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"MY MERCEDES HAS FOUR LEGS!" TRADITIONAL AS AN ATTRIBUTE OF AFRICAN EQUESTRIAN CULTURE

Over the past fifteen years the meaning of the term "traditional" - as one of those essential attributes used to type sub-Saharan cultures - has come under increasing scrutiny.¹ The debate is now a topic of discussion in African studies generally and in african art history in particular.²

The responses on the part of relevant professionals may be subdivided among three headings: those who have chosen to "hold fast" and who continue to insist that the word does refer to something about the mentality and/or social practices of these societies that is unique:

The real difficulty encountered in the understanding of primitive thought is not as some philosophers suppose, that its "supernatural" beliefs are refractory to rational understanding, but that symbolism is linguistically untranslatable and its ideas encapsulated in action, ritual, and social institutions; that is, they exist at a sub-verbal level.³

those who view it as a relic of western ethnocentrism⁴ that should be eliminated from the technical vocabulary of African studies:

... we think it best to discontinue use of the word "traditional" with reference to African systems of thought. Its use predisposes scholars to make certain assumptions that

encourage misrepresentations of African meanings and attitudes.⁵

and those who feel it can still be of use and value if its terms of reference are clarified and stripped of pejorative elements:

The early modern natural scientists, the natural philosophers of the renaissance, stressed often the unreasonableness of appeals to authority. And if modern scholarship suggests that they overstressed the extent to which their predecessors were bound by a hidebound traditionalism, it is still true that there is a difference - if only in degree - in the extent to which modernity celebrates distance from our predecessors, while the traditional world celebrates cognitive continuity.⁶

This paper will examine some ramifications of each of these alternatives for understanding the meaning of contemporary ceremonies and practices, admittedly carry-overs from the past, in the predominantly Muslim emirates of northern Nigeria. Because the principal theme of this volume is equine, the aspects of these ceremonies that will receive detailed consideration are those related to the horse: its historical (and perhaps historic) ancestry and role in West Africa generally; the performative role assigned to horses in these ceremonies; the role of decoration; how all of this may be

received and interpreted by the general public in attendance at these ceremonies.

The precise meaning attributed to "traditional," and the criteria said to justify its relevance to an African equestrian ceremony, are intimately related to the specific methodological framework applied: whether functionalism, structuralism, symbolism or, with increasing frequency these days, the various forms of deconstructive (in effect, alternative) analysis of intellectual perspectives associated with the former three that are loosely grouped under the heading "postmodern."

Indeed in some non-trivial sense each of these former three became a distinctive methodological approach because of certain formative insights about the nature of traditional thought, culture, and/or society. Topical, temporal and spatial constraints make it impossible to undertake a detailed recapitulation of these methodologies here, but it may be possible to isolate aspects of their formative notions of the "traditional" that have now become a source of controversy.

The equestrian ceremonies with which this paper is concerned commemorate the two principal religious holidays of the Muslim calendar: the Id al Kabir (the "Great Festival," celebrating the end of the pilgrimage to Mecca and also Abraham's sacrifice of Ishmael) and the Id al Fitr (the "Festival of the Breaking of the Fast," celebrating the end of the month of Ramadan). The geographical region where these festivals have been observed over a period of years is what in contemporary Nigeria is loosely referred to as the "North." Roughly this corresponds to the territories of the former Hausa-Fulani Sokoto Caliphate in the west and central regions, and the territory of Borno or the former Borno Empire

in the east. Principal towns where the festivals have been documented include Kano, Katsina, Maiduguri, Yola and Zaria.

In each of these places the basic structures of the equestrian portions of the ceremonies are similar: an equestrian parade that begins and ends at the palace of the ruler, and that culminates with a durbar or competition between the assembled horsemen "beneath" or adjoining the palace walls. The nucleus of the parade is a horsed palace company led by the ruler, king or Emir⁷ (to use the appropriate Muslim-Arab title). Other, smaller horsed companies are led by various regional, rural sheiks or sarki who travel with their horsed retinues into the towns where the Emirs' palaces are located to salute, affirm their allegiance, and to parade with their Emir.

At the 1992 parade commemorating the Id al Fitr in Kano, it is estimated that approximately 300⁸ horses participated: 100 in the palace company (30 horsed royal guards; 10 princes of the royal family; 6 alternative ceremonial mounts for the Emir; 50 horsed retainers and palace chiefs) and 200 in the various contingents from outlying areas.

