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Foreword

Neil Skinner probably invited me to contribute this Foreword to his translation of Frank Edgar's Hausa folk stories as a gesture of friendship and because he knows my admiration for Edgar's work and for the Hausa people. In accepting, I am struck by the strange indirect association of these two men which dates in my experience beyond 1958 when Neil Skinner showed me a mass of Edgar's unpublished writings which he had purchased while on leave in Britain the year before for the Northern Region Literature Agency (NORLA) from the estate of Frank Edgar's widow. Assisted by a Hausa Arabist of the NORLA staff at Tudun Gaskiya, Zaria, I spent an exciting week with these papers; all clearly handwritten on foolscap, they filled three shelves, each five feet long. To list them I catalogued these papers by their titles, and grouped them in provisional categories by topic or region. If Edgar's published corpus is in fact the most extensive collection of African folklore yet issued by a single author, these and other works published by Edgar in his lifetime represent merely a portion of his total literary output, little of which was written in English. Surely among the many scholarly officials who have devoted their lives to the study of Northern Nigeria, Edgar can have few peers as a field collector of folklore and tradition.

In 1963 when Neil Skinner was teaching Hausa at the University of California, Los Angeles, Professor William Bascom of Berkeley asked him to translate the three volumes of *Tatsuniyoyi Na Hausa*, Edgar's major work, thereby making it available to scholars unfamiliar with Hausa. Without thought of possible publication, Neil Skinner agreed and returned to New Zealand with a photocopy of Edgar's text, long out of print. For the next three years he worked at the translation of Volumes I and II of the *Tatsuniyoyi*, whenever he could. Only then and with some urging did he contemplate the prospect of publication. To translate a work of such heterogeneity and character is no mean feat; and to undertake this task as an end in itself without ulterior purposes illustrates remarkable devotion; but perhaps in the wearier stretches the translator recalled the bulk of Edgar's work, unpublished and perhaps prepared without thought of publication. It is odd, the

indirect association of these two men, spanning half a century, both former Administrative Officers in Northern Nigeria, both talented linguists, both steeped in the lore and language of the North, both undertaking major literary tasks for their own sake, the older man as collector, the younger as translator. It is odd too that the man who finally translated Edgar's compendium of Hausa folklore should earlier have rescued the greater part of Edgar's remarkable work from loss or destruction by purchasing it, on his own initiative, for Northern Nigeria where this treasure rightly belongs; and it is quite fitting that as the former Director of NORLA, Neil Skinner should have volunteered for this strenuous task of translation, one commensurate perhaps with Edgar's initial compilation.

Edgar's published collection of Hausa folklore was made primarily in Sokoto Province at the direction of Major John Alder Burdon, the first Resident of Sokoto, who in 1910 gave Edgar some Hausa texts written in the Ajemic script for transliteration into Roman characters as reading matter 'of real use to Hausa students,' that is, to Europeans who wished to learn Hausa. Together with some extracts from the Maliki Law book and other texts that he had collected himself, Edgar prepared the first volume of the *Tatsumiyoyi* for publication in 1911. The two later volumes contained materials he collected himself.

Burdon had two major interests in directing Edgar to prepare a collection of Hausa folk tales and texts for publication: firstly, to provide British Administrative Officers with suitable materials for Hausa language study, and secondly to increase their knowledge of Hausa society and culture by presenting these folk tales and traditions. Both interests reflect the pattern of Indirect Rule by which the British sought to administer the large Hausa-Fulani Emirates through their traditional rulers and institutions. Such administration required British officials to have a sound knowledge of the native language, history and culture. With this end in view, officials strove to collect folk tales and historical traditions, proverbs, riddles, statements of native custom and belief, and manuscripts on religious, legal and historical subjects from Hausa and Bornu. Besides Burdon and Edgar, H. R. Palmer, E. J. Arnett, A. J. N. Tremearne, R. S. Rattray, J. R. Patterson and others undertook such enquiries in Hausaland and in Bornu.

