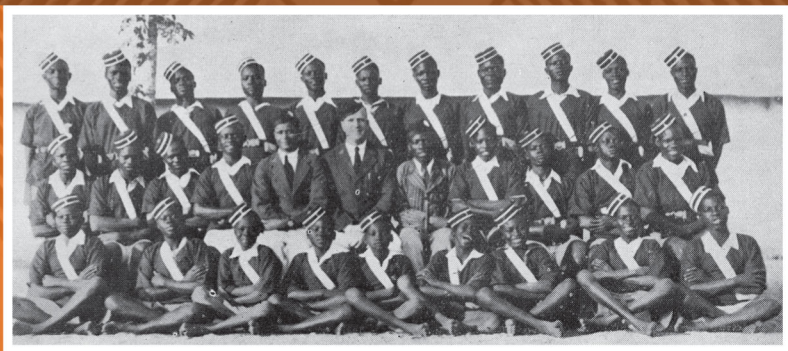


MAKING HEADWAY

THE INTRODUCTION
OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION IN
COLONIAL NORTHERN NIGERIA



ANDREW E. BARNES

Making Headway



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The Introduction of Western Civilization
in Colonial Northern Nigeria

Andrew E. Barnes



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Preface

A professor of mine once explained historical research as akin to pulling an onion from the ground and then peeling back the layers to get to the seed. His point was that the outer layers were growing, organic things with histories worthy of study, but the inner phenomenon—*that* served as impetus for everything else. Historical research was thus the process of learning to discern outer phenomena from the inner phenomenon. The notion made an impression on me at the time, but the insight it carried did not come home to me until I took up the task of writing this book. That was fifteen years ago. It started out as an entirely different study, then morphed into another, and then another, and then one more. Each time I thought I had hold of the inner phenomenon, but like another layer of onion skin, it peeled away and I was confronted with the task of reconstructing yet another narrative. It was only after ten years of starts and stops that I identified the narratives presented below as offering the best angle on the topic of the introduction of European civilization in Northern Nigeria.

When I first arrived in Nigeria as a Fulbright scholar in 1992, this was not the topic I hoped to investigate. Since my undergraduate days I have retained an interest in both African and European history. In graduate school one has to choose, however, and I opted to concentrate on European history. I have never regretted the decision, but after completing my first research project, I decided to try to mesh my two interests. I decided to study European missionaries in Africa. Since my research on Europe was on Counter-Reformation Catholicism, a brand of Catholicism propagated across the European countryside by missionary orders, I decided to look at the connections between Catholic missionizing in Counter-Reformation Europe and Catholic missionizing in colonial Africa. But quite literally on my first day in the old colonial colony of Northern Nigeria I made an observation that started me on the onion peeling alluded to above.

The early 1990s were the heyday of the hit American television show *Miami Vice*, in which the actor Don Johnson created a fashion of wearing expensive suits over crew neck shirts with the coat arm sleeves hiked up to the elbows. The early 1990s were also the heyday of *bling*, the fashion, followed mostly by African Americans of the hip-hop generation, of wearing necklaces of heavy gold chains to which were attached names or initials in gold block letters.

Landing in Lagos for the first time, I found myself engaged in a game probably all African Americans, perhaps all Americans, play when they first land in Africa, that of comparing and contrasting black culture in Africa to black culture in the United States. My engagement in the game continued when I landed in the airport in Jos, in the former Northern Province. I was playing it when I spotted coming toward me a young African male dressed in a Don Johnson suit, with a huge gold chain, but also a clerical collar. Eventually we passed each other, and I noted to my surprise that the suit sleeves were not hiked, they were tailored to be short sleeves. But the most important thing I saw was the name at the end of the gold chain. In big block letters it spelled out JESUS.

As someone who grew up observing, if not participating in, the black church in America, I had seen a good many things. But I had never seen such a bold, naïve expression of faith. I got to Africa with two years of reading about mission Christianity in my head. Most of that reading, written by Western anthropologists and historians, had convinced me that I was coming to Africa to study a cultural phenomenon very much alien to the African mind. But from the start of my sojourn in the north I was confronted with the fact that Christianity, at least the Christianity I saw and heard around me, was hardly foreign. Living in the “senior staff compound”—that is, the residential area reserved for faculty and administrators associated with the University of Nigeria at Jos—it was a rare weekday evening when I did not pass by a prayer meeting being held on someone’s front veranda or lawn. Street corner preachers could be spotted everywhere in the city at any time of the day (and sometimes night). As an American I was used to the idea of “open mike” sessions for stand-up comedians being held at campus venues. But an open mike for aspiring young preachers was something quite new. In observing the Christian worlds I was privileged to see in Nigeria, I felt I was witnessing a faith so intuitive as to deny the idea that it came from somewhere else.

But obviously, historically, it was imported. The task before me, then, became to figure out how this all came about. To be more precise, because my interest was cultural contact between Africans and Europeans, the task before me became to identify the role of European missionaries in bringing into existence the articulations of Christian faith I observed. The history of Catholic missions in Northern Nigeria provided some keys but ultimately did not answer my questions. Likewise, the history of the Church Missionary Society in the region proved to be another layer of the onion. It was only when I started to construct the story from the arrival of evangelical Protestant missions in the North that I discovered a line of progress from the past to the present I wanted to explain. Here, though, I encountered a problem. In reconstructing the story of Christianity in Northern Nigeria during the colonial era, some cognizance has to be taken of the role of the colonial

government in shaping developments. Government opposition to Christian evangelism was so entrenched, so intransigent, that there were few aspects of the Christian experience that did emerge that were not in some way shaped by it. What needed to be explained were both the lines government opposition took and the motivations that made that opposition so adamant. As for motivations, originally I took the word of the missionaries that this animosity was based on sympathy for Islam. But the more I read, the more my readings convinced me that whatever had prompted the government's behavior toward Christian missions, it was not sympathy for Islam. It became clear to me in fact that government attitudes and practices concerning Christian missions were based on nothing I would identify as religious. I had not gone to Nigeria looking to study the export of European ideas of aristocracy. But my training in European history certainly helped me see that the introduction of such ideas was the primary goal of government social engineering during the colonial era. And while I am definitely not the first to call attention to the pursuit of aristocratic autocracy in the North, I do think I am the first to attempt to contextualize this pursuit as a cultural phenomenon.

The British colonial government in Northern Nigeria had as much cultural and emotional capital invested in the creation of a British-style social hierarchy as Christian missionaries had in the creation of indigenous churches. This conclusion provided a starting point for an understanding of the government's motivation. Further, because the government was convinced that Christian missions introduced egalitarian notions highly corrosive to ideas of social hierarchy, an attribute of the government's concern with elite formation was a determination to keep the missions as far away as possible from the people the government hoped to transform. Hence the government's opposition to Christian evangelism.

