87; Nissen 1999: 60), though the alternative reading *šarru-kī-nu* (the king is the true one) should also be considered (Lewis 1980: 30; Edzard 2004: 78). Two recent Mesopotamian kings – Assurbanipal and Nebuchadrezzar – are occasionally referred to as *šarru ki-na-a-ti*, an epithet meaning "king of rightful things" (Seux 1967: 308; CAD/VIII: 384). In view of the truthfulness of Sargon with respect to the proper sacrifice for Marduk and the subsequent divine favour leading to Sargon's rise to supreme power, as expressed by the Esagila temple chronicle, such a royal epithet may in the popular mind most appropriately designate the great upstart king.[38] The name Kanta, therefore, seems to correspond to an abbreviated popular form of the name

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36 Lewis points out that the exposed hero tale, an element only indirectly deducible from the cow legend, was widely known in the ancient world between Rome and India (1980: 149–210).

37 Having first argued that the Sudanic states were the result of conquests by invaders from post-Meroitic Nubia (1975: 52f.), Oliver and Fage later suggested that the building of states was the result of the infiltration of peasant communities by pastoralists (1988: 38).

38 See also the epithet *ki-i-ni/nu* applied in letters to Sargonid kings (Seux 1967: 297, n. 181).

Sargon, which by the elimination of *šarr* (king) in Africa – when the proper meaning of the term had been forgotten – would have been reduced to *ki-na-a-ti*/Kanta. This etymology is partly supported by the Kanta legend, which in the Islamic context has precisely preserved the element of the hero's obedience towards the solemn prediction, in this case the premonition concerning the birth of a calf by a certain cow and the necessary execution of the divine requirement.

First of all, the name Kanta can be discerned in the Kebbi list in the form Muḥammadu-*na-Makāta* (17) "Muḥammad of Makāta." If the list is written in chronological order at all, the name Muḥammad must at this level be the result of a late substitution, since proper Islamic names only appear in the king list after Kantā (44). Other names like Zaydu (16), Sulaymāna (18), ʿAbdū (20), ʿAlī (21), and ʿUsmān (22) – not ʿUthmān – are apparently Islamic but being followed by a great number of non-Islamic names (nos. 23–42), this impression could be the result of the similarity of earlier Semitic names with Arab-Islamic names. More direct evidence for the equivalence of the first Muḥammad of the list with *Kanta/Sargon is provided by the addition of *na Makāta*. The fourth Kantā (44) in the list is presented as the successor of Makāta (43) and the chronicle has this Kanta in most versions as the son of Makāta (Harris 1938: 233; Hogben and Kirk-Greene 1966: 239). Likewise the royal praise song calls Kanta "the heir to the house of Makata," while according to the dynastic versions of the Kanta legend the name of his father was Mukata.[39] In the king list the name Makāta itself appears only twice, first in connection with Muḥammadu (17) and second as the predecessor of Kantā (44). The author of the chronicle realized this doubling and, therefore, changed the name of the first *na Makāta* to *na Makākē*.[40] Similarly the Kanta praise song has "Borin (?) Bagasa *na Arkar*," which means perhaps "man of Bagdad of Arkar/Arku", *arkû* in Akkadian "second" designating in Kanem-Bornu Assur-uballiṭ II.[41] On account of its strange genitival sign *na* and its apparently feminine ending, *Makāta* most likely does not refer to a normal male name,

but rather by the adjunction of a locative prefix *ma-* to the name of the capital city Akkad. Indeed, the most common epithet of Sargon I subsequent to the foundation of a new capital city was LUGAL *a-ga-dè*[ki] "king of Akkad" (Lewis 1980: 36). It would be quite plausible if the Hausa form *na Makāta* was derived from Akk. *ša ma-agade* (the one of Makata/Akkad).[42] In that case, parallel to *mqdš* (sanctuary), i.e., the "holy place" – which has the same prefix *m-* – the locative *ma-* would single out Akkad as a specific, perhaps holy city.[43]

Secondly, we must for similar reasons expect the name Muḥammadu *ḳarfī* (26) "Muḥammad the strong" to refer likewise to a ruler called Sargon. Indeed, the Hausa term *ḳarfī* (strong) seems to translate the Akkadian *dannu* (strong) which in Kanem has given rise to the most frequent royal name Dunama, "the possessor of *dúno* (Kan.: strength)" (Lange 2009a: 13 f.). In Babylon and Assyria *šarru dannu* (strong king) was one of the most frequent royal epithets (Seux 1967: 68–70). One might think that in this second *Kanta was Sargon II (721–705), who on account of his conquest of Samaria and his creation of the totally new royal city Dûr Šarrukîn might have been distinguished by the Akk. epithet *dannu*, translated in Hausa by the qualifier *ḳarfī*. However, the position of Muḥammadu *ḳarfī* (26) in the second section suggests identification with the first Sargon of the Assyrian king list (see below).

Next, we find the name Kanta in the form Maru-Kantā (33) following Maru-Tāmau (32). These two names are particularly relevant for the analysis of the Kebbi king list as a document of ancient Near Eastern kings, because both contain as a prefix the Akkadian term *māru* (son) indicating filiation, which often appears in Mesopotamian king lists.[44] As a prefix of royal names the word *mār* is in West Africa likewise found in Mārī-Jāṭa, the name given by Ibn Khaldūn to Sundiata (Levtzion and Hopkins 1981: 333 f.), and in four names of kings of the Sonni dynasty which Leo Africanus considers to be of Libyan origin (al-Saʿdī 1898: 3 f./6; Épaulard 1956/II: 462).[45] In view of the traditional separation of Mesopotamia into Babylonia in the south and Assyria in the north, one might expect

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39 Harris (1938: 238); Hogben and Kirk-Greene (1966: 246). Only the dynastic versions of the legend provide a name for Kanta's father (Galadima/Lekawa; Suleman/Lailabawa).

40 Harris translates the name as "the man who was always lying down" (1938: 231). The Zamfara chronicle also has *na Makākē* and bears, therefore, witness to a late scholarly loan from Kebbi (cf. Krieger 1959: 41).

41 CAD/I, 2: 236; Burstein (1978: 38); Lange (2009a: 8; n. d.). Harris translates *Borrin Bagasa, na Arkar* as "scatterer of armies, of Arkar" (1938: 238).

42 The etymology of Akkad is unknown (Lewis 1980: 36 f.).

43 For *mqdš* see DULAT/II: 568; HALAT/II: 591 f.; Krahmalkov (2000: 306 f.).

44 CAD/X, 1: 308–316; Grayson, RLA/VI: 92–120. In the Assyrian king list *māru* appears 74 times (Grayson, RLA/VI: 103–115).

45 In favor of the Libyan, i.e., foreign, origin of the Sonni it may further be argued that their title derives from Sem. *šanu* "second, vice" (CAD/VII, 1: 397 f.).

that Tāmau or Tammûz/Dumuzi stand for Babylonia and Kanta/Sargon of Akkad for Assyria.[46] However, such an exclusive attribution of Kanta to Assyria does not take into account that the Sargon legend was also popular in Babylonia (Lewis 1980: 2 f.; Van de Mieroop 1999: 63–75). Instead, it may be suggested that the names Maru-Tāmau and Maru-Kantā refer to the great adversaries in the final combat leading to the destruction of the Assyrian empire, the Babylonian king Nabopolassar (626–605) and the last Assyrian ruler Assur-uballiṭ (612–609). At this point, just before the nine Hausa names (nos. 34–42), the king list, therefore, seems to set a final point, which is more historically than politically motivated, under the enumeration of ancient Near Eastern kings, before it continues with the African kings.