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Thus it is to Lugard's system of Indirect Rule that we owe the relative abundance and high quality of the documents on the history and customs of these Central Sudanic Emirates, their languages and folklore, compiled by Administrative Officers during the first decades of this century. By comparison with other African regions of similar size, this official contribution to the study of Hausa and Kanuri culture and history in Northern Nigeria is outstanding alike in its depth, quality, variety and volume. In this stimulating milieu, Frank Edgar compiled his enormous corpus of Hausa folk literature.

By 1913 Edgar had published his *Grammar of the Gbari Language* with attached Dictionary, together with the three volumes of *Tatsuniyoyi Na Hausa*. Thereafter he published a Hausa selection from the Thousand and One Nights in Roman script. His unpublished manuscripts now at the Regional Archives in Kaduna, Northern Nigeria, reveal the range of his interests and efforts. These scripts include, besides a monumental Hausa-English Dictionary, some poems in Ajemic and Roman script, a store of proverbs, riddles and similar word-plays, numerous folk tales and historical texts on Bornu, Bauchi, Zaria, Katsina, Biu, Jukun, Potiskum, Fika, Kano, Gobir, Kebbi and Sokoto. In addition there are many old texts on legal, political, theological and historical subjects in Arabic, Hausa Ajemic and Roman Hausa versions. Apparently most of these materials were collected after the publication of the *Tatsuniyoyi*; and perhaps the greater portion consists of historical texts with varying character and range, from terse king lists of local states to extensive accounts of particular incidents and personalities. How many of these scripts were included in the *Tatsuniyoyi* I cannot say.

The Hausa whose folklore Edgar recorded so industriously are the largest ethnic group in Northern Nigeria and number many millions. Settled in the north-western quarter of that territory, for centuries Hausa have been open to influences from North Africa and from the Middle East as well as from other Central Sudanic states. For centuries also Hausa have traded eastwards to Bornu and west to Gao and the Niger Bend, north to Ghadames and Ghat, southwards to Yoruba and Nupe. Settled on the high fertile savannahs that stretch north to the sahil below the desert, Hausa were simultaneously enriched by trade and exposed to military and

political domination for much of their history. Of foreign influences that bore upon them, medieval Islam was both the most complex and important. Then, after centuries of religious syncretism, the traditional Hausa chiefdoms, nominally Muslim but still attached to heathen idioms, were challenged and subdued by a movement of militant Islamic reform led by Shehu dan Fodio, a local Fulani cleric; between 1804 and 1810 the region experienced a major upheaval as the Shehu and his followers, mainly Fulani, overpowered the various Hausa states and established their theocratic regime. Since then most Hausa chiefdoms have had Fulani rulers who claim authority and descent from the Shehu's lieutenants; and despite the British occupation of 1900 to 1903 under Lugard, the Fulani have retained their dominance until and since 1967, when Hausaland passed from British rule as part of the independent Nigerian Federation.

Since at least the fifteenth century, Hausa have lived in contiguous centralised chiefdoms whose capitals were large fortified towns where the ruler's palace and the central market stood. For centuries before the Jihad of Shehu dan Fodio the Hausa people were organised in a series of overlapping social strata based on hereditary occupational classes. In each state the royal family and the official nobility had precedence, followed by the Muslim intelligentsia of native and immigrant clerics, jurists, preachers, teachers and scribes, *sherifai* descended from the Prophet and wandering holy men or marabouts. Next came the wealthier merchants engaged in local and long-distance trade (*fatauci*); then craftsmen and other traders such as the commission-agents, vendors of salt or slaves, weavers, leather workers, silversmiths, dyers, master builders and blacksmiths, few of whom in the cities probably farmed for subsistence, though their rural counterparts generally did so. Then as now, the mass of Hausa people lived in rural villages and hamlets, farming the sorghum and millet staples and the cotton they wove for cloth. Besides this free population were the slaves, some captive or purchased, others born locally to whom Hausa language and culture were native. Chiefs and a few others had eunuchs in their households, and in several states eunuchs served as senior administrators in palace and public affairs. The traditional society was further complicated by the presence of several relatively endogamous ethnic groups whose

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ancestors, attracted by the prosperity and prospects of these Hausa societies, had moved and settled there; such immigrants included Arab traders from Ghadames, Tuareg from Asben and Air, Berbers from Bornu, Nupe from Bida, some Yoruba from Old Oyo, settled and nomad Fulani, some Mandinka, and yet others. Thus the traditional Hausa society, before as after the Holy War of 1804-10, was a complex of overlapping strata, communities and groups differentiated by religion, language and ethnicity, by connubium, by political and legal status as Muslim or pagan, free, eunuch or slave, rulers or ruled, aristocrats by birth or nobles by office, city folk and countrymen, farmers, craftsmen, traders of various sorts, the Muslim intelligentsia (a hereditary group), the wealthy and the destitute, the old, the mature and the younger men.