These conclusions about the colonial government left me with a crucial decision to make. Do I go along with the missionaries and demonize colonial administrators for getting in the way of Christian proselytization? Or do I place the ambitions of colonial administrators as expatriates on par with the ambitions of Christian missionaries as expatriates, and thus write a history about two groups of Europeans and their dreams of cultural transfer? Because my goal was to write a history of cultural contact, and not of Christian evangelism, I made the latter choice. This decision explains the comparative character of the present work. My thesis is that the introduction of Western civilization to traditionalists in Northern Nigeria was different from the introduction of Western civilization to Muslim elites in the region; that these introductions were provided by different, competing groups of European expatriates with different sets of social and cultural agendas; and that lastly, in both instances a version of Western civilization was successfully introduced. I demonstrate my thesis by showing as clearly as I can the comparative efforts on the part of the two groups to mentor selected groups of

Northerners toward a sense of the values the expatriates wanted to share. The government made sure that it and the missions targeted distinctly different African populations. The space between these target populations insured that the success of one group really had little direct impact on the fortunes of the other. Still, there was never a time during the colonial era when the two groups of expatriates did not see themselves as locked in a battle between good and evil, such characterizations coming from participants on both sides. The perceived contest between the two groups of expatriates made the story of cultural contact between Europeans and Africans in Northern Nigeria both very interesting and very difficult to narrate.

To return to my metaphor of onion peeling, after I finished peeling, I discovered that I had not really gotten down to the seed. The stories of the transfer of evangelical Christianity as well as of aristocratic values were both outer layers, with the inner phenomenon being the story of the emergence of the modern nation of Nigeria. I am comfortable with the discovery. In looking back over what I have written, I would like to think that I have provided Western scholars, particularly historians, with a pathway to follow toward an understanding of cultural interaction between Africans and Europeans, as it has occurred over time, that recognizes that both groups had some initiative in the process and that the results of such interaction held rewards for both. Beyond the Western academy, however, I hope Nigerians will find this work of value in their efforts to reconstruct and to understand their own history. As a historian of Christianity, I have provided Nigerian Christians with an idea of how expatriate evangelicals did and did not contribute to the shaping of Nigerian Christian identity. Lastly, this work does not have much to say about Islam in Northern Nigeria, in part because Islam is not an area of my expertise, and in part because my subject was colonial administrators who made clear that they were approaching Muslim elites as aristocrats first, and as Muslims only secondarily. Still, for Nigeria's Muslims what I hope I have shown in some modest way is the extent to which Muslim elites always kept Islam in mind, in spite of the British insistence that reasons of state dictated that faith be jettisoned.

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Tempe, Arizona

Acknowledgments

In a book that took as long to finish as this one did, one incurs a debt of gratitude to a host of benefactors. I cannot name them all. But it is important to me to thank the directors and staff at the National Archives of Nigeria at Kaduna and Ibadan and at the Arewa House Centre for Historical Documentation and Research, also in Kaduna. Without their help I would never have identified the documents that are at the heart of this monograph. Likewise the anonymous workers at the British National Archives and at the Rhodes House Library at Oxford provided access to the documents that helped me place what I learned in Nigeria in context. Martha Smalley, special collections librarian at the Yale Divinity School Library, and Margaret Acton, formerly the special collections librarian at the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World at Edinburgh University, taught me the truth of the statement that librarians are the giants on whose shoulders scholars really stand. Father Jarlath Walsh and Father Joseph Maguire of the Société des Missions Africaines (SMA) in Jos Diocese and the priests at the SMA House in Cork, Ireland, graciously opened their minds and memories to me. The late Father Michael I. R. Vishih, OP, played Aristotle to my Dante, guiding me through the many circles of Nigerian Christianity toward what little enlightenment I might claim on the subject. Bob Arnold and Tim Geysbeek at the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) International Archives in Fort Mill, South Carolina, helped me discover the importance of the SIM in the planting of Christianity in Northern Nigeria. Joel Carpenter and the archive staff of the Hekman Library at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, similarly pointed me toward documents that revealed the role of the Sudan United Mission (SUM) in the Christianization of the North.

The initial research for this study was completed during a Fulbright Fellowship in Nigeria in 1992–93. Carnegie Mellon University provided support for a summer of research in Great Britain in 1994. Arizona State University (ASU) provided support for summer research in Britain in 2000, 2002, 2004, and 2006 and for summer research at archives in the United States in the summers of 2005 and 2007. A grant from the Overseas Ministries Research Center allowed me to take the fall of 1998 off from teaching to begin writing this book. A grant from the ASU College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Dean's Office allowed me to take the spring of 2005 off to complete a first draft.

To my former colleagues at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, and to my present colleagues at Arizona State University in Tempe, I would like to say thanks for listening again and again to my various explanations of what I was trying to do with this project. Thanks likewise go to the many colleagues who have listened and commented on the papers I have given at the African Studies Association and the annual conferences of the Yale-Edinburgh Group on the History of the Missionary Movement and Non-Western Christianity. To both groups I would like to offer this book as proof that I did listen and learn. Professor Toyin Falola, editor of the Rochester Studies in African History and the Diaspora series, in which this book appears, demonstrated to me that patience is perhaps the greatest virtue a scholar may claim. Lastly to Scarlett, Luke, Aaron, and Joshua, who have never known me when I was not working on this book, I offer deepest gratitude for your understanding over the years. Perhaps now I will have time to read some bedtime stories.

1

Some Theoretical Concerns

This book is about Europeans and about how Europeans tried to remake Africans in their own image—not in any sense as individual replicas of themselves, but rather in the sense of passing on to at least selected groups of Africans the values and sensibilities that particular groups of Europeans esteemed. Over the first sixty years of the twentieth century, in the British colonial territory of Northern Nigeria, European expatriates implemented a multitude of development schemes aimed at incorporating African peoples into the cultural worlds those expatriates saw themselves as inhabiting. These schemes are the main focus of the book. They will be examined first for what they disclose about European notions of social engineering; second, for what they reveal about the ways European cultural ambitions in Africa changed over the course of time; and third, for what they have to say about how European expatriates evolved in order to relate to colonized peoples.

This book is also about Africans, and about how Africans actually responded to the development schemes introduced by Europeans. The book examines, for one small part of Africa, for one short period of time, the presentation of European culture to Africans and the African response to that presentation. In Northern Nigeria, the examination suggests, Western civilization provided a portal through which local peoples reached to grab knowledge and values to help them cope with European colonization. European expatriates certainly maintained the initiative in the presentation of European patterns of thought and material culture, but as shall be shown, Northern Nigerians exerted far more say over the reception of patterns of thought and material culture they did adopt. And the skills and values Northerners assimilated helped them resist cultural domination. Lastly, the cultural knowledge Northerners acquired can be shown to have allowed them to reach beyond their European mentors to learn from other Westernized African and Asian peoples.

The main concern of the book is with the story of Christian missions and their efforts to establish Christian communities among the peoples of the territory. I have no ambition to provide a traditional “planting” of Christianity narrative, though I will discuss the details of the spread of Christianity in the region sufficiently to help historians eager to complete such a project.

Rather, Christian faith will be treated here as a medium, the primary goal being to explain how it served to transmit twentieth-century European culture and values to Africans living in an area of British colonization.

In order to write a history of the missionary push to introduce Western civilization in Northern Nigeria, it is also necessary to write a history of the government push to do the same thing. There was never a time during the colonial era when Christian missionaries in Northern Nigeria did not find their efforts to evangelize limited by the actions of British colonial administrators. Missionaries traced these limits to what they saw as sympathy for Islam among colonial administrators. The argument I advance below is that colonial officials stymied Christian proselytization not out of some covert preference for Islam, but out of a desire to promote British ideas of aristocratic rule among members of the region's Muslim ruling class. The determination of the government to introduce into Northern Nigeria an aristocratic notion of Western civilization was as strong as the desire of the missions to introduce a Christian one. And while there were times when events pushed the contest into the background, throughout the colonial era both groups of expatriates continued to pursue their competition between them as a winner-take-all battle of good versus evil.