Finally, the Kebbi king list comprises in the fourth instance the name Kantā (44) preceded by that of Makāta (43). It thereby clearly transforms the notion of Makata to the name of a king and it insinuates that this king was the father of Kanta. Although both versions of the chronicle introduce an additional Kutai/Kotam corresponding to Kutai (29) of the king list – a name changed into Kulai or Qudhai[47] – they do not fully agree on the relationship between Makata and Kanta: while the "Asalin Kabawa" turns Kanta into a son of the "great Makāta" (*Makāta babba*), the "Ta'rīkh Kabi" omits any indication of parentage.[48] Nevertheless, there is no doubt that at this point the author of the king list uses the oral traditions of Kebbi which present Kanta, and secondarily also the enigmatic Mukata as local rulers. Indeed, once the memory of the home country of the immigrants had faded into a vague abstraction, the transfer of the Sargon/Kanta legend from its original environment in the ancient Near East to Africa long ago created the necessary conditions for the rise of the purely fictitious figure of a great state builder on African soil.

Hence, the sequence of the four – partly reconstructed – Kanta names within the king list of Kebbi corresponds to a clear historical sequence leading from the empire builder Sargon of Akkad (2334–

2279) via the Assyrian Sargon I (c. 1880) to the last Assyrian king Assur-uballiṭ (612–609). In the chronicle, the third naming of Kanta/Sargon is followed by those kings – Kulai/Kotai (29), Sakai (31), Ganbi (30) –, who are supposed to have led the great migration from the east through the Sahara to Katsina and Kebbi. Ironically, the name Kanta, which figures for the first time in a clearly recognizable form in the fourth instance, is the only Sargon/Kanta who never existed as a real king. Having intensively studied the history of Kebbi, the British administrator P. G. Harris aptly noted that the first Sarkin Kebbi "was a nobody" (1938: 24). In view of the historically founded sequence of Kanta names, there are good reasons to believe that contrary to this nobody not only his earlier namesakes but also the other names in the Kebbi list designate historical kings who had ruled in the ancient Near East.

The Kebbi King List and Its Four Early Sections Concerning Ancient Near Eastern Rulers

Historians consider the king list of Kebbi a spurious document which does not deserve to be taken seriously. Although several published versions of the list were at their disposal, they did not use it for their reconstruction of Kebbi history.[49] Instead, they preferred to rely on the near contemporary accounts of the two chronicles of Timbuktu, referring to the rebellion of Kanta against Songhay overlordship at the beginning of the sixteenth century (al-Sa'dī 1898: 78/129; al-Ka'ti 1913: 339), thus truncating the history of Kebbi by many centuries (Hogben and Kirk-Greene 1966: 238–246; Lange 1991: 142–148). On the basis of historical considerations, four different sections of the king list may be distinguished, which directly or indirectly confirm the relationship with the Assyrian empire, supported by the chronicle's account of a migration from Madayana to Kebbi and the transfer of the Sargon legend to West Africa.

The first section of the Kebbi king list (see Table 1) extends over the first fourteen names from Burunburun I (1) to Kututuru (14). From comparisons with king lists of the ancient Near East, it appears that these names – without regard for three unidentified names – refer to kings from four different nations: four Kassites, two Urartians, two Aramean, one Assyrian, one Babylonian,

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46 For the traditional figure Dumuzi/Tammûz in the Central Sudan, see below.

47 As in the case of Makāta > Makākē the chronicler tries to eliminate inconsistencies here by introducing minor differences between reduplicated names. Since each name was taken into account very carefully, it is clear that the list as a whole was considered to be a highly significant historical document.

48 Instead of Kutai, Harris calls the additional king between Makata and Kanta Kotam (1938: 232) and Hogben and Kirk-Greene call him Kutai (1966: 240).

49 Mischlich und Lippert (1903: 196–198); Edgar 1913: 141 f.); Rattray (1913: 16–21).

Table 1: Ancient Near Eastern Royal Names in the King List of Kebbi.

Position	Kings in the Kebbi list	Ancient Near Eastern Kings	Identity and Chronology of the Kings
I	IDENTIFICATION OF THE KEBBI STATE BUILDERS BY THEIR ANCIENT KINGS (600 B.C.)		
1	**Burunburun** I	**Burnabur**iaš I	10th Kassite king (c. 1510)
2	**Argūji**	**Argišti** I	4th Urartian king (785–760)
3	**Tabāri**	**Ṭabri**mmōn	2nd ruler of Damascus (c. 890)
4	**Zartai**	**Sarduri** I	1st Urartian king (c. 840–830)
5	**Gūbarau**	**Gabbaru**	Dynastic founder of Sam'al (10th cent.)
6	**Dundun-fānu**	Didānu, Ḫanû	9th and 10th legendary king of Assyra
7	**Gātāmā**	**Gandaš** (Gadaš)	1st Kassite king (c. 1740)
8	Bardau	?	?
9	**Kudamdam**	**Kadašman**-(Enlil II ?)	25th Kassite king (1279–1265) ?
10	**Shiryā**	Šagarakti-**šuriaš**	27th Kassite king (1255–1242)
11	Bādauji	?	?
12	Karfau	?	?
13	**Dur-ḵushī**	Simu-**dâr**	23th king of **Kish** (c. 2370)
14	**Kututuru**	**Kuter**-Nahhunte I	28th king of Elam (1730–1700)
II	KINGS OF THE EARLY MESOPOTAMIAN EMPIRES (2350–1600 B.C.)		
15	**Tāmau**	Dumuzi/**Tammûz**	5th antediluvian king of Sumer
16	**Zaudai**	Lugal**zagesi**	Only king of Uruk III dynasty (2350)
17	*****Kantā** *na* Makāta	Šarru-**kîn**/Sargon	Founder of Akkad. empire (2334–2279)
18	**Sulaymāna**	**Šul**gi or **Solomon**	Major king of Ur III dynasty (2094–2047); or Israelite king, son of David (10th century)
19	**Ḥamar-**kūma	**Ḥammur**abi	6th king of Babylonia (1792–1750)
III	KINGS OF THE PERIOD OF NORTHERN MESOPOTAMIAN HEGEMONY (1600–1157 B.C.)		
20	**'Abdū** *dan* **Bawa**ka	**Abazu**, **Belû**	13th and 14th legendary kings of Assyria
21	**'Alū**	**Ḫalê**	18th legendary king of Assyria
22	**'Usmān**	**Samāni**	19th legendary king of Assyria
23	**Tasgari**	**Tazzigur**umaš	6th Kassite king (c. 1650)
24	**Burunburun** II	**Burnabur**iaš II	19th Kassite king (1359–1333)
25	**Mawāshī**	**Muršili** I ?	2nd great Hittite king (1620–1595)
26	*Kantā *Karfī*	Šarru-kîn I/Sargon I	35th Assyrian king (c. 1880)
27	Batā-**Mūsa**	**Mōše**/Mūsā/Moses	Legendary leader of Israel
IV.	KINGS OF THE NEO-ASSYRIAN PERIOD (744–609 B.C.)		
28	**Fūmi**	**Pûl**/Tiglath-pileser III	108th Assyrian king (744–727)
29	**Kotai**/Kulai	**Kandal**anu (Kandal)	Assyr. viceroy of Babylonia (647–626)
30	**Ganbi**	Aššur-**bāni-ap**li/Ashur**banip**al	113th Assyrian king (668–627)
31	**Sakai**	Sîn-šarra-iškun/**Sarak**os	116th Assyrian king (627–612)
32	Maru-Tāmau	Nabopolassar	1st Neo-Babylonian king (626–605)
33	Maru-Kantā	Assur-uballiṭ II	117th and last Assyrian king (612–609)

Table 2: Assyrian Kings Remembered in Assyria, Israel, Greece, Kebbi, and Bornu.