Excluding Tuareg, all ethnic groups in this society stressed paternal descent in residence, inheritance and succession to office or to civic status. Compounds enclosed families linked through the agnatic kinship of their male heads; polygyny was common as well as preferred; on marriage, women moved to live in their husband's home, generally among his close kinsfolk; and first marriages were normally arranged between first cousins. However, under pressure from Islam the old pagan lineages had been transformed by proscriptions of exogamy and levirate and by differentiation of descent lines and inheritance subdivisions.

This traditional society had also official Muslim courts, Koranic schools for children and for adult scholars, elaborate military and civil organisations, youth associations, hereditary occupational groups, cults for the worship of pagan spirits by possession, institutions for long-distance trade, guilds of prostitutes and a titled head woman, currency, markets, a literate intelligentsia, slave estates attached to particular offices or owned by individuals, and various other social formations characteristic of a complex, prosperous society with relatively high levels of technological development and social differentiation.

In this society women, though central to the private domain of kinship and marriage, remained minors at law under the guardianship of their senior male kin who commonly acted on the advice of an elderly kinswoman. This co-ordinate situation enabled women to divorce their husbands at will with support from their kin; alternatively, spirited women, rejecting their subservient

status, might leave husband and kin to join the prostitutes in another town or state.

This, briefly, was the traditional pattern of Hausa society in which the Shehu proclaimed his *jihad* and to which most of the stories and traditions recorded by Edgar relate. For its members, differences of social and ethnic status provided a broad framework in which other differences of individual situation, temperament and fortune were easily appreciated. A fine and firm web of institutionalised relations distributed constraints and opportunities for initiative unequally among individuals of differing social categories. Relations of clientage and bond-friendship allowed men to select their patrons or peers for personal or structural considerations. To those who sought fortune (*arziki*) in commercial success, the market offered exciting opportunities; warriors and others pursuing political position might move from one Hausa chief to the next by changing their patrons. Devout Muslims could combine adventure and travel with the search for grace and knowledge by pilgrimage to the Holy Places of Islam; other scholars could pursue their religious and legal studies at home or on periodic journeys within the Central Sudan; slaves might seek their master's favour or even manumission; adepts of the pagan *bori* (spirit) cult, prostitutes, wastrels and immigrants were free also within Islamic limits to pursue their interests in a tolerant, eclectic milieu. Some of the following stories illustrate these qualities of the traditional society; others exhibit its less pleasant features – ethnic intolerance, chiefly high-handedness, the depressed position of women, slaves, and so on.

After the tradition of folk literature, Edgar's narratives assume the reader's familiarity with these variegated patterns of Hausa society; and, except for a few remarks on grammar and orthography, Edgar neither discusses his materials nor reports their sources nor the methods of their collection. Evidently he enjoyed his task as collector of native folklore; his activities were justified by the current demand among British officials for suitable Hausa reading materials in Roman script. Edgar accordingly converted Arabic or Ajemic texts into Roman Hausa and gave little thought to their analysis. Lacking explicit academic interests, he was content merely to record and to transliterate; and on retiring to Britain Edgar seems to have ceased work on his massive collection, except

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perhaps for fair copying and transliteration. Nothing suggests that he seriously considered its analysis beyond the natural categories of the folk classification, in which *tatsuniyoyi* or fables were separated from other materials (*labaru* or *labarai*), most of which referred to real persons, events, customs or situations.