The story of the missions and the story of the government are complementary halves of the same overall narrative and will be offered as such below. The government's efforts, however, will be approached from a perspective different from the one taken with the missions' efforts. Very little research exists on the history of Christian missions in Northern Nigeria. To write about missions is to add something new to the scholarship on Christianity in Africa more broadly and Christianity in Nigeria in specific. There exists a substantial body of research, most of it having to do with the colonization of the Muslim states that make up the northern two-thirds of Northern Nigeria, in which the topic of the introduction of Western civilization by the government is an underlying theme.¹ The goal in of the present study is to discuss this literature with a view toward bringing the topic to the forefront, mostly through identifying and discussing documents that put into sharper relief the cultural objectives behind government programs and projects. "Indirect rule" is the term used for the British strategy of conducting the affairs of colonial government as much as possible through indigenous political institutions. The term was first coined and used to discuss British government of the Muslim states of Northern Nigeria. This study seeks to show the extent to which the cultural initiatives behind official pursuit of the strategy was as important as the political agenda. The indigenous political institutions the British commandeered were those that permitted an autocratic exercise of power. The colonial government endeavored to train the individuals in control of these institutions in what the British saw as the art of aristocratic rule.

For the story of the Christian missions, archives on three continents have been consulted. Station logs and annual reports, available in mission archives, have proven extremely helpful in providing some idea of the social dynamics occurring at mission stations. Also available in these archives are mission periodicals, a greatly undervalued source for understanding how what missionaries saw themselves as doing changed over time. Lastly, government archives in both Nigeria and Great Britain were researched. Here it is helpful to mention two things. First is the extraordinary war of words between Christian missionaries and colonial administrators that characterized mission-government relations in Northern Nigeria. As already suggested, in the competition between Christian missionaries and colonial administrators for the hearts and minds of Northern Nigerians, administrators used the apparatus of government without compunction to stymie missionary advance. In reaction Christian missions filed protest after protest with the Colonial Office in Whitehall. The Colonial Office wrote to colonial administrators asking for explanations, which the colonial administrators in turn typed up and sent back to Britain.

The second point worth mentioning is the makeup of the administrative files created to contain these exchanges. The colonial administration in Northern Nigeria followed the practice of cobbling together new administrative files from pertinent pieces of older such files. Each missionary complaint that required a measure of background investigation prompted a culling of the archives for information that might serve as precedent. The resulting files could be quite voluminous; some having to do with missions grew to more than three hundred pages. In their own fashion these files told stories. They offered detailed recapitulations of developments on the ground, going back beyond the events in question to previous actions recognized by administrators as antecedents. Equally important, because the antecedents were selected from a larger pool of past actions, the files supply a sense of broader processes of social and cultural transformation as perceived from the administrative perspective. In other words, the files provided the connections assumed by administrators to have existed between disparate events. As applied to the story of Christian missions, because the files related the request for the opening of one mission station to a prior request for the opening of another, and because the files related each new confrontation between missions and government to prior confrontations between the two, the files grant arguably the best sense available of the moving frontier of Christian evangelization over the course of the colonial era.

As already explained, the cultural initiatives of the colonial government and the outcomes of these initiatives will be reconstructed primarily through the use of secondary literature. There are a large number of studies, published and unpublished, of the colonial regime in general, of particular aspects of the colonial regime, and of the colonial regime in specific

provinces. To these may be added the numerous memoirs published by former members of the Northern Nigerian administrative corps, as well as the four novels about the colonial province penned by Joyce Cary, the one Northern administrator who went on to literary fame. Lastly, to these may be added the typescripts of the interviews conducted with expatriates who lived in the North collected as part of the Colonial Records Project. I have visited archives both in Kaduna, the former administrative capital of the colonial province of Northern Nigeria, and in London in search of materials concerning government cultural initiatives. A significant cache of files containing memoranda, reports, and letters on the topic has been collected. These files will be discussed below as they pertain to aspects of the story not sufficiently investigated in secondary literature.

It will be helpful here at the start to say something about the geographical and social foci of the book, so as to avoid causing confusion. Northern Nigeria, also known as the Northern Provinces of Nigeria, was created by combining all the lands conquered by the British north of the Niger and Benue Rivers (or Niger-Benue). Most of this land was contained in two great Muslim states, the Sokoto Caliphate and the kingdom of Kanem-Bornu. The territories that made up these two empires the British recognized as being ruled by emirs or equivalent Muslim aristocrats. The territories were collectively called, among other things, the “emirates,” which term will be used as a shorthand label in the following pages. These Muslim lands are what most scholars have in mind when they speak about the British province of Northern Nigeria.

South of the emirates, however, there was a substantial band or belt of territory stretching from the Emirates’ borders to the Niger-Benue. This area contained many Muslim enclaves, but at the start of the colonial era it was mostly populated by traditionalist communities. This stretch of territory has been given very little attention by historians. By the end of the colonial era, however, it would be recognized as Nigeria’s “Middle Belt.” The origins and development of the Middle Belt are a topic on which I hope to shed light, though this topic will be addressed systematically only in the last chapter. While aspiring to provide a primer for the history of the planting of Christianity in Northern Nigeria, I hope the book also serves a similar purpose for the history of the emergence of the Middle Belt. The two histories are related in that the Middle Belt is best defined as that region of Northern Nigeria where Christianity took root.

While there were other emirates in traditionalist areas as well, most of what will be said below about the transfer of culture to Nigeria’s Muslim elite will have to do with developments within the northern emirates. The broader history of the emirates during the colonial era will not be a subject of discussion below; there already exist several excellent case studies of specific emirates during the era.² The concern here is rather exclusively with

the cultural attributes of the British effort at creating a British-style Muslim “aristocracy” in the region.

By the same token, while there were traditionalist enclaves within the emirates, and the government in fact placed many traditionalist groups under Muslim authority (“Pagans in Emirates”),³ most of what will be said below about the transmission of (Christian) culture to traditionalist groups took place in the area that would become the Middle Belt. As noted above, so far little has been written on the emergence of the Middle Belt as a self-identified region during the colonial era. The study below aspires only to characterize the African Christianity that served as impetus for that development.

Definitions

The chapters below have been written as much as possible as a narrative, the objective being to follow the two notions of Western civilization promoted in Northern Nigeria from their emergence in the cultural discourses that preoccupied Britons of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, through their implementation in the context of development schemes during the colonial era, to an assessment of their outcomes at the moment of Nigerian independence. As a prelude to the discussion in later chapters, this first chapter will provide some clues as to what is meant by several key terms. First are the terms “Western civilization” and “European culture,” used herein as synonyms. Because these terms represent so many things, it is constructive to start by identifying what the terms are not meant to signify—that is, any conception of a European *mission civilisatrice*, or civilizing mission.