No.	Assyrian king list		Bible	Greek authors	No.	Kebbi list	Bornu list
1–17	"Kings who live in tents"						
9	**Didānu**				6	**Dundun-**	
10	**Ḫanû**				6	**-Fānu**	
11	Zuabu						
12	Nuabu						
13	**Abazu**				20	**'Abdū** *dan*	
14	**Belû**				20	**Bawa**-ka	
15	Azaraḫ						
16	Ušpia						
17	Apiašal						
17–26	Reverse order						
18	**Ḫalê**				21	**'Alū**	
19	**Samāni**				22	**'Usmān**	
(35)	Šarru-**kīn** I	(2334–2279)				***Kantā** I	Sēf/Sipa
39–72	Old-Assyrian kings	(1813–1364)					
73–98	Middle-Assyrian kings	(1365–912)					
78	Tukultī-**Ninu**rta I	(1243–1207)		**Nino**s			
99–117	Neo-Assyrian kings	(883–609)					
108	Tukultī-**apil**-Ešarra III	(744–727)	Tiglath-pileser = Pûl	**Poro**s, **Phulo**s	28	**Fūmi**	**Funē**
109	Šulmānu-ašarēd V	(726–722)	Shalmaneser	Iloulaios			
110	Šarru-**kīn** II	(721–705)	Sar**gôn**	Arkeanos	(26	***Kantā** II)	
111	Sîn-aḫḫē-erība	(704–681)	Sanher**îb**	Senecherib			
112	Aššur-aḫa-iddina	(680–669)	Esarhaddon	Asardinos			
113	Aššur-**bāni**-apli	(668–631)	Asna**par**	Sar**dana**pallos	30	**Ganbi**	
116	Sîn-**šarra-iškun**	(627–612)		**Sarako**s	31	**Sakai**	
117	Aššur-uballiṭ **II**	(612–609)			33	Maru-Kantā	**Arkū**

and one Elamite. The Kassite kings are Burunburun I (1) = Burnaburiaš I (c. 1510),[50] Gātāmā (7) = Gandaš (c. 1740),[51] Kudamdam (9) = Kadaš-man- (Enlil II ?) (1279–1265), and Shiryā (10) = Šagarakti-šuriaš (1255–1242). Corresponding to the 10th, the 1st, the 25th, and the 27th kings in the available lists, the Kassite kings in the first section are listed in chronological order, with the exception of the first king. The first Kassite king may owe his inclusion in the list to the fact that he was the first Kassite monarch in Babylonia.[52] Following each other in chronological order, two names could have been taken as such from an ancient Near Eastern king list: Kudamdam/Kadašman- (Enlil II ?)

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50 The forms of the name vary from Burburum (Mischlich und Lippert; Sölken), to Baranbaram/Barambaram (Edgar, Asalin Kabawa), Burunburun (Zamfara chronicle). A connection with the expression *bara-bara-kiengi*, "all rulers of Sumer" (Edzard 2004: 60) can be ruled out.

51 The king lists have the name Kutāmā/Kutāmā (Mischlich und Lippert; Rattray; Sölken), one has Gitama (Edgar), the chronicle has Gitāma, but the Zamfara chronicle has Gatama (Krieger 1959: 28), written Ghātāmā in the Zamfara king list (Krieger 1964: 95). For the first Kassite ruler Gandaš (also written *ga-ad-daš*), see Weidner, RLA/III: 138.

52 Brinkman, RLA/V: 467; Weißbach, RLA/II: 81; Grayson, RLA/VI: 126–135; Nissen (1999: 246f.).

(25), and Shiryā/Šagarakti-šuriaš (27).[53] Burunburun/Burnaburiaš occupying the first position and four Kassite kings being mentioned altogether in this section, the Kassites appear to have been the most important nation among the state founders of Kebbi. The Urartian kings are Argūji (2) = Argišti (785–760) and Zartai (4) = Sarduri I (840–830), the fourth and the first Urartian kings.[54] By rank and number they occupy the second position among the kings of the first section. Next, there are two Aramean kings: Tabāri (3) = Tabrimmōn, the 2nd ruler of Damascus (c. 890)[55] and Gūbarau (5) = Gabbaru, the eponymous king of Sam'al or *bît-gabbar* (tenth century).[56] They represent the local population of Syria as distinguished from the eastern deportees settled in the western provinces of the Assyrian empire. The two Assyrian kings (counting as one) are Dundun-Fānu (6) = Didānu and Ḫanû, the 9th and 10th legendary kings. Being of a legendary nature, the early Assyrian kings were obviously not mentioned because of their direct historical relevance but because of their Assyrian identity. The only Babylonian king in the first section is Durḵushī (13), who most likely corresponds to Simidâr, the 23rd king of Kish who lived about 2370 as a contemporary of Sargon of Akkad.[57] Concerning his reign of 30 years, his fatherhood with respect to his successor, and the fact that the total length of reign of his four successors and final kings of Kish covered only 34 years, it can be deduced that he was the last important ruler of Kish.[58] The only Elamite figure is Kuter-Nahhunte I, "Protector of the sun god Nahhunte" (1730–1700), who subdued Akkad and plundered its temples (Gen 14:1–17;

Hinz, RLA/VI: 383 f.). Unidentified are the names Bardau (8), Bādauji (11), and Karfau (12). It should be noted that the most likely reason for the insertion of the names of ancient Near Eastern kings belonging to at least six different nations into the first section of the king list of Kebbi was the idea to represent adequately the various groups participating in the state-building effort in terms of their different ethnic identities.[59]

Two additional remarks may help to substantiate the correlations between the kings in the first section of the Kebbi list and ancient Near Eastern rulers. The first concerns the repetition of the name Burunburun, (1) and (24), which is the sole repetition of a name in the first half of the list, with the exception of the name Muḥammadu, (17) and (26), standing for Sargon/Kanta, though in this case the two instances of the name are distinguished by their epithets *na Makāta* (of Makata) and *ḵarfi* (strong). Indeed, the name Burunburun (1) appears not only at the beginning of the list but also in the 24th position where its holder is sometimes distinguished from the first as *na biyu* (Ha: the second).[60] In fact, the duplication of Burunburun I and Burunburun II corresponds precisely to the same duplication in ancient Near Eastern king lists of Burnaburiaš I and Burnaburiaš II, the first being in the 10th and the second in the 19th position of Kassite kings (Grayson, RLA/VI: 91 f., 118). Besides the similarity of the names, this nearly unique duplication of a name in the Kebbi king list provides a supplementary argument for the onomastic identity of Burunburun with Burnaburiaš. The second note concerns the parallelism between Dundun-Fānu (6) and the two successive names Didānu (9) and Ḫanû (10) in the Assyrian king list.[61] Besides the strong linguistic argument for the identity of the two names, the erroneous combination of two successive names provides some insight into the original drawing up of the Kebbi king list. Since all the dynastic documents for Kebbi and also those for Zamfara have this mistake (Harris 1939: 231; Krieger 1959: 31 f.), it obviously must be very old, perhaps dating back

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53 See the Babylonian king list A (Grayson, RLA/VI: 91).

54 Since Sarduri I was preceded by Aramu, Salvini calls him the second founder of the Urartian state (1995: 34). For the chronology of the Urartian kings, see Salvini (1995: 207) and Nissen (1999: 249 f.).

55 Mentioned in 1 Kings 15:18, his name means "Rimmon is good" (Viviano, ABD/VI: 395).

56 *Bît-gabbar* means "house/land of Gabbar" (= Sam'al) (Ebeling, RLA/II: 129). In the king list of Gobir, Gobiru is likewise one of the earliest kings and he is the eponymous ancestor of the country (cf. Hama 1967: 28). For the Aramean kings of Sam'al see Klengel (1992: 214, 208). Three Kebbi lists have Gūbara/Gūbari (Mischlich und Lippert; Rattray; Sölken), one has Gwabrau (Edgar) and the chronicle has Gwobrau (Harris 1938: 231).