However, Edgar's practice sometimes invalidates this broad distinction. As fables, and thus wholly fictitious, the *tatsuniyoyi* are distinguished from old folk literature which treats situations of real life, whether in poems, proverbs, legal codes, historical scripts, descriptions of custom and ethnic types, or legends of uncertain validity. Even so, many of these *labaru* seem quite as fabulous as some *tatsuniyoyi*. Though Edgar, writing in Hausa for officials familiar with Hausa society, was unconcerned by such anomalies or by the grossness of the folk classification he employed, it is necessary in translating these materials for presentation to a wider audience to develop a more meaningful organisation. H. A. S. Johnston, another ex-official of Northern Nigeria, in his recently published *A Selection of Hausa Stories** which is based largely on Edgar's work, has organised its eighty-six items for Westerners unfamiliar with Hausa culture in six categories; and Neil Skinner in presenting the 443 fables and 240 *labaru* of Edgar's compilation, has ordered the former in fourteen classes, the latter in twelve. Clearly these two reclassifications are in part designed to facilitate the orderly presentation of these very diverse and exotic materials to Western readers, including specialists in comparative folklore. By provisionally adopting Edgar's gross distinction between fables and *labaru*, we can tentatively distinguish their contents and contexts and thus indirectly indicate some of their values for the study of Hausa ethnography and culture history.

Neil Skinner distinguishes certain folk tales which treat the marvellous, sometimes offering etiological explanations, or Just So Stories about common everyday things. Many of these tall stories deal with animal or mythical beings who inhabit a curiously Hausa world and conduct themselves after the fashion of Hausa. Since the etiological value of such tales is minimal, while they are clearly pleasurable and generally non-didactic, it seems that they are related for entertainment rather than instruction, or perhaps to

* H. A. S. Johnston, *A Selection of Hausa Stories*, Oxford, 1966.

pass the time pleasantly. Sometimes these fantasies or fables treat problem situations current in Hausa society, though in idealised forms.

Another group of tales centres on relations between the sexes, with marriage, adultery and child nurture as its major themes. These stories are often ribald, rarely sentimental and only in a gross way moral. Many present male comments on the attractions and defects of the opposite sex, but most seem morally indifferent and few are etiological in any sense. All presuppose standard Hausa patterns of relations between individuals of specified sex, age, status and kinship, so that as a group these stories of men and women provide a broad indirect account of heterosexual relations in Hausa society.

Though many stories treat Hausa Islamic beliefs, institutions and representatives, sometimes satirically, fewer present local beliefs in *dodos*, witchcraft, tree serpents, *kwari*, the impersonal supernormal power Polynesians call *mana*, or *iskoki*, the named spirits personified through possession in the bori cult. Edgar provides little information on the characters and doings of these pagan spirits by comparison with A. J. N. Tremearne.* Undoubtedly these omissions reflect Edgar's dependence on literate Hausa who belonged to the Muslim intelligentsia for much of his materials. Such men were unlikely to possess a wide knowledge of the *iskoki* cult or to admit familiarity with its lore.

To seek a single function for these folk tales, despite their differing genres, presupposes their functional uniformity. Often such questions assume mistaken equations of function and purpose. Whereas purpose involves conscious intention, function denotes the latent and unintended effects of particular modes of social action. Thus to say that, while these tales are related for their entertainment value, their primary function is broadly educational, involves no inconsistency. Hausa tale-tellers and audiences share certain institutional orientations and conceptions which are largely embedded in Hausa speech. When the narrator relating his stories seeks to dramatise events to achieve appropriate effects, these

* A. J. N. Tremearne, *Hausa Superstitions and Customs*, London, 1913. A new edition with an introduction by M. Hiskett is in preparation by Frank Cass/A. J. N. Tremearne, *The Ban of the Bori*, London, 1914. Reprinted Frank Cass, 1968.