Some observations by the anthropologist Marshall Sahlins are quite useful here. Sahlins points out that the notion of bringing civilization to the indigenous (non-European) peoples of the world, civilization being understood as culture founded on liberal bourgeois concepts of reason and rationalism, was an attribute of the western European Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. Over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a host of other notions, which Sahlins wonderfully characterizes as “dogmas of the common average native Western folklore posing as universal understandings of the human condition,” became associated with the idea.⁴ Thus, Western scholars have taken for granted that indigenous “traditional” cultures would begin to collapse on themselves from the point of contact with “modern” European civilization, and that from the point of contact indigenous peoples necessarily either evolved—that is, began to assimilate Western values and sensibilities—or, as the English writer Wilson Reade put it, speaking about people of African descent, would “be devoured by stronger races” and disappear.⁵ The point of Sahlins’s comments is that the observed behavior of indigenous peoples in reaction to cultural contact demonstrates

the fallaciousness of such assumptions. Far from being overawed, indigenous peoples can be seen to have usurped and appropriated Western civilization to maintain and extend their own cultures. This process, which Sahlins labels the "indigenization of modernity," involves, to again use his words, an effort by non-Western peoples "to create their own cultural versions of modernity."⁶

Sahlins's observations nicely frame the developments described below. The focus of the book is Europeans and how Europeans sought to shape the thoughts and behaviors of Africans. The Africans in question, that is, the peoples of Northern Nigeria, are not assumed to have passively embraced the attributes of European culture or to have sacrificed their identities to become copies of Europeans. They are assumed to have "indigenized" modernity, to have actively and selectively investigated the presentation of Western civilization laid before them from the perspective of how that civilization could help further the collective cultural experiences they already shared. In reference to Sahlins's comments, what the book hopes to show is the extent to which expatriates concerned with cultural transfer did and did not let their "dogmas" get in the way of the process. Expatriates certainly came to the North with a commitment to some idea of a *mission civilisatrice* in their heads, although, as will become clear, that idea did not necessarily involve a culture built on liberal bourgeois values. In the flow of the actual process of cultural exchange, however, expatriates opened up the culture they were offering to exactly the sorts of cultural appropriations Sahlins had in mind. Not all of the attributes of the idea of Western civilization maintained by the expatriates who lived in colonial Northern Nigeria was open to negotiation. But a good many of them were. And it can be observed that there was enough space within the European idea of Western civilization for at least some sets of Africans to construct worlds of their own.

Since, as just suggested, African definitions of terms like "Western civilization" and "European culture" eventually established hegemony in colonial Northern Nigeria, it is those definitions that will be used below. As understood by Africans the two terms signaled the cultural universe shaped by European technology. From guns to bicycles to typewriters—to the African perspective the European compound was one vast warehouse of contraptions around which Europeans shaped their lives.⁷ As for the related adjective "civilized," there was no equivalent in the Northern Nigerian lexicon. The closest approximation was the term "book," as in an African knew "book," meaning that he or she was knowledgeable in the ways of the Europeans. Northerners applied it to any individual who displayed intellectual skills such as literacy in colonial languages and/or the knowledge required to operate European technology.

Africans from Nigeria's Southern Province placed these meanings for these terms in the minds of Northerners. To briefly summarize an argument that will become clearer in the following chapters, Europeans defined their

culture in mental (cognitive) terms, assuming that the abstract thought required to function in a European universe was so advanced that Africans would require centuries to grasp it. Southerners' definitions of Western civilization, however, characterized Western civilization as a culture based on the acquisition of skills. Western civilization was a civilization of reading and writing, but also of riding a bicycle, using a typewriter, driving a car. Following this definition, Western civilization became something that could be grasped in a single generation. This definition was in fact hammered out in the face of European racism and paternalism along the West African coast in the second half of the nineteenth century, and it signaled a refusal of Africans to accept the insular boundaries Europeans sought to place around European culture.⁸

Two other terms that merit some definition are "cultural transmission" and "cultural transfer," which also are used as synonyms. Scholarly discussions of cultural transfer usually occur within larger discussions of "cultural imperialism," and discussions of cultural imperialism in turn usually occur in the context of assessments of the impact of some construct of Western civilization on cultures and societies.⁹ As these points suggest, cultural transfer has been treated as the process through which some species of Western ideas and values has been imposed by some dominant group or state on a dominated group or state.¹⁰ Within the literature on cultural imperialism, there seems to be a growing recognition of the limitations of this characterization. Older models of cultural imperialism emphasized the "coercive" power of Western civilization to impose itself on other cultures, granting the transmitters of Western civilization almost godlike power to change everything before them. Newer models recognize that recipients have exercised as much, if not more agency in the process of cultural transfer as have transmitters. Echoing Sahlins's appraisal, most recent research suggests that far from possessing any innate capacity to intimidate indigenous cultures, Western civilization has had an impact on such cultures only to the extent to which it has been appropriated by indigenous groups and applied toward their goals.

This study aspires to expand on the idea of cultural transfer as more of a process of appropriation than of imposition. Analyzing the dynamics of cultural transfer as they occurred during the colonial era in Northern Nigeria, the book seeks to show two things: first, the extent to which Europeans were actively engaged in an effort to *limit* the spread of the liberal ideas studies of cultural imperialism presume they supported; and second, the extent to which African response pushed Europeans back toward the dissemination of a liberal idea of Western civilization.

Typically in the literature on cultural imperialism resisters to cultural imperialism are assumed to be local intellectuals, meaning that they are literate elites who reside in the state to which culture is being transferred.

Further, these local intellectuals are assumed to be defending some national construct of culture against the imposition of some international construct of culture. Arrayed against these local defenders are transmitters of some incarnation of liberal capitalistic society who make use of whatever power at their disposal to replace local culture with a version of their own.

The history of cultural transfer in Northern Nigeria challenges this equation in that it was the expatriates who consciously saw themselves as engaged in the defense of indigenous culture and values, while it was local folks who pushed expatriates for greater access to capitalistic culture and values. The example of Northern Nigeria suggests that resistance to cultural imperialism could become what the anthropologist William Christian, Jr., once characterized as “translocal,” and as such, a form of cultural imperialism itself.¹¹ Equally important, the expatriate experience in Northern Nigeria questions any narrow association between European cultural imperialism and liberalism. The expatriates who went to Northern Nigeria wanted as little as possible to do with modern Western culture. It was not simply that in crossing the Niger-Benue they saw themselves as going back in time. It was also that they wanted to move local societies forward but to a time anterior to the contemporary moment. Modernity could be reversed, they believed. Their development schemes were going to demonstrate that.

Given the ambition of the colonial government to use what it identified as precapitalistic agrarian values as the cement for the system of aristocratic autocracy it installed, the eagerness of Northerners to acquire the kinds of knowledge and skills that would allow them to opt out of the government's plans can be appreciated as reflecting an instinct for survival. Administrators complained bitterly about how young men with some claim of command over the attributes of Western civilization schemed to avoid the corvée-like labor obligations the government imposed on village males. But what separated these men from their fellow villagers was not distaste for life on a road crew—it seems fair to assume that such distaste was universal. What separated them was an awareness of a set of options not available to other villagers, options that involved a less onerous, more profitable connection with the colonial state.

To these Africans the task was getting expatriates to aid them by supplying the kinds of knowledge expatriates were determined not to supply. Northern Nigerians always had the option of forcing the issue by voting with their feet—that is, for example, by pressuring missionaries with the threat of worshipping someplace else. Especially after the emergence of the Catholic mission in the 1930s, this strategy did yield results, at least for traditionalists. But the study below highlights the capacity of missionaries and other expatriates to observe and learn. Expatriates who went to Northern Nigeria shared as conventional wisdom the idea that any sort of exposure to Western civilization contaminated Africans. Colonial administrators claimed

that such exposure led to what they called “denationalization.” Missionaries claimed that it led to Mammon. As shall be seen, gradually expatriates came to see that one thing did not necessarily lead to the other. During the first half of the colonial era, both groups of expatriates fought as hard as they could against any commitment to cultural transfer via schools, Western-style schools being identified as the primary vehicle for the spread of Western liberalism. During the second half of the colonial era, both missions and government reversed course and made cultural transfer via schools the preferred choice for passing on their ideas of Western culture and values. To a certain extent both groups were forced by events to go down this path. But what made both groups increasingly confident that they had made the right decision was the African response to their initiatives. Africans were becoming modern in the way expatriates wanted them to become modern. This point, however, should not overshadow the fact that, in response to African prompting, Europeans were supplying Africans with the knowledge that Africans desired.