57 The king lists have Durki and Darki, while the Kebbi and the Zamfara chronicles have Durḵushī and other Zamfara texts Durḵusā (Harris 1938: 231; Krieger 1959: 30; 1964: 92, 95). By elision of Simu, the second half of the name seems to have been connected to Kush, the name of the famous city of which the king was the last important ruler.

58 According to the Sumerian king list, he was followed by his son, and three other minor kings having ruled 7, 11, 11, 7 years (Jacobsen 1939: 108 f.).

59 In Kanem, the foreign royal names do not refer to indigenized Duguwa clans (Lange 2009a: 10–12) but to kings having ruled in the ancient Near East (Lange n. d.).

60 This is the case in the Mischlich list (Mischlich und Lippert 1903: 197). Rattray has *nabay* which with different vowels can be read *nabiyu/na biyu* (1913: 19). The chronicle omits the name because of the apparent duplication (Harris 1938: 232).

61 Dundun-fān/Dundu-fān in the carefully written manuscripts of Mischlich (und Lippert 1903: 163) and Sölken (1959: 132) and Dada-fāni in the manuscript of Rattray (1913: 17) are clearly set apart from the preceding and succeeding names.

to the time of the composition of the list. In that case, the erroneous double name would provide an additional argument for the supposition that the author of the list was relying on one or several ancient Near Eastern written king lists.

The second section of the Kebbi king list comprises five names extending from Tāmau (15) to Ḥamar-kūma (19). Having in the middle the name Muḥammadu *na Makāta* (17) and hence *Kanta/Sargon (17), it apparently concerns the foundation of the Akkadian empire and as such refers to the same period as the Kanta-Sargon legend. On account of similar occurrences in other states of the Central Sudan, Tāmau (15) seems to be the same as Dumuzi/Tammûz, the 5th king of the Sumerian king list.[62] In the Arewa kingdom, north of Kebbi, we find Damuzu, the leader of the Bagazawa (people of Baghdad) and ancestor of the Azna king Sarkin Baura, who settled in Arewa "in the time of fair-skinned people who came from the east and built wells everywhere" (Harris 1938: 262). In the small Achifawa kingdom south of Kebbi, the ancestral figure Damasa is either placed before or after Kisera and Damarudu (Kareshin, FN 93: 36; Stewart 1993: 150).[63] Also, in view of the final contrast between Maru-Tāmau (32) and Maru-Kantā (33), there is little doubt that in the king list of Kebbi, Tāmau (15) stands collectively for the ancient Sumero-Babylonian kings. The subsequent Zaudai (16) would, therefore, appear to correspond to the last great king of the Sumero-Babylonian tradition, Lugalzagesi, "the king (*lugal*) who fills the sanctuary," who ruled in Uruk and also called himself "king of Kish" (*šarr Kiš*).[64] As we have seen, the next king, Muḥammadu *na Makāta* (17), can be identified as the original Kanta and hence as Sargon of Akkad (2334–2279), the great Semitic empire builder. He is followed by Sulaymāna (18) whose name reminds us of three different rulers of the ancient Near East: Sulaymān/Solomon of Israel, the son of David, who ruled in the tenth century, Šulmānu-ašarēd I, "(the god) Šulmānu is

the first" (1273–1244) of Assyria,[65] and Shulgi (2094–2047) of the Ur III dynasty. In the context of Sargon of Akkad and the subsequent Hammurabi, a reference to Shulgi, the most important ruler of the Ur III dynasty, is perhaps the most plausible. Shulgi is by the length of his reign of 48 years clearly recognizable as an outstanding ruler and he could have been placed in this chronologically exact sequence on the basis of the Sumerian king list (Jacobsen 1939: 22f.; Roux 1992: 168–170), while the name Sulaymān would correspond to an Arab-Islamic adaptation, like the subsequent Assyrian names Abazu > ʿAbdū (20), Ḥalê > ʿAlū (21), Samāni > ʿUsmān (22). The next king on the Kebbi list is Ḥamar-kūma (19). In view of the parallel names Ḥamar, Ḥ.m.r.ḥ, and Aḥmar in Ndufu (Bornu/Kotoko), Ḥumē in Kanem, and Ḥamitu-Kurma in Zamfara, it is quite likely that the name refers to Hammurabi (1792–1750), the 6th king of Babylon.[66] If these identifications are correct, the second section of the Kebbi king list recalls the period of the rise of the Semitic Akkadian and Amorite empires and the extension of their power over the Sumerian city-states. On account of the same historical focus in the Kanta-Sargon legend (Lange n. d.), such a concentration of the author of the king list on the key period of Mesopotamian history seems to be plausible, provided that he could rely on some written king lists brought from the ancient Near East. Although historically prior to section one, section two was apparently not placed at the beginning of the document, in order to give the founders of the African state priority over ancient Near Eastern history.

The third section of the Kebbi list extends over eight names from ʿAbdū *dan* Bawaka (20) to Batā-Mūsa (27). It starts with three kings from the legendary history of Assyria following each other in the same order as in the Assyrian king list. The first name is particularly significant, since once more – as in the case of Dundun-Fānu/Didānu-Ḥanû – it comprises two successive names from the Assyrian king list, though in reverse order: Abazu, the 13th and Belû, the 14th legendary king.[67] This in-

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62 Tammûz is the Hebrew and Aramaic form of the Sumerian name Dumuzi (Handy, ABD/VI: 318). According to the Sumerian king list, there were two rulers called Dumuzi: the first was a shepherd and the fifth king of the antediluvian period, the second was a fisherman, and the fourth king of Uruk and the predecessor of Gilgames (Jacobsen 1939: 73, 89). Both were legendary figures.

63 It should be noted that the names Achifawa and Sefuwa are probably derived from *sipa* (shepherd), the function of the first Dumuzi of the Sumerian king list (Jacobsen 1939: 73). Sēf, the eponymous ancestor of the Sefuwa, corresponded in all likelihood to Sargon of Akkad as an incarnation of Dumuzi (Lange n. d.).

64 Roux (1992: 144); Westenholz, RLA/VII: 155–157; Edzard (2004: 60f.).

65 CAD/I, 2: 416–418. There are five bearers of the name, but the first, who was the eldest and the most important, seems to be the only valid candidate for identification.

66 Palmer (1928/II: 101); Krieger (1959: 23); Ndufu, FN 77: 83b; Lange (2009a: 13).

67 A similar shift of sound in the name Baal can be observed in the king list of Gobir, where Bala-*turmi* is sometimes called Bawa *na turmi* "Bawa/Baal on the mortar" (cf. Hama 1967: 14, 28), and elsewhere in the Central Sudan (Lange 2004: 200–203). There is no explanation for the suffix -ka of Bawaka. The king lists have Abdu *dan* Bawaka (Edgar) and ʿAbdū *dan* Bākī (Mischlich und Lippert; Rattray; Sölken).