histrionic efforts presuppose accepted canons of thought and conduct common to himself and his audience. Without this shared background, the dramatic gestures would often misfire, thereby destroying the tale. Because the story has its context and meaning in the common culture, the audience responds by evaluating its incidents, characters and presentation in terms familiar to them, drawn from their own social experience, thereby indirectly revitalising the cultural norms and social models to which they were socialised. Indeed, folk tales, even when dealing with fabulous creatures and events, serve as media for the socialisation of successive generations of Hausa children who are gradually inducted from realms of cultural phantasy in which animals talk and act like Hausa adults into the lore of white (good) and black (bad) spirits, of magic and the mysterious, and so, with certain transformations and changing stress, into the complex workaday society where differentials of birth, status and power are often interpreted in mystical terms, as for instance when abrupt changes of fortune are explained by possession of a *dodo*. In a traditional society where schools are devoted to the study of religious texts in a foreign tongue, folk tales, proverbs, historical legends and etiological narratives that represent approved and deviant behaviours and their consequences are, virtually for lack of competition, among the most influential instruments for the transmission and reinforcement of customary values and attitudes. Such broadly educational effects do not imply that such folklore has an educational purpose, solely or primarily; but its educational value is surely enhanced by its qualities as entertainment. Moreover, in a traditional preliterate society, folk education consists mainly in the transmission and reinforcement of stereotyped folk attitudes, values and conceptions, rather than in the transfer of technical 'knowledge', data or moral maxims.

How or why these tales and other forms of folk literature took their present shape, we do not know. Clearly, while some tales were diffused among Hausa by contacts with foreign peoples, including immigrants, others were probably indigenous; tales of either sort vary in their age and purity; but whether borrowed from abroad or fashioned locally, for their preservation among the Hausa, these tales depend on their appeal and their meaningfulness for Hausa narrators and audiences. So, regardless of their differing

origins, Hausa folk tales are socially selected items of local lore, reworked and simplified or amplified in the processes of transmission. Various versions of Edgar's tales, collected in the same or different Emirates, illustrate certain features of these transforming processes, including omissions or reallocations of roles, recombinations of motifs, events and the like. Clearly in such processes those items which lack immediate intelligibility or cogency are most likely to be modified or omitted, while those which have local relevance will be retained and perhaps elaborated or transferred to other narratives.

To substantiate some of the preceding remarks we may review briefly the contexts in which *tatsuniyoyi* and *labaru* of differing sorts are generally told. Some tales that deal with animals, the marvellous, and so on, are identified with old women who relate them to groups of young children in family compounds at night, often in the old dame's hut where the children will sleep. Baba of Karo, an old Hausa lady who narrated her life history, makes frequent references to these nightly tale-tellings.* Hausa describe such sessions as *hira*, a term which includes conversation or gossip. *Hira* thus has as many varieties as situations, audiences, and types of discourse. For example, the tales which are told by old dames to children differ in content from those that are appropriate for old men to tell. Old men avoid the miraculous and animal stories, preferring instead to discuss the legendary foundations of their community or chieftdom, the family genealogy and history, traditions of local saints, of marabouts, princes or warriors – that is, events or personalities believed to belong to the real world of Hausa society. In Koranic schools, at craft sessions, during Ramadan and at certain festivals, old men may tell such tales to children and adolescents. However, fathers are segregated from children and women in the daily round, and perhaps elderly men addressed their stories mainly to their last-born (*auta*), the favourite child, and to grandchildren, their joking relations.

In youth groups and as apprentices to some craft whose traditional lore summarises its distinctive ethos and relations with other segments of Hausa society, young boys take part in special social contexts, each with its appropriate lore. Perhaps among the crafts,

* Mary Smith, *Baba of Karo: A Woman of the Moslem Hausa*, pp. 52–55, 59–60, 75, 152, 177, 179, 251, London, 1954.

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long-distance traders (*fatake*), butchers, blacksmiths, and praise-singers maintain the richest special traditions, if we exclude the spirit-possession cults, clerics and officialdom. Young girls have also their own lore, linked with bond-friendship, betrothal, sex, petting (*tsarance*), marriage and the magico-religious complex which includes, besides witchcraft (*maita*), magic (*boka*), medicines (*magani*), the pre-Islamic nature spirits (*iskoki*, *bori*), and Islamic charms (*layu*) or prayers (*addu'a*). Girls also learn a lore of marketing by peddling wares around the village and find contexts in their own youth associations for Hausa lore about relations between the sexes.