As this argument implies, cultural transfer, as it occurred in colonial Africa, as it had to do with European initiatives, is best described as a self-serving process. Cultural transfer was always attempted from the European side with the goal of passing on to Africans specific lifeways. The justification behind the goal (as presented by the expatriates in question here) was of course that these things were the most salutary attributes of European culture. Europeans only identified as salutary, however, those attributes of European culture they themselves were most committed to passing on. In colonial Northern Nigeria, both the determination on the part of administrators to teach young Muslims the ethos of the playing fields, and the equal determination of Protestant evangelicals to teach young traditionalists the necessity of faith based on scripture are examples of this. Cultural transfer was about providing Africans with the means to eventually become like their European mentors.

Cultural transfer thus always had implicit within it “social engineering.” This is the last and most difficult term to be defined, primarily because, beyond some general sense of government planning, there is absolutely no consensus in the scholarly literature as to its meaning.¹² And a focus on the role of government obscures the initiatives taken by other agencies, most importantly, the Christian missions. Rather than attempt to build on any existing use of the term, I use “social engineering” simply to denote the social experiments devised to pass on social and cultural values. Put in slightly different language, when used below social engineering is meant to connote the programmatic strategies initiated by European expatriates in an effort to trigger global changes in collective African behavior. One example of such social experiments would be the sewing circles devised to teach traditionalist women the tenets of Christianity; another would be the polo matches used

to demonstrate to young Muslim males aristocratic notions of valor. While obviously coercion could be used in the employment of such strategies, at least on the part of the government, the focus below will be on those strategies for which some volition can be discerned in the African response.

The Missions Studied

In 1927 *World Dominion*, a British Protestant magazine, published a survey of the Christian missions in Nigeria. The survey listed nine Protestant missions as operating in the Northern Province, with 243 missionaries working out of seventy-one stations.¹³ The survey failed to note the Catholic mission working in the territory. From another source it is possible to state that at the same moment there were four Catholic missionaries operating out of two stations.¹⁴ All told, by 1930 there were ten Christian missions in the North, with 247 missionaries, working out of seventy-three stations. The development of two of these missions, the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) and the Sudan United Mission (SUM), will provide most of the substance for the discussion below.

The SIM was by far the largest of the Christian missions in the North. As of 1927 it had 94, or 38 percent, of the total number of missionaries in the field in Northern Nigeria. It occupied twenty-four, or 33 percent, of the mission stations.¹⁵ The SIM was established in the region in 1902 as the outcome of the third effort by the Canadian evangelical Rowland Bingham to found a mission dedicated to fighting Islam in the Sudan.¹⁶ It went through several name changes, one worthy of note being from the Toronto Industrial Mission to the Africa Evangelistic Mission, in order to combat any illusion that its missionaries were in the region to do anything other than to pass on "the Glad Tidings."¹⁷ After a brief period of union with the Sudan United Mission, under that title, it chose the name Sudan Interior Mission, which was the original name for the mission chosen by Walter Gowans, Bingham's colleague and the mission's first martyr back in 1892.¹⁸ The SIM drew missionaries from across the English-speaking world, its ranks filled almost equally by missionaries from Canada, the United States, and Great Britain.

The SUM was the next-largest mission. As of 1927 it had 68, or 28 percent, of the missionaries in the field, and occupied twenty, or 27 percent, of the mission stations.¹⁹ The SUM was a British mission established by the German evangelist Karl Kumm. Originally known as the African Pioneer Mission, it soon changed its name to Sudan United Mission to get at Kumm's goal of evangelizing the traditionalists and Muslims of the Sudan. The SUM never lost its international character, serving as an organizational umbrella under which a number of churches from around the world developed mission fields in Northern Nigeria.

In 1966 a similar Protestant survey of Christian missions in Northern Nigeria was published. Using data from 1959, the survey counted a total of 177 mission stations in what it called the Nigerian "Central Belt."²⁰ The survey likewise failed to mention the Catholic mission, but approximately at that time there were 11 Catholic mission stations in what was by then the diocese of Jos.²¹ In sum, at the moment of Nigerian independence 188 Christian mission stations were known to be operating in what became known as the Nigerian Middle Belt. Of these stations 57, or 30 percent, belonged to the SIM; another 63, or 34 percent, belonged to the SUM. The survey does not supply statistics on the number of missionaries.

There were other Protestant missions in colonial Northern Nigeria. It is important to stress that each of these missions had its own unique message and its own individual history. While these missions will not be ignored, the SIM and the SUM will be treated here as the face of Protestant Christianity during the colonial era. Between them they maintained the majority of the missionaries in the field, accounting for two-thirds of the missionaries in the North midway through the colonial era. And both at the midway point and at the end of the colonial era, the two missions staffed three-fifths of the mission stations operating in the region. Equally important, their missionaries also took the lead in relations with the government, and government concessions to the missions were made with them in mind.

While the experiences of the SIM and the SUM will be taken as representative, there were two missions whose experiences so deviated from theirs as to deserve separate comment. These were the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the missionary arm of the Church of England, and the Society of African Missions (SMA), the Catholic missionary order with jurisdiction in Northern Nigeria. The key difference between the CMS, the SMA, and the evangelical Protestant missions was that the CMS and the SMA both were involved in an ever developing pastoral commitment to migrant Christian communities. One of the greatest ironies in the history of the establishment of Christianity in Northern Nigeria is that across the first three decades of the twentieth century the Christian presence grew most quickly in the territories where Christian proselytization was expressly prohibited, among African Christian migrants, people from Sierra Leone and Nigeria's Southern Province working in the North. They lived in the railroad camps and the *sabon gari*, or townships, constructed adjacent to Muslim cities. The colonial government turned to Christian missions to supply social services for African Christian migrants. Since the majority of these Christians were Anglican or Catholic, the CMS and the SMA more and more came to direct their energies toward servicing the migrants' needs.²²

While the story of migrant Christian communities in the North is an important one, it is too far removed from the story of the introduction of Western civilization to the indigenous population, and thus is not considered here.

Because the colonial government was determined to keep Christian migrants, or “nonindigenous natives,” segregated from “indigenous natives,” and experienced some success in this endeavor, the story of the migrant communities and that of the indigenous churches evolved according to different dynamics during the colonial era.

The CMS added to the story of the planting of Christianity in the North in two other ways that should be acknowledged. First, the CMS led the way in what may be labeled the secondary evangelization of the North. At the extreme southwest of the Northern territories were two administrative provinces that at least from the cultural perspective might have just as easily been folded in with Nigeria’s Southern territories. Kabba and Ilorin Provinces provided a northern frontier to Yorubaland and continued to be proselytized from that area throughout the colonial era. Most of the evangelists crossing over into Kabba and Ilorin were African, and most were representatives of the CMS.²³ Since the area was being evangelized simultaneously from the North, in particular by the SIM, the area was something of a burned-over district relative to the rest of Northern Nigeria. As will be seen in chapter 5, Kabba and Ilorin Provinces were a battle zone where missions and the government regularly confronted each other. The government did not always win these confrontations. But the Kabba/Ilorin region was the arena where the government worked out the strategies it would follow in the rest of the North for containing and controlling Christian proselytization.