Admittedly this account provides only the briefest sketch of these occasions. That is deliberate. For when topics like equestrian history and technology are discussed with reference to a society that is categorized as traditional, certain purportedly objective, specially crafted, methodological techniques for understanding and interpreting their meaning come into play. Taking a closer look at these processes of assigning meaning and their implications for the status of the cultures concerned is one of the aims of this paper.

"Outside" observers who undertake analyses of alien cultures have first and funda-



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mentally to take a tactical epistemological position, reflected by their methodology, about the degree to which that culture can explain itself to them directly - most obviously via discourse (for example, through its literature and art, or through expert indigenous informants on these subjects), and the degree to which this approach must be supplemented - usually for want of sources of objective discourse - by a methodology that indirectly interpolates select data or information about that culture using analytic techniques which are meant to educe objectivity. Examples of the latter methodologies are those provided by ethnology (functionalism, structuralism, etc.) or the techniques for the analysis of oral literature provided by ethnography.

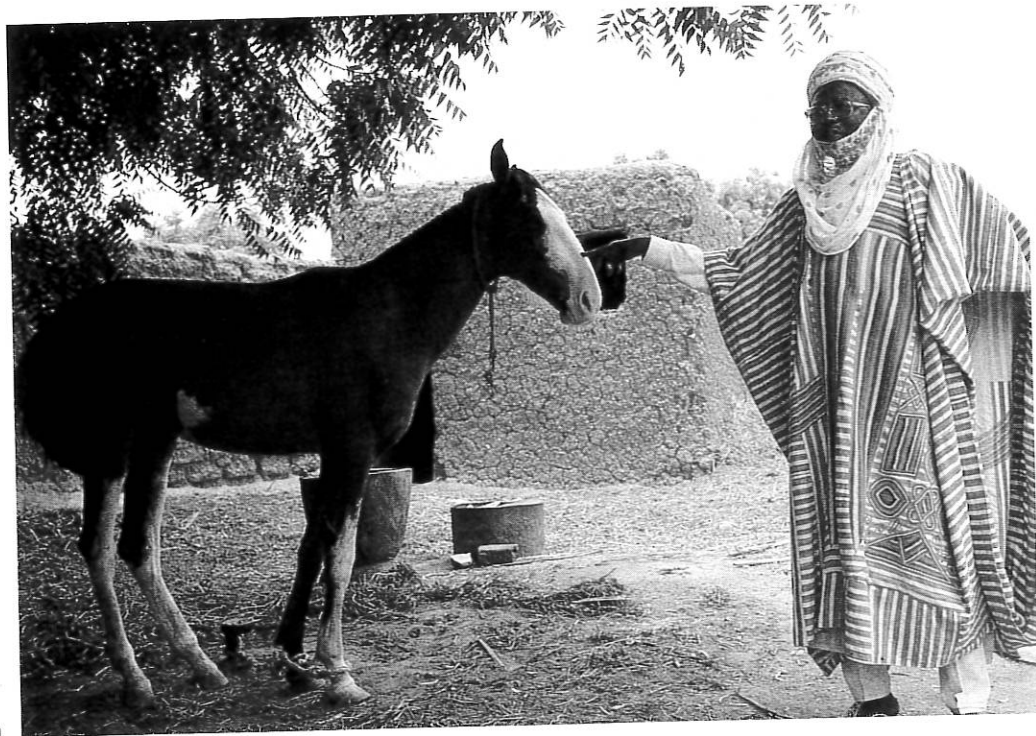
What has always distinguished the area of research concerned with traditional (formerly "primitive") cultures is the disproportionate or relatively greater emphasis



b

Fig. 1 - a) and b) Kano. Traditional chiefs on parade before their Emir.

Fig. 2 - a) Gezawa, b) Kano. Remnants of the imported stock that was never quite able to overcome adverse climatic and health conditions. Alternative caption: Examples of the new generation of indigenous breeds that are fueling a contemporary equestrian renaissance.



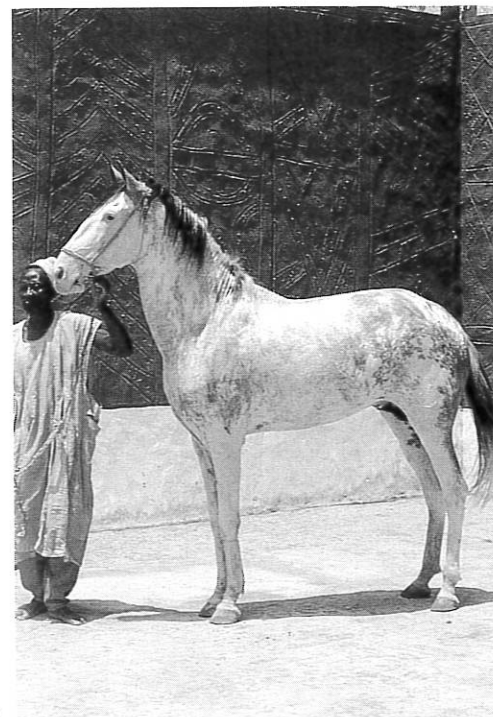
placed upon the latter of these two approaches - upon interpolation. Various reasons have been given for this: the absence of written literature; the relative under-development of specialised labour and hence the absence of indigenous cultural savants; the relative indigenous underdevelopment of the rigorously analytic, discursive, experimental, empirical and didactic perspectives fostered by science.