version may result from the misunderstanding of a similar change of the father-son order in the Assyrian king list, concerning ten kings but starting only at the seventeenth king and reaching the 26th king (Grayson, RLA/VI: 103 f.). Next in the Kebbi list are ʿAlū (21) and ʿUsmān (22) – not the Arab-Islamic name ʿUthmān – corresponding in the Assyrian list to the two successive legendary kings Ḫalê (18) and Samāni (19).[68] Again, the four legendary Assyrian figures (counted as three kings) at the beginning of section three of the list, following the legendary Assyrian kings of section one, are placed in nearly correct order.[69] All these Assyrian names strongly suggest the reliance on a written Assyrian king list or at least on a well remembered sequence of the most ancient Assyrian royal names. The three kings are followed by Tasgari (23) = Tazzigurumaš, the 6th Kassite king (c. 1650), by Burunburun II (24) = Burnaburiaš II, the 19th Kassite king (1359–1333), by Mawāshī (25) perhaps corresponding to Muršili I (1620–1595), the second great Hittite king and conqueror of Babylon,[70] by Muḥammadu *karfī* (26) = Sargon I (ca. 1880), and by Batā-Mūsa (27) = Moses, the legendary ancestor of the Israelites.[71] The strange first name Batā for Moses could result from an abbreviated form of Hebr. *ṭēbat* (basket) which might be an allusion to the story of Moses being exposed in a basket on the river Nile (Exod. 2:3). Similar to the first, the third section of the Kebbi king list bears witness to a great variety of nations but with a clear preponderance of the five Assyrian figures. Furthermore,

we find two Kassite kings, one Hittite ruler and one ancestral Israelite leader. In comparison with the first section, the four legendary Assyrian kings are all more recent and, therefore, the chronological order is fully respected for these names. The overemphasis of Assyrian royal figures including Sargon I gives the impression that by mentioning the names in section three, the author of the king list wanted to refer to the period of northern Mesopotamian, i.e., mainly Assyrian hegemony following the period of the Akkadian, the Ur III, and the Amorite empires based on Babylonia.

The fourth section of the Kebbi list comprises the names of six kings belonging to the Neo-Assyrian period. It starts with Fūmi (28) = Tiglath-pileser III (744–727), the conqueror of Syria-Palestine and the creator of the western provinces of the Assyrian empire, who is called Pûl in the Bible, Phulos by Berossos, and Poros by Ptolemy (see Table 2).[72] In the *Dīwān* of Kanem-Bornu he is remembered as Funē (4) and mentioned as the first king in the Neo-Assyrian section (Lange 1977: 66, 146; 2009a: 7; 2009b). He is followed by Kotai/Kulai (29) = Kandalānu (647–626), the Assyrian viceroy of Babylonia who is mentioned by Ptolemy as Kineladanos.[73] Next we find Ganbi (30) = Assurbanipal (668–627), the 113th Assyrian king who is mentioned by Herodotus as Sardanapallos (1971/II: 150). Then there is Sakai (31) = Sîn-šarra-iškun (627–612) "the god Sin has appointed the King," the penultimate Assyrian king called Sarakos by Berossos (Burstein 1978: 26). Finally there are Maru-Tāmau (32) "son of Dumuzi/Tammûz" = Nabopolassar (626–605), the first Neo-Babylonian king and conqueror of the Assyrian empire, and Maru-Kantā (33) "son of Kanta/Sargon" = Assur-uballiṭ II (612–609), the last Assyrian king, both corresponding to Bulū (8) and Arkū (9) of the *Dīwān* (Lange n. d.). Of these proposed identifications Fūmi (28) = Pûl and Sakai = Sîn-šarra-iškun/Sarakos seem to be well founded linguistically and on account of their parallel names in the Greek records. With respect to Maru-Tāmau (32) = Nabopolassar and Maru-Kantā = Assur-uballiṭ II it may be observed that the Babylonian Nabopolassar could easily have been considered in Syria-Palestine as heir of Tammûz, and the Assyrian Assur-uballiṭ II as heir of Kanta/Sargon of Akkad. Parallel to Bulū (8) and Arkū (9) of the *Dīwān*, they reflect precisely the end of the Assyrian empire (Lange 2009a: 8; n. d.). More doubtful are the

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68 It may be noted that in the former Kotoko town of Sangaya, east of Maiduguri, two Assyrian kings are considered as the founding ancestors: Ádimun corresponding to Adimu, the second legendary king of Assyria, and Adisún to Adasi, the 46th Assyrian king, ancestor of Esarhaddon (680–669) and founder of a new dynasty (Weidner, RLA/I: 35). The eponymous ancestor of the Wandala of Mandara seems to have been Mandaru, the 6th legendary king of the Assyrian king list (Grayson, RLA/VI: 102).

69 In the Assyrian king list, the kings in the 26th to the 17th/18th position are in the reverse order, because here the genealogy of Aminu (26) is given. The Kebbi list has ʿAlū/Ḫalê and ʿUsmān/Samāni in the right chronological order.

70 Roux (1992: 246); Wilhelm, RLA/VIII: 434 f.; Edzard (2004: 161).

71 Sargon I figures in the Assyrian king list (Grayson, RLA/VI: 105) and his identity as an Assyrian king is established by inscriptions from Kültepe (Grayson 1987: 45 f.), but by his position with respect to Naram-Sin (37) he resembles Sargon of Akkad (cf. Nissen 1999: 245). The identification of Muḥammadu/Kanta *karfī* (26) with Sargon II (721–705) is unlikely because the latter should have figured in section IV of the Kebbi king list. Moreover, on account of his ignominious death in the battlefield without burial, the characteristics of Sargon II and in particular "his strength (*karfī*)" may have been displaced to Sargon I (Jes 14:4–21; Roux 1992: 317).

72 2 Kings 15:19; 1 Chron. 5:26; Burstein (1978: 23, 38); Roux (1992: 305–310); Edzard (2004: 202–207).

73 Burstein (1978: 38); Brinkmann, RLA/VI: 368; Oates (1991: 163–171).

equations Kotai/Kulai (29) = Kandalanu and Ganbi (30) = Assurbanipal from *Aššur-bāni-apli* "the god Assur is the creator of an heir" (later pronunciation: *Aššur-bān-apli*), the latter supposing the elision of the divine name – similar to Sîn-šarra-iškun > Sakai (31) in the Kebbi king list and Nabopolassar > Bulū (9) in the *Dīwān* – and the sound shift b > g (cf. Weißbach, RLA/I: 203). Nevertheless, the fourth section provides valid onomastic evidence for the final period of the Assyrian empire. As such it is an appropriate conclusion for a list of rulers extending from Sumerian times to the disappearance of Assyria.

The traditionists of the neighbouring state of Zamfara borrowed nearly all the names with the exception of the fourth section and the last two names in section three and integrated them into their king lists and chronicles (Harris 1938: 114 f.; Krieger 1959: 24–43; 1964: 95–106). Indeed, in Zamfara we find a similar tradition of immigration from Egypt and the conviction that the ancient kings were rulers of the world (Krieger 1959: 18–20; 1964: 92). In view of the common rule of the ancestors in the east, Zamfara traditionists apparently thought that they were entitled to use the ancient names from the Kebbi material when writing up their own history. Relying on the Kebbi chronicle, they took the modified name Muḥammadu *na Makāke* – instead of Muḥammadu *na Makāta* (17) – and they omitted all the rulers from Muḥammadu/ *Kantā ḳarfī* (26) onward, because on account of the well-known Kanta legend of Kebbi and the ongoing ceremonial relations with Katsina, these elements were considered to belong exclusively to the history of Kebbi.[74] They also displaced Burunburun I from apparently the beginning of their list to a minor position, left remnants of Burunburun II (24) in the name Taskarin-Burum – thus following again the Kebbi chronicle – and began their own list with Baḳuruḳuru (1), Baḳara (2), and Gimshiḳi (3), perhaps all Sumero-Babylonian figures like Gimshiḳi = Gilgamesh (Lange 2004: 253). Hence, instead of the Kassite Burunburun we find figures who might have been Babylonians like Gimschiḳi/ Gilgamesh, whereas the Urartian Argūji, the second in the Kebbi list, is kept in the fourth position.[75] Therefore, in terms of the nations involved,

the Zamfara reshuffle seems to correspond to the promotion of ancient Babylonians, the maintenance of the Urartians, and the demotion of the Kassites to a minor position. Although Kebbi and Zamfara traditionists of the Islamic period certainly had no knowledge about the nations of the ancient Near East, they might have sensed some kind of ethnic distinctions expressed by the royal names and they might have felt some aversion towards preserving the memory of certain kings alive – who happened to be Neo-Assyrians rulers.[76] However, contrary to the king list of Kebbi, the king list of Zamfara does not follow any discernable political or chronological order, except at the beginning.