The second way the CMS added to the story was in the person of Dr. Walter Miller. The CMS was the original mission in the North. Its first missionaries appeared in the context of the Sudan party (1890) and then the Tugwell party (1900). The CMS made it clear from the beginning of the colonial era that it was in the region to evangelize Muslims and refused to be diverted into work among traditionalists. The mission ceded its claim to a right to evangelize traditionalists to the Cambridge University Missionary Party (CUMP). The CUMP made a valiant effort to establish a missionary presence in the region before in turn ceding the stations it operated to the SUM in 1930.²⁴ Dr. Miller first appeared in the North as a member of the Tugwell party, a group of CMS missionaries under Bishop Tugwell who made an aborted attempt to reach Sokoto, where they hoped to convert the sultan. The one positive outcome of the Tugwell party was the concession of a mission site by the emir of Zaria to the CMS in the city of Zaria itself.²⁵ The CMS sent Miller to man the mission station in Zaria. He stayed on in Nigeria for fifty-plus years and became the best known of the missionaries who worked in the region. Miller’s writings were very influential in shaping the British public’s understanding of the religious situation in Northern Nigeria. Miller himself was something of an icon of Christian determination in the face of government opposition. His mission to the Muslims of Zaria,

however, precisely because it was the only mission of its kind, provides little insight into the experiences of other Christian missionaries in the region.²⁶

As for the SMA, its most important role in the planting of Christianity in Northern Nigeria played out during the second half of the colonial era. During the first half of the colonial era it lacked both the personnel and the resources to mount a serious push for converts. During this period the Catholic mission was maintained by the Alsatian province of the SMA. The mission was thus further hindered by the fact that English was at best a second language for most of the priests. Still, it has to be noted that the priests displayed a remarkable resiliency in response to adverse conditions. They grew to be quite expert at taking whatever resources the government had to offer, modeling in the process what the government hoped missions would become. Significantly, that model had nothing to do with evangelizing Africans. Without converts to keep themselves occupied, by the 1920s the needs of Catholic migrants were drawing the priests to the cities in the emirates.²⁷

The Import of Economic Change

The various schemes for cultural transfer put forward by expatriates before 1930 took for granted that, though Northern Nigeria had a few great cities, like England itself it was a land of country people and country ways. The schemes hoped to build on this agrarian base a society that resembled rural English society as it had existed at some point in an idealized past. Two types of forces worked together to stymie these schemes. The African demand for a less romantic idea of European culture will be the force highlighted. Also contributing to the European inability to make headway, however, were the economic and social transformations triggered by the establishment of a colonial regime in Northern Nigeria. Sapping the initiatives of both administrators and missionaries was the ongoing emergence of a colonial society keyed to economic factors not even on the horizon at the moment of conquest. No one among the original generations of European expatriates foresaw the discovery of mineral wealth in the North. No one foresaw the social and economic transformations triggered by the exploitation of this wealth. These social and economic changes created a culture inimical to the values expatriates hoped to endorse.

While good studies of particular aspects of the "colonial moment" exist, there are no general studies of the evolution of colonial society in Northern Nigeria. Present scholarship does not permit a systematic assessment of the developments that worked most to retard expatriate schemes of cultural makeover but does allow some brief discussion of the developments that seem to have had the greatest impact on these schemes. The aim here is to call attention to what appear to have been the three most salient of

these developments. The first was caused by the government requirement that African villages provide forced labor for the railroads and highways being built to facilitate the transfer of minerals and commodities from the Northern Province to coastal ports. Forced labor demands corrupted many indigenous officials and made village life an onerous proposition for all Northerners. The second development was an outcome of the obligation that Africans pay taxes directly to the state. The tax burden had the effect of pulling men from the land while simultaneously making the land less attractive. Lastly, to supervise and regulate the extractive economy that grew up in the region, both the government and private firms had need of clerks and artisans. To house and maintain these workers, they had to build administrative and commercial centers. These centers stimulated in turn the creation of new markets that attracted even more residents. The growth of new cities and towns were the third unexpected consequence of the colonial conquest of Northern Nigeria.

There was substance to Raymond Buell's claim in *The Native Problem in Africa* that one of the greatest abuses of indirect rule in Nigeria was the use of "political labor," the government's euphemism for forced labor.²⁸ The use of forced labor was both extensive and intensive in Northern Nigeria, and the key to the economic development of the region.

Peter K. Tibenderana pointed out that the most hated form of forced labor was service as a carrier for the hammocks in which district officers often toured their divisions. District heads reserved this special task for "disobedient" peasants.²⁹ Carrying hammocks was in fact among the tasks regulated by Sir Donald Cameron's Forced Labour Ordinance, enacted in 1933.³⁰ M. M. Tukur made it clear that forced labor was used by the British for political purposes before it was exploited for economic purposes. As early as 1904 Charles Orr, the resident of Zaria, was making use of forced labor to build roads "fit for wheeled traffic" from Zaria city to Zungeru and from Zaria to the Kano provincial border, and to build barracks and stables in Zaria for the British mounted infantry.³¹ Forced labor was also used to build the original government buildings in Sokoto.³²

But it was for economic purposes that forced labor was most often used. Bill Freund noted that the Niger Company used twelve thousand carriers to supply materials to railway construction sites in 1911.³³ Michael Mason estimated that from 1907 to 1912 more than a quarter million men were put to work on the construction of the railway in Niger (Nupe) Province.³⁴ Tukur counted more than forty-five hundred men being forced to labor on various government-sponsored projects, most having to do with railroad construction, in Zaria Province during the April-June quarter 1914. He suggested that this number was low, both because men were being drawn away from Zaria projects to work on building the new northern capital city of Kaduna and because desertion rates were being kept down by the fam-

ine then ongoing in the region.³⁵ Richard Hull gave a number of thirty-one hundred men being conscripted in 1926 to move the railhead from the Katsina-Zaria border to the Katsina town of Funtua.³⁶

One colonial administrator was sufficiently concerned with the use of forced labor to write a memo in 1914 suggesting ways the use of forced labor might be reformed. The memo provides detail beyond just the number of men being conscripted. As noted by H. S. W. Edwardes, three thousand men were being supplied by the emir of Bauchi for the Bauchi Light Railway. They were required to be away from their homes forty days in succession; twenty-eight days in actual labor on the railhead, twelve days traveling to and from the worksite. As Edwardes saw it, the fact that these men received six pence per day while laborers in nearby mines received nine was not the problem. The problem was that since work on the railhead took place during the rainy season, men were being taken away from their farms to the ruin of their crops. Thus, responding to the government's justification that only 2 percent of the adult male population was affected at a given time, Edwardes countered with the point that "by the end of the rains 14% of the population will have been affected and the suffering entailed by damaged crops falls on the women and children."³⁷

As Edwardes went on to conclude: "Of the detestation of the people for the work under present conditions there is no doubt. Hundreds run away on the road down [to the site], more abscond from the work at the first opportunity. Large numbers of people in the North have gone into Kano to escape it, and everywhere they are willing to pay handsomely not to be selected."³⁸

Tin was mined by Africans on the Jos (Bauchi) Plateau from at least the middle of the nineteenth century.³⁹ British prospectors, led by the Naraguta Tin Mining Company, a subsidiary of the Niger Company, appeared on the plateau quite soon after the official declaration of the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria, and already by 1903 it was obvious that the tin deposits there were far more significant than the prospectors had anticipated. By 1930, in fact, more than £30 million worth of tin ore had been taken from mines on the Jos Plateau.