Ribald stories that treat of sexual matters are told to mixed audiences of younger adults in *hira* sessions nightly at the local brothel or at the salon of some leading prostitute (*karuma*). Such tales may also circulate on certain festive occasions, such as marriage, among co-wives and female guests within a compound, or among men segregated by work or on journeys, idled by rain, darkness or other circumstances. The lore of *iskoki*, the old Hausa spirits, their praise-songs, genealogical and other relations, attributes, powers and needs is vested in *bori* cult-groups, each locally anchored in the prostitutes' guild; thus the stories and music of the spirit-possession cult are indirectly linked with lewder tales through recital by the same persons in the same milieu. More specialised information about particular spirits, their diseases, susceptibilities and powers, is available privately from *bori* specialists who preserve and know them. Not all of these devotees are women; nor are all female cultists prostitutes.

Yet other folklore traditions are centred in the capitals, concentrated among the elderly savants of particular wards and especially at and around the ruler's court. There we should find the major oral traditions of the chieftdom's history, often apparently bizarre and uneven. These include, besides legends of the state's foundation and origin, cryptic king-lists, some of which specify the length of each king's reign, tales of pre-Fulani rulers and their deeds, of local battles during the Shehu's *jihad*, tales of the Shehu's miraculous powers and leadership, of Fulani Emirs and their wars, their characters and difficulties, of civil commotion and strife, of the coming of the British and their early forceful years. Tales of rulers and events nearer in time can still be checked against narratives

by old men who witnessed or heard directly of these events from those who witnessed them. For earlier histories we must seek either the narrator's source and authority, following the model of a Muslim *isnad*, or admit the folk element in the narrative and its interpretation equally. Such quasi-historical tales form the majority of Edgar's *labaru*. They centre about the actions of chiefs and have their most authentic sources at or near the court, especially in Edgar's case the imperial courts of the Sultan and Vizier (Waziri) of Sokoto. Some of these tales are well known to older men, even in rural areas; others that detail events more finely, may be private to official or aristocratic circles; and even these latter are often found in differing versions that express corresponding political alignments.

Yet other stories, which purists might exclude from Hausa folklore, are related by clerics, having their core in Traditions of the Prophet and his Companions, supplemented by tales of famous Sudanic figures such as Shehu dan Fodio and his brother Abdullahi, Mohammed Askia of Gao, Bawa Jan Gwarzo of Gobir or Kanta of Kebbi. This clerical tradition also includes legends that exalt the cleric's mystical powers over heathen magicians and his role in assuring the success of his clients in their search for fortune – princes for the throne, officials for office, women for children, peasants for various boons and Emirs for victory in the field.

Thus in this corpus each major body of folklore and narrative has its appropriate milieu and content, and most represent the traditions of special groups in the complex, differentiated Hausa society. The tales are thus differentially associated with differing Hausa institutions such as praise-singing and prostitution, the pagan bori cult or the Muslim intelligentsia, youth associations and the premarital petting sessions known as *tsarance*, kinship ceremonials of betrothal and marriage, childbirth and the following ablutions, bond-friendship and the routine round of compound life in city, rural town or bush hamlet, the market place, the law court, the palace, officialdom and the army, and with particular chiefdoms. There are tales also of wells, or fishermen and of hunters, of hereditary thieves and other craft specialists, tales of madness and personal misfortune and social stereotypes of various ethnic groups – Maguzawa or pagan Hausa, the Bugaje (s. Buzu) or Tuareg serfs, Fulani pastoralists and Nupe craftsmen, Gwari

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pagans, Arab merchants from Ghat or Ghadames, the Kanuri and the country bumpkins ill at ease in town. Beyond the lore of these specialised contexts stand the cycles of fables and wonder stories that old women relate to the young.

These folk tales accordingly offer very diverse and valuable evidence on particular institutional contexts and differentiated groups of the traditional Hausa society. They also provide many comments on the structures they describe and on the stereotyped situations and ethnic and social categories they feature. Besides such indirect information and commentary, Edgar also collected many texts which describe Hausa customs, such as marriage or inheritance directly, and others that summarise folk evaluations of ethnic and occupational groups or people of different states such as Kano or Katsina, of women, conjugal relations, relations between co-wives, siblings, commoners and chiefs or clerics and their clients. Such direct descriptions and evaluations delineate important features in the contexts of many traditional tales; they also furnish an excellent account of Hausa practice and cultural orientations at the turn of this century, before European influences had taken their present effect. Used with caution, they can thus serve to identify later changes.