Waves of Refugees in Consequence of the Fall of Assyria in 609 B.C.

Instead of a wave of immigration coming from the Nile valley in the early Christian period, as suggested by Oliver and Fage, evidence derived from historical sources in Kebbi indicates an invasion of the Central Sudan by refugees from the crumbling Assyrian empire already at the end of the seventh century B.C. This conclusion is supported by the Sargon-Kanta legend, the tradition of migration expressed by the Kebbi chronicle, the royal enthronement ceremony, and the analysis of the onomasticon of the Kebbi king list. For the neighbouring Hausa states and Kanem-Bornu similar conquests are suggested by the message of the Bayajidda legend, the analysis of the Kano chronicle, and the examination of the *Dīwān* of Kanem-Bornu (Lange 2004: 248–250; 2009a: 4–12; 2009b; n. d.). Archaeological excavations in the region southwest of Lake Chad reveal the emergence of proto-urban structures and the sudden increase of social complexity towards 500 B.C. (Magnavita 2004). A comparative study of the Chadic language material likewise buttresses the idea that the ethnic, linguistic, and cultural map of the Central Sudan was changed by the invasion of Semitic and other speakers of Hamito-Semitic languages after the downfall of the Assyrian empire (Lange 2008a: 98–100; n. d.).

Some notes on Assyrian history might be helpful for a better understaring of the driving forces behind the migrations to the Central Sudan. Dis-

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74 According to the dynastic Kanta legend, Makata married a daughter of the king of Katsina, hence the mother of Kanta is considered to be a princess of Katsina. On account of this marriage, Kabawa and Katsinawa are to this day playmates, *taubāshī* (Harris 1938: 25; Lange 1991: 156).

75 In comparison with Krieger (1959: 24–26), the list published by Harris has six additional rulers from Dutsi, among whom the female Algoje is the last one (1938: 114 f.).

76 In Kanem-Bornu the names of ancient Near Eastern kings are preserved by the *Dīwān* and by the naming of the royal Magumi clans (Lange 2009a: 10). With respect to the ancient nations, the origin chronicle only localizes some Kanembu-Kanuri clans in the Near East (Lange n. d.).

regarding the history of the Old and Middle Assyrian kingdoms, it is enough to say that expansion of the Neo-Assyrian empire to the west was mainly the result of military expeditions undertaken by Tiglath-pileser III (744–727). With his cavalry-based army, this great ruler first attacked and defeated the Syrian league of Neo-Hittite and Aramean princes instigated by Urartu.[77] He then subdued the cities of northern Phoenicia and conquered the Philistine towns of Ascalon and Gaza. In response to a call for help by the king of Judah, who was being pressurized by Damascus and Israel, he finally took Damascus, annexed half of Israel, and established the western Assyrian provinces. After this, it was Sargon II (721–705) who suppressed a revolt by the Syrian provinces and the rebellion of the king of Gaza, assisted by the Egyptian army. Some years later, the Egyptians fomented another revolt in Palestine which Sargon II again put down. Likewise, his son Sennacherib (704–681) had to deal with a revolt in Palestinian towns instigated by Egypt. In order to eliminate the constant threat at the southwestern border, his successor Esarhaddon (681–669) launched a great campaign against Egypt and conquered it in 671. The last great king of Assyria, Assurbanipal (668–627), managed to hold Egypt in submission until 655, but then an Elamite invasion of Babylonia obliged him to direct the bulk of his forces to the southeastern provinces of his empire. During the whole period of the Neo-Assyrian empire, the military exploits were achieved by a permanent army formed of contingents levied in the provinces and by an army of conscripts made up of Assyrian crown-dependents, i.e., mainly deportees and peasants (Luckenbill 1926: 269–293; Roux 1992: 305–336).

With respect to the ethnic situation in the Neo-Assyrian empire, it should be noted that massive deportations considerably changed the original demographic landscape: Mesopotamian people were resettled in the western provinces of the Assyrian empire situated close to the Mediterranean Sea, and people from Syria-Palestine were relocated in the eastern provinces. In fact, though widespread in the ancient Near East, the policy of deportation was practiced more vigorously by Assyria than by other states. Consisting of the displacement of large numbers of people from one end of the empire to the other, it compensated the demographic weakness of the Assyrians with respect to other people in their empire. In the first place, deportations were destined to punish rebellions and the breach

of treaties. But in fact, they also fulfilled the purpose of liquidating rival powers in order to weaken centres of resistance and create new bonds of loyalty between the deported minority groups and the empire. By keeping the former national identities alive, the state authorities consciously tried to create and uphold the distinctions between the newly settled people and the indigenous inhabitants of the different provinces. Owing their survival in foreign lands to the protection of their imperial overlords, the deportees themselves tended, in spite of the hardships imposed on them by displacement from their homelands, to develop new ties of allegiance to the small minority of ruling Assyrians (Oded 1979: 33–74; Edzard 2004: 203 f.).

The fall of the Assyrian empire was brought about by an alliance of the Chaldeans of Babylonia under Nabopolassar (626–605) and the Medes from behind the Zagros mountains under Cyaxares (625–585). In 614, Assur was captured by the Medes, and Nineveh fell in 612 after a joint siege of three months by Nabopolassar and Cyaxares. Sîn-šarra-iškun (627–612) succumbed in the flames of his palace, but Assur-uballiṭ II (612–609) escaped with the remnants of the army to Harran, where he was crowned. With some Egyptian troops sent at last to his rescue, he shut himself up in the city of Harran, but soon he had to withdraw and was never heard of again. He might have continued the struggle together with his Egyptian allies, who continued to fight against the advancing Babylonians under Nebuchadrezzar (604–562), the son and successor of Nabopolassar. Therefore, the final defeat in the two great battles of Carchemish and Hamath in 605 may have resulted in the flight of both, the many surviving Egyptian and the few remaining Assyrian troops (Lange 2009b). Subsequently, the whole of Syria-Palestine lay open to the Babylonians (Roux 1992: 375–379; Edzard 2004: 235 f.).

In this situation of turmoil, the Assyrian deportees in the western provinces had to fear for their lives. In many cases, they had been given the land of local people who themselves had been deported earlier. Therefore, the local people considered them as intruders, imposed on them by the Assyrian authorities. Owing to the numerous and very precise royal inscriptions, it is possible to localize the resettlements of the deportees with considerable precision: we find Babylonians in all Mediterranean provinces of Assyria, but more particularly in the north and in Israel; Kassites we find in the centre (Simirra and Kašpuna near modern Tripoli) and in Palestine (Arza near Ghaza), Urartians exclusively in Damascus, and Elamites in Egypt (Oded 1979: 116–135). When after the defeat of the Assyro-

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77 He largely replaced war chariots by cavalry (Roux 1992: 307; Starke, NP/X: 867–869).

Egyptians at Harran and Carchemish the imperial order broke up in Syria-Palestine, the members of the deportee communities were no longer safe. Closely associated with the former Assyrian oppressors, they were hated by the local people and even the former Babylonians could not expect to be welcomed by the advancing troops of Nebuchadrezzar. On account of the Egypto-Assyrian alliance, these people and the remnants of the Assyrian army must have tried to follow the surviving Egyptian soldiers in their flight towards the Nile valley. However, since in Egypt itself the prospects of settlement were grim, because the authorities would not allow large numbers of people to impinge on the rights of the local peasantry, further retreat towards the south and the west was imperative. Equipped with camels and horses the refugees reached sub-Saharan Africa, where, armed with iron weapons, they could easily submit or expel the scarce autochthonous population.