In his study of the Nigerian tin mining industry, Freund makes the point that the government's capacity to coerce labor was the envy of the mine managers, who lobbied for similar power. The government insisted, however, that the labor force for the mines be maintained by market forces. That said, the government primed the market for the mining companies by requiring that all males pay taxes. One of the motives behind the tax assessed on Northerners was an eagerness to have Northerners subsidize the cost for building the economic infrastructure needed to exploit the tin ore.⁴⁰ But one of the assumptions behind the imposition of the tax also was that it would push Northerners to work for the mines. This assumption was made explicitly clear in a 1907 letter by one administrator to the Naraguta Tin

Mining Company: "You are of course aware there is no forced labour and that I do not undertake to compel men to work for you. The pagans in the Bukuru district have to provide themselves with a certain amount of money to pay their tax and the Assistant Resident at Bukuru will use his influence to induce them to obtain it in the way most easily available to them, by labour at the mines and transport."⁴¹

The letter listed "transport" as well as the mines as a means for Northerners to earn the specie needed to pay their tax. By "transport" was meant service as a porter. The materials for construction of the railways and roads had to be carried to worksites on the heads of Africans. As noted above, twelve thousand porters were used to move construction materials for the railway in 1911. Preferably, however, porters were "volunteers," meaning that they made themselves available for such labor, presumably responding to the opportunity to earn the money for their tax in this manner. Only if sufficient numbers could not be obtained in this fashion were Africans pressed into service. Over the decades, as the railways and roads were completed, and thus could take on more and more of the demand for transport, opportunities to earn money through service as a porter declined. This left the mines as the one certain place a Northerner with no other marketable skills could go to earn money to pay taxes.

Freund presents data to show that the average monthly size of the African labor force in the mines grew from 5,833 in 1911 to 34,074 in 1939.⁴² Keep in mind that these averages reflect a mostly transient workforce.⁴³ Africans worked only so long as they needed in order to earn the money they were assessed as taxes, and then returned to their farms. And while the colonial government continued to raise taxes as a spur toward longer stays in the mines, there was a limit to the effectiveness of this strategy.⁴⁴ One source estimated that by the 1940s the length of an average tour in the mines by local laborers had grown from the few days it had required to earn the tax at the start of the century to approximately eight weeks.⁴⁵ One import of the transient nature of mine labor was that it took a significantly larger pool of workers to maintain the monthly averages cited above. One official suggested in 1947 that the yearly average should be multiplied three-and-a-half times to get the actual size of the labor pool. A monthly average of 50,000 workers, in other words, meant that over the course of a year, something on the order of 175,000 men worked in the mines.⁴⁶ Obviously this many men working in the mines had a major impact on life in the North. An appreciation of the impact of the mines is signaled in the comment by Sir Rex Niven, resident of Plateau Province in 1953, that one-sixth of the population of the Northern Province was then in some way involved in tin production.⁴⁷

Elizabeth Isichei saw the colonial government's policy of using taxes as a means to force Nigerians into the mines as having "catapulted" subsistence farmers into the "cash economy."⁴⁸ Her point can be looked at another way.

Given the number of economic opportunities created by the establishment of the colonial state, it can be argued that most men who continued to make their living via subsistence farming were men who wanted to stay on the land. Yet to stay on the land these men had to pay an ever increasing fee to the government in the form of taxes. From this perspective it can be recognized that among taxation's most pernicious effects was that it alienated Northerners from the land. Few Northerners made enough from their farming to feed their dependents as well as pay their taxes. A progressively longer period of time working in the mines thus became a dreary aspect of reality for men who chose to stay in the villages. Over the decades more and more men elected to escape this reality.

An enormous amount of paperwork was created in the colonial development of Northern Nigeria. The colonial government demanded applications for licenses and leases for all capitalist enterprises initiated by non-Nigerians. All of these materials had to be filed. Northerners with a command of English did not begin to appear until the 1920s, thus the paperwork generated by these negotiations had to be processed by clerks coming from elsewhere. Originally the clerks were mostly from Sierra Leone, but the sheer magnitude of the bureaucratic apparatus for monitoring capitalist exploitation created thousands of jobs that attracted Nigerians from the Southern Province northward.

Great Muslim cities existed in the North for hundreds of years before the arrival of the British. Of interest here, however, are the new cities that came into existence owing to the administrative needs of the colonial state. Kaduna and Jos were the two most important. Both were created *ex nihilo*. Kaduna was established to serve as the administrative seat of the Northern government. Jos was where the mining companies set up their offices. But the colonial state was behind the rise of several lesser towns as well, of which Minna, Gusau, and Lafia are perhaps the most significant. Each of these acted in some way as an administrative and/or commercial center for expatriate activity, and consequently as focal points of African migration. Lastly, as expatriate commercial concerns followed the railway into the Muslim emirates, the cities at the center of those emirates also began to swell with migrants looking to be employed for their intellectual skills, most of whom were segregated by the colonial government into *sabon gari* (new towns), that is, native townships.

Urbanization in Northern Nigeria is a subject in need of a good deal more research. Still, census numbers help illustrate the development under discussion. Kaduna, which had an official population of 5,400 in 1921, had grown to 38,800 in 1952. Jos, with an official population of 2,000 in 1921, likewise had 38,000-plus citizens in 1952. Gusau, reflecting the impact of the growth of the groundnut (peanut) trade, went from a population of 10,400 in 1921 to 40,200 in 1952. Kano, the largest city in the North, over the same

years saw its population rise from 50,000 to more than 130,000. Zaria, at the hub of a good many different types of economic activity, grew from 25,000 citizens to 54,000 in the same time span.⁴⁹

The core populations of these urban enclaves were composed of Southerners. But increasingly they were joined by Northerners leaving the countryside.⁵⁰ It may not have been the case that "Stadt luft macht frei" (City air makes one free) in Northern Nigeria, but cities did come to offer an escape from the more onerous aspects of the life the colonial government imposed on inhabitants of villages. Government jurisdiction was never a straightforward proposition in Northern cities, a reflection of the concern of the colonial government to keep those involved in expatriate economic activity from the control of local authorities.⁵¹ City life had its own pitfalls, but city inhabitants had comparably fewer worries about government demands.

Expatriates came to Northern Nigeria hoping to establish there a version of Western civilization not yet corrupted by the capitalist spirit pervading contemporary Western civilization. The developments just described suggest that the spirit of capitalism that expatriates hoped to escape got to Northern Nigeria before many of them did.