Although non-narrative and explicitly descriptive, such direct statements form a natural part of Hausa folklore, since the conceptions and attitudes they express are important elements of the folk tradition. These summary descriptions always refer to concrete social situations and to local types. They are thus quite distinct from the strictly Islamic texts that declare or discuss the Law, the Faith, Prophetic Traditions or the norms of Muslim government. Such Islamic materials differ in source, character, manifest purpose and range from local lore. They express, in Hausa form, the universalistic orientations of Islam which contrast sharply with the ethnic axes of Hausa society.

Historical and quasi-historical texts, not all of which are narrative, also form an extremely valuable section of Edgar's compilation. Besides several king-lists of certain states, often given in different versions, these texts include origin legends for the Hausa states and some local communities, apocryphal tales of Kanta, Bawa and the Shehu, some stories that illustrate important features of traditional government, and others that characterise particular

rulers, such as the Sultans Umaru and Abdu Danyen Kasko of Sokoto, or the Emir Abdullahi of Kano, together with a mass of illuminating incidental materials on historical events and personalities during the century of Fulani domination that followed the *jihad*. If we accept the folk interpretation of unusual events by reference to destiny (*rabo*) or magic, and the unavoidable variants of a common tale, we have no reason to doubt the intended accuracy of many of these 'historical' traditions, though naturally such intent cannot guarantee their historicity. To assess this, we should first correlate these variant versions with any others still available and identify their similar or dissimilar contents, sequences, characters and interpretations. It may then be possible to collate an abstracted probable or common sequence with other data drawn from the Emirates to which specific narratives relate, to determine the probable historical situation and sequence. Naturally such procedures presuppose adequate bodies of independently derived data for the events under study, and also substantial consistency, detail, and credibility among the various traditions. However, much historical information can still be gathered by field enquiries in Hausa emirates and checked by the study of official and other records*

Setting aside their uncertain historical values, these tales of past events show how Hausa conceive the histories of their states, the characters of their rulers, and their institutions of government and law. These traditions are thus equally important as documents of folk thought and as historical sources.

The academic values of Edgar's collection are many and various; to students of Hausa culture and history, it provides a comprehensive body of diverse materials, much of which, being explicitly fictive, is of great ethnographic significance as a projection of Hausa attitudes and practice on to other planes. Together these texts, descriptive and narrative, supply rich firsthand materials on Hausa institutions, inter-ethnic relations and social stratification, supplementing such standard sources as the Kano Chronicle and

* M. G. Smith, 'Field Histories Among the Hausa', *Journal of African History*, vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 87-101.

S. J. Hogben and A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, *The ^{emirates} Estimates of Northern Nigeria: A Preliminary Survey of their Historical Traditions*, London, 1966.

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other Emirate histories*, and presenting, with insight and economy, the characteristic failings, virtues and orientations of Hausa differentiated by rank, sex, age and circumstance. Directly, and in narrative obliquely, the texts also present many insights into Hausa values, beliefs and social orientations. As documents that transmit the flavour of Hausa life and the background of individual experiences, they have few rivals. Within this compilation we can also distinguish various items that derive from different levels of Hausa social history, thereby indicating certain broad courses of Hausa cultural development. Many tales, for example, centre on Fulani Emirs; though they express the broadest traditions of Hausa lore, others dwell upon ancient Hausa chiefs and yet others, of uncertain age, seem rather more ancient in content and manner. Perhaps by employing our knowledge of major developments and cultural innovations in Hausa society we may provisionally identify historical periods to which such tales and traditions relate; and thus by procedures of exclusion, we may perhaps reduce part of this corpus to a reasonable chronological order. For folklorists and others not directly concerned in Hausa culture history, these abundant materials invite and permit other analyses, thematic, stylistic and distributional, independently or in comparative contexts. For those readers with a general interest in the customs and conditions of life in exotic countries at earlier periods, this remarkable collection needs no further recommendation.

* H. R. Palmer, 'The Kano Chronicle', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 38, pp. 58-98.

S. J. Hogben and A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, 1966, *op. cit.*

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