The elite-oriented oral traditions and king lists of the individual Hausa states provide only scanty information with respect to the indigenous people. However, evidence derived from the Bayajidda legend of Daura, but also known in Gobir and Katsina, shows that the African elements were more powerful in the Banza states like Kebbi and Zamfara than in the Hausa states as such. Hence, on account of their "Banzaness," they must have more successfully resisted the Hamito-Semitic invaders than those of the future Hausa states, otherwise the distinction between Hausa and Banza would have been meaningless.[78] On the basis of the Bayajidda legend – which is unknown among the Kabawa – one could further expect that the Azna, though led by the Kunduɗa claiming descent from Kisra, represented the indigenous people.[79] They could at first have been speakers of a Niger-Congo – or a Nilo-Saharan – language before Hausa, the language of the Hamito-Semitic conquerors, imposed itself progressively on all people.[80]

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78 As the personified descendants of Bagwariya, the local slave concubine of the founding hero Bayajidda, the seven Banza states, two of which – Kebbi and Zamfara – have at present a Hausa-speaking population, are thought to have formerly been inhabited by speakers of Niger-Congo languages (Barth 1857: 472; Lange 2009b).

79 Harris (1938: 226, 230). For the distinction between the Azna and the Hausa in terms of the Bayajidda legend as local Niger-Congo speakers and Hamito-Semitic speakers, see Lange (2009b).

80 According to Muḥammad Bello, the people of Kebbi descended from a Songhay father and a Katsina mother (Arnett 1922: 13). The language shift might be explained either by the spread of trade or by the advent of a Katsina dynasty (Lange 1991: 155–158).

Conclusion: The Decisive Evidence for the Foundation of Kebbi by Assyrian Refugees

Up until now Kebbi history was too marginal and too understudied to be taken into consideration with respect to the general debate on early West African state foundations. This situation resulted from general neglect – its main sources were earlier by and large unknown and the few researchers who knew them considered them to be too cryptic for any useful discussion. In fact, as we have seen, the internal evidence available is more diversified and more abundant for the early history of Kebbi than for other West African states. It covers oral and written narrative accounts as well as documentary and relic evidence and ranges form primary to secondary sources. When subjecting these elements to text criticism, the analysis must be rigorous and balanced, different genres must be clearly distinguished, and destructive hypercriticisms, often masking the ignorance of languages and philological principals, must be avoided. Apologists of the feedback theory should realize that the traditions of Near Eastern origins in Kebbi and elsewhere are only superficially affected by Islamic reinterpretations. Critics of the etymological approach should recognize that phonetic and semantic similarities of Semitic terms are considered here as equally important, and sceptics with respect to onomastic studies should be aware that individual ancient Near Eastern royal names are in the Kebbi list part of chronologically arranged sequences, which can be shown to be historically meaningful and plausible. A few supplementary notes on the main narrative account and the main documentary source will perhaps be helpful in bringing into better perspective the evidence they provide for the study of the foundation of a particular state of sub-Saharan West Africa and its ancient Near Eastern antecedents.

Based on a combination of oral traditions and written records, the Kebbi chronicle ascribes the rise of the state of Kebbi to immigration of the ancestors of the Kabawa from Madayana and Mecca in Arabia through Egypt to the Central Sudan. It localizes the rule of a number of early kings outside of sub-Saharan Africa and it singles out three kings as leaders of a great migration across the Sahara. A critical study of these elements shows a certain influence of Arab-Islamic notions on the original information: Mecca became prominent in the tradition on account of an earlier similar name which was no longer understood and the idea that early kings dominated Egypt arose from improved geographical knowledge concerning the countries

on the pilgrimage route. Moreover, the leadership of the great exodus was accorded to those kings who, before the "invention" of the nine Hausa kings, preceded the last two foreign kings. The last two kings closely linked together by their names – Maru-Tāmau and Maru-Kantā – were left in their place in order to keep them clearly distinct from Kanta, the hero of oral traditions. In turn, this "local Kanta, son of Makata," also remembered during the enthronement ritual, can be shown to correspond to a reduplication of the great Sargon of Akkad, whose tale the immigrants got to know as a major legitimizing legend of their earlier Assyrian overlords, which they brought with them to West Africa and which they subsequently used as a unifying ideology.

Documentary evidence on the foundation of the Kebbi state can indirectly be derived from the first half of the Kebbi king list comprising 33 royal names. From the close resemblances between the names on the Kebbi king list and those of various ancient Near Eastern king lists and from the cogent arrangement of these names, it appears that there must have been a mastermind behind the composition of the king list. In all likelihood, the author of the list lived at the beginning of the sixth century B.C. and could avail himself of one or several written king lists from the ancient Near East. On the basis of these lists and other evidence he produced an entirely new, highly original, and fully valid written document, covering different aspects of ancient Near Eastern history. Indeed, in line with the tradition of Babylonian historiography of a single kingdom, as exemplified by the Sumerian king list (Jacobsen 1939: 39–140),[81] the division of the list into four different sections, especially its chronological order in sections II to IV, its six apparently direct loans from the Assyrian king list, and its adequacy with respect to the known history of Mesopotamia excludes any chance similarities as well as any haphazard throwing together of historical material.

From the first section of the Kebbi king list it appears that the author wanted to provide information on the ancient Near Eastern immigrant communities which established the Kebbi state. With respect to the hierarchy among these communities, the following order among the state builders can be deduced from the royal names of this section: most prominent were the Kassites, followed by Urar-

tians, the Arameans, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and the Elamites. Though the state builders were heavily influenced by their earlier integration into the Assyrian empire, the ethnic hierarchy in the African successor state was quite different from that of their state of origin. By placing Kassite and other kings of former subservient nations at the beginning of his list and the Assyrian figures at a secondary level, the author of the list certainly wanted to indicate a reversal of the former social order for the benefit of the deported nations.

The royal names of the second section of the Kebbi list give an idea of the early imperial period of Mesopotamian history (2350–1600). Standing for the Sumerian culture hero Tammûz/Dumuzi, Tāmau represents the long period of competing southern Mesopotamian city-states, while the name Zaudai/Lugalzagesi symbolizes the rise of the first Sumerian empire and that of Kanta/Sargon of Akkad the emergence of the first Semitic empire ruled by Akkadian kings and its extension over the whole of Mesopotamia. Following the interval of the Gutian invasion, imperial power was firmly reestablished under Shulgi/Sulaymāna of the Ur III dynasty and later continued by the Babylonian dynasty of which Hammurabi was the most important representative. Parallel to the more elliptic first section of the Dīwān (Lange n. d.), the second section of the Kebbi king list, therefore, concerns the rise of various empires in southern Mesopotamia. The perpetuation of the Sargon-Kanta state legend of Kebbi upholds the memory of the most remarkable empire builder of ancient Near Eastern history and refers to the same epoch. No doubt, by emphasizing the importance of Sargon of Akkad and other kings belonging to the early imperial period, the author of the Kebbi king list intended to highlight the common historical background, uniting most of the ethnic communities who participated in setting up the Assyrian successor state of Kebbi.