But this spirit did not affect them adversely. For the most part, it made living their lives easier. Thus, they did not see it in such a negative light. What is remarkable is the degree to which, in their writings at least, Europeans remained oblivious to the inroads of Western capitalism in Northern Nigeria. Mason reports that one missionary did protest to the government about the abuses of the forced labor system. A meeting between his superiors and government officials led him to recant his claims. He was then quickly transferred out of the region.⁵² Bishop Tugwell of the CMS likewise complained about the abuses in recruitment of labor for railroad construction. A government commission composed of the men supervising railway construction was called into session; after investigating his charges, it dismissed them as groundless.⁵³ Such displays of concern were rare, however. John Boer observed about members of the Sudan United Mission that they tended to look past the construction of the railroad and highways to the territory the completed links would open up to evangelization. This was probably true of other missionaries as well.⁵⁴

The comments of Edwardes, the colonial administrator mentioned above, illustrate that at least some government officials were conscious of the privation they were causing. But such awareness could be costly. A decade or so after his memo, Edwardes's insistence on calling attention to the abuses of the forced labor system was a contributing factor to his being forced out of the colonial service.⁵⁵ And no matter what Edwardes preached, it did not compel other officials to recognize the abuse. Joyce Cary trained under Edwardes as a young district officer. Still, in his novel *Mister Johnson* (1939), Cary pictured highway construction as a lark undertaken by young village males in search of beer money.⁵⁶

Yet while expatriates could ignore the changed economic and social realities brought on by the colonial state, Africans could not. A particularly brutal form of Western capitalism was entrenching itself in the North from the start of the colonial regime, and Africans, no matter what their station, had to find a way to survive in a world shaped by it. That expatriates chose to recognize what was going on only as “progress” is one explanation why they had so few collaborators during those early years. Their schemes all proposed the creation of a social universe at odds with economic realities. Northern Nigeria was too valuable a property to be allowed to become, in Mason’s superb term, an “Islamic Camelot.”⁵⁷

2

Historiography

As a work of comparative history, this book takes from and advances arguments in two separate and quite distinct fields of scholarly inquiry. Studies of Christian evangelization and studies of colonial administration have rarely overlapped. The literatures in these fields have not had much to say to one another. One objective of this piece of historical research is to show how much Christian missionaries and colonial administrators did debate common issues having to do with social engineering. Thus, it is helpful to review both literatures from the perspective of how they open up into a common discussion of the topic.

Of Revelation and Revolution

The idea for a historiography chapter was taken from John and Jean Comaroff's *Of Revelation and Revolution*.¹ There they use such a chapter to good effect in laying out the intellectual assumptions that underpin their scholarship. The Comaroffs in fact make a strong case for the value of a historiography chapter (or some similar background on the literature) as part of the introduction of all monographs. A standard part of most dissertations, such chapters are generally skipped in published studies, primarily because, to be frank, they tend to be quite boring, especially to those nonspecialist audiences publishers hope to attract. But such chapters could go a long way toward clearing up the postmodernist haze that permeates much of contemporary social scientific research, both through forcing authors to think through the intellectual legacies on which they are aspiring to build and by forcing readers to acknowledge the true legacies behind an author's ideas. As for historiography chapters being boring, readers who find them so can always do as the Comaroffs recommend, and just skip ahead.

To begin with, it is fair to say that in the past generation no other body of scholarship has come close to equaling the influence of the Comaroffs' work on the scholarly grasp of what Christian missionaries were trying to do in Africa. Thomas Beidelman should be given credit for showing the possibility of an anthropological study of the missionary experience.² Still, in

Of Revelation and Revolution, their two-volume study of non-conformist missionaries in what became the Republic of South Africa, the Comaroffs made the case that such an anthropology is key to understanding the nature of cultural contact between European and African as it has occurred in Africa.

It is also fair to say about the body of scholarship of the Comaroffs that no other work has drawn as much criticism and condemnation.³ The Comaroffs are incredibly well read. Further, they may be characterized as having a gift for synthesizing new insights from the materials they read, a gift even more remarkable for the fact that they seem to share it as a team. Scholars have taken issue with the ideas they synthesize, however, as well as with the way they read the materials that go into such syntheses. Simply put, the criticism is that the Comaroffs do not know enough, have not read enough, to offer the conclusions they do.

The work of the Comaroffs changed the scholarly discourse on Christian missions, not just on missions to Africa, but on missions worldwide.⁴ Their work should be considered in any discussion of global Christianity. The study below is much indebted to their work, especially in the conceptualization of the questions to be asked about the attributes of cultural transfer. Still, the answers offered here build on the aforementioned criticism. The Comaroffs' understanding of Christian missions and of how Christian missions shaped cultural interaction between Europeans and Africans is just too narrow.

First among the ideas in *Of Revelation and Revolution* to be challenged is the passive role in the process of cultural transfer the Comaroffs posit for the colonial state. The apartheid government in existence in South Africa in 1991 is featured in the opening pages of the two-volume work. But government fairly disappears as an agent of cultural change in the ensuing 700-plus pages. The Comaroffs set themselves the task of explaining how consciousness itself is colonized. For them, this process occurs not in some sequence of dramatic confrontations, but in a "long conversation"—that is, a slow, dialectically driven transformation of the mundane. It is through the realm of everyday life that Europeans entered the heads of Africans and trapped the latter in a never-ending cycle of rising expectations. Because, as the Comaroffs see it, missionaries successfully arrogated to themselves the high ground among Europeans in any and all discourse concerned with African moral and social improvement, missionaries were responsible for the colonization that took place in the African mind.⁵

Accepting, for the sake of argument, the Comaroffs' point about the transformation of consciousness as a long drawn-out affair, there are strong arguments for recognizing other sources as the impetus to the dialectic they identify. One of the strongest of these arguments is for capitalism itself. As Paul Landau noted in his critique of the Comaroffs, their argument ignores the fact that long before the appearance on the scene of missionaries, commodities disseminated through the southern part of Africa via the trading

activities of the Dutch East India Company were changing everyday life for Africans in the region.⁶

In Northern Nigeria, as in southern Africa, the determination of the colonizer to exploit mineral wealth gave new contours of African daily life. But the case of Northern Nigeria shows that the colonial state, not the colonial marketplace, was the true impetus behind the transformations in the everyday lives of Africans. As was discussed in chapter 1, the tin deposits on the Jos Plateau were the second richest in the British Empire. The colonial state did not wait for the marketplace to force the peoples of the region to rearrange their lives to facilitate the mining of tin deposits. The colonial state itself took the initiative. This was most graphically illustrated in the forced labor required of able-bodied men to build the highways and railways that allowed the tin to be taken to market. But it was apparent also in the tax laws that required payment in British coin, thus forcing men away from their fields toward work in the mines. In the area of culture, it was most obvious in the government's fostering of Hausa as the official "native" language of the region, a move that simultaneously simplified communication among the region's polyglot population and established (one) local Muslim culture as hegemonic.

Colonial Northern Nigeria revealed the extent to which the state itself engaged in social engineering. As mentioned, this is a factor hinted at by the Comaroffs at the start of their first volume, but then virtually forgotten. In Northern Nigeria, the government's determination to pass on English ideas of aristocratic rule set the parameters for all missionary efforts at cultural transfer. Where Christian missions could and could not set up stations and schools; what Christian missions could teach in mission schools and in what language; how African Christians could and could not spend their Sundays—decisions regulating these matters and others were dictated by the government's concern to foster the establishment of an Anglo-Muslim world of aristocratic rulers and obedient subjects.

Missionaries ignored government strictures when they could, and protested as loudly as possible when they could not, but since the government never relinquished its initiative in cultural matters, there was never a time during the colonial era when missions were not playing the government's game according to the government's rules. This point leads to the second idea advanced by the Comaroffs that must be challenged. The Comaroffs grant missionaries almost omnipotent power over cultural discourse. But it has to be questioned whether missionaries ever exerted that magnitude of authority over anyone. Intriguing here are the reviews of the Comaroffs' work by African scholars. On the whole, African scholars have tended to be much more enthusiastic about the Comaroffs' efforts than their American or European counterparts.⁷ In particular, African scholars have lauded what they read as a portrayal of missionaries as collectively suffering from obsessive-compulsive disorder. According to this image, missionaries attempted