The royal names of the third section of the Kebbi list reflect the period of northern Mesopotamian hegemony which bridges the time extending from the first Mesopotamian empires to the Neo-Assyrian expansion (1600–1157). By the precedence given to Assyrian legendary kings, which according to conventional historiography have to be dated much earlier, it conveys an idea of the shift of imperial developments from southern to northern Mesopotamia and the relatively late emergence of Assyria as an imperial power. At the same time it provides onomastic indications for the Hittite thrust to the south, the emergence of Kassite rule over Babylonia – in reverse order –, and the rise of Israel. Though not apparent from the Kebbi list,

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81 At a later period, the synchronistic king lists likewise conceive of Babylonia – in distinction to Assyria – as a single kingdom (Grayson, RLA/VI: 116–125).

historically the period ends with the overthrow of the Kassite dynasty in 1157 B.C.

The fourth section of the Kebbi list concerns the Neo-Assyrian empire and in particular its fall. Considering this period of Assyrian history from a Syro-Palestinian perspective, it begins with the great conqueror of the western provinces, Tiglath-pileser III, after mentioning three other intermediate kings this section finishes with the nickname of the Neo-Babylonian defeater of Assyria, Nabopolassar (626–605), and that of its last king, Assur-uballiṭ II (612–609). No doubt, these abbreviated names could easily be remembered by people who had experienced the collapse of the Assyria empire and sought refuge in West Africa. Similar short names referring to the same historical figures from the final years of Assyria are also found in the *Dīwān* in precisely the same final position of the list of ancient Near Eastern kings. Quite in conformity with the historical events, both documents place the earlier Neo-Babylonian king first and the later Neo-Assyrian king, who may have outlived his enemy, last. The reference to the final period of Assyrian history clearly emphasizes a common historical experience, allowing different groups of refugees to found a new state on African soil. On the basis of this onomastic analysis, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the state of Kebbi was in the full sense of the term an Assyrian successor state.

Almost as spectacular as its writing up is the subsequent transmission of the king list until the present day. In fact, if the arguments presented here are valid, the Kebbi king list is one of the few historical documents from the ancient Near East to have reached modern times by intentional transmission. Other examples that can be quoted are the books of the Old Testament, the accounts of Herodotus and of Ctesias, the chronicle of Berossos, and the Ptolemaic canon. However, these texts mention – with the exception of Ninos (Tukultī-Ninurta I) and Semiramis – only a few Assyrian kings from Pûl/Tighlath-pileser III onward and they are influenced by an anti-Assyrian tendency. All other well-founded historical evidence pertaining to ancient Mesopotamian kings was discovered by the unearthing and deciphering of written tablets and inscriptions (Grayson, RLA/VI: 86–126). Though the king list of Kebbi has reached us through the medium of Arabic, it has undergone only minor changes. As for its earliest form, it was probably written and transmitted for some time in Aramaic. In view of the survival of the Phoenician-derived Tifinagh script in the nearby Tuareg societies (Boogert, EI^2/X: 476) and on account of remnant terms indicating an early literacy among the

Hausa, further written transmission on leather, involving a residual knowledge of Aramaic, seems to be possible for the long period before the introduction of Arabic (cf. Lemaire, ABD/VI: 1000f.; Hurschmann und Röllig, NP/XI: 228).[82] However, with regard to the great age of Yoruba dynastic traditions (Lange 2004: 239–242), a transmission by word of mouth of a king list, first composed in a written form, should not be excluded categorically.

It is important to realize that the evidence from the Central Sudan suggests a direct link between three different events: the fall of the Assyrian empire, a great exodus to the south, and the rise of several sub-Saharan states. As we have seen, according to the Kebbi chronicle the best candidate for any leadership of a migration towards sub-Saharan Africa was Maru-Kantā (33). Bornu sources in turn suggest that the equivalent figure Arkū (9) was originally considered to have been the head of the exodus group responsible for the foundation of Kanem (Lange n. d.). Similarly, the Hausa tradition of Daura depicts Bayajidda as the great leader of a migration who left the Mesopotamian city of his royal father with half the army of the state, which he lost en route before arriving in Daura as a lonely refugee (Lange 2009b). Since each of the three figures mentioned in the respective traditions – Maru-Kantā, Arkū, and Bayajidda – represents the last Assyrian king, Assur-uballiṭ II, there are good reasons to believe that these traditions provide precious evidence for a causal connection between the fall of the Assyrian empire and the rise of states in the Central Sudan.[83] Whether Assur-uballiṭ II, whose fate is not yet known (Oates 1991: 182), led the central group of the exodus in person or not, the event itself, its timing, and its Assyrian connection seem to be well established. In this context the claims of Kebbi to be a successor state of Assyria are particularly striking. Owing to its well-preserved sources, the state founders of Kebbi can be shown more clearly than those of other polities of the Central Sudan to have originated from the Near East.

With respect to the fate of the local inhabitants the Kebbi traditions are silent. Yet, on the basis of the Hausa legend's classification of Kebbi among

82 Earlier literacy in Hausa society is indicated by the Aramaic loanword *makaranta* (school), the unknown etymology of the widespread term for "writing" – Kan. *ruvotə*, Ha. *rubūtu* (from Akk. *rubbû* – "chief" [writer]?) – and the Sumero-Akkadian loanword *girgam* in eastern Hausa and in Kanuri for "written historical document" (Lange 2008b: 97).

83 In view of these identifications the name Bayajidda may derive from (Assur)-uballiṭ "Aššur has given life": uballiṭ > Bayajidda/Abuyazidu (Lange 2009b).

the *banza bakwai* "seven illegitimate" states, it may be suggested that in spite of their conquest by invaders from the Near East the indigenous people were able to impose their original Niger-Congo or Nilo-Saharan language on the foreign conquerors. Furthermore, the adoption of the Sargon/Kanta tale as the state legend seems to imply that there was considerable local resistance against the cultural domination of the foreign invaders. Contrary to the *Hausa bakwai* "seven Hausa" states, the indigenous people of Kebbi and Zamfara, though militarily vanquished by the immigrants, seem to have put up a resistance against the foreign conquerors at an early stage that was sufficient to oblige them to adopt the local language and to give up their own. Hence, it would appear that the foreign invaders were themselves subjected to a process of rapid acculturation which changed important aspects of their original culture. Apart from the multifaceted heritage from their countries of origin, this ethnic and linguistic immersion of the immigrants in the African milieu, partly due to the lack of women, was perhaps the main reason why the important ancient Near Eastern contributions to the rise of social complexity in the Central Sudan have hitherto gone unnoticed.

Abbreviations

ABD =   D. N. Freedman (ed.), The Anchor Bible Dictionary. 6 Vols. New York: Doubleday. 1992

CAD =   I. J. Gelb et al. (eds.), The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. 21 Vols. Chicago: Oriental Institute. 1956–2006.

DULAT =   G. del Olmo Lete and J. Sanmartín, A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition. 2 Vols. Leiden: Brill. 2004. [2nd rev. ed.]

EI^1 =   M. Th. Houtsma et al. (eds.), The Encyclopaedia of Islam. 8 Vols. Leyden: E. J. Brill. 1913–1936.

EI^2 =   B. Lewis et al. (eds.), Encyclopédie de l'Islam. 11 Vols. Leiden: Brill. 1960–2002. [Vols. 1 to 5 in French, vols. 6 to 11 in English]

FN 77,
   89, 93 =   Field Notes from Dierk Lange from the years 1977, 1989, and 1993.

HALAT =   W. Baumgartner und L. Koehler, Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten

Testament. 5 Vols. Leiden: Brill. 1967–1996. [3. Aufl.]

NP =   Cancik und Schneider (Hrsg.), Der Neue Pauly. Enzyklopädie der Antike. 16 Bde. Stuttgart: Metzler. 1996–2003.

RLA =   D. O. Edzard (Hrsg. – begründet v. E. Ebeling, E. Weldner und W. von Soden), Reallexikon der Assyriologie und vorderaisatischen Archäologie. 11 Bde. Berlin: W. de Gruyter. 1932–2005. [Not finished]

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