When combined, all of these attributes are sufficient to justify that universal stereotype of the traditional mentality that, in response to a question, for example, about why horses are outfitted and decorated in certain ways, or why historically an equestrian ceremony is associated with a certain occasion, ultimately the articulated response amounts to nothing more than a "because we've always done it this way" or "because this is what our forefathers said (to do)." In

other words, the most common form of explanation for a social practice or belief in a traditional culture is itself an appeal to tradition, and to the past.⁹

As is to be expected, therefore, existent analyses of the equestrian culture(s) of northern Nigeria place a comparative de-emphasis upon contemporary local expertise and a much heavier and more substantial emphasis upon indirect, secondary sources: Arab geographers (because they are written and date back to the 11th century), early West African manuscripts written in arabic, the accounts of European explorers, diffusionist hypotheses,¹⁰ stylistic reconstructions,¹¹ and the exegesis of oral traditions.¹²

It is principally by means of this indirect approach that the instrumental or practical reasons for a substantial equestrian population have been identified.¹³ The horse



passed from being a status symbol for royalty,¹⁴ to a weapon - an assault and pursuit vehicle - for the cavalry forces that were to distinguish state creation in the West African sahel and savannah regions during the 13th to 19th centuries.¹⁵

Adverse climatic, health¹⁶ and consequently breeding conditions made the region's high equine mortality rate and the consequently high horse importation rate (principally from North Africa) affordable for military purposes. The advent of European colonialism meant the demise of independent African armed forces. The mechanical transportation invasions propelled by the bicycle and the internal combustion engine made comparatively expensive and delicate equestrian transport redundant, and the horse reverted to a symbolic, royal role. The equine population that lingers on in the area today is therefore treated as an exam-

Fig. 3 - Kano. Polo "ponies" are still imported from across the Sahara, but by airplane.



ple of vestigial cultural remains, the relic of a former era.

All of this is exemplary scholarship, and this paper is not out to challenge so compelling a historical tableau. The point is to decry the relative lack of attention paid to the meaning(s) these ceremonies have in the present day. For these ceremony-festivals certainly do have more significance to the organizers and participants ("spectators" included) than merely "what we inherited from the forefathers"!

There is a tendency to interpret a "traditional" parade of horses, in part composed of people wearing dress that was also in fashion centuries before, carrying spears and shields that were made redundant - in actual fact on various local battlefields - 100 years before by the machine gun, as increasingly feeble remnants of a once splendid past that potters on. A sort of last gasp.

Fig. 4 - a) and b) Kano. Cavalrymen armoured in the traditional manner on parade.
Alternative caption: Members of a cultural association explicitly dedicated to preserving the heritage of the Hausa-Fulani cavalry forces.



Modern elements of dress that are creeping in - Western brogues, T-shirts, sunglasses, cigarettes, even wristwatches - tend to be regarded as less-than-aesthetic corruptions of the original indigenous "tradition".

Maintaining this attitude towards these ceremonies depends upon the continued promotion of a stereotype of Africa as "traditional" - as temporally oriented towards a past¹⁷ which itself is legendary - obscured by a plethora of myths, fables, and superstitions, and that in this "modern" age of the nation-state is being subverted by processes of social change that make such events increasingly less relevant to contemporary reality, "pale imitations" of what they once were.

The equestrian culture survives largely through the inertia of conservatism, and its future probably depends principally upon an increasingly self-conscious traditionalism. In an environment highly uncongenial

to horses, the horse culture could not long survive the demise of the particular pre-colonial social and economic structures with which it was associated, which linked horses closely with the dominance of a warrior aristocracy and with an economy based upon warfare and slavery.¹⁸

There is an element to this line of thought that complements what Ali Mazrui says in the following:

Another obstacle to cultural liberation has been the confusion of the concept of modernization with Westernization. In fact, re-traditionalization of African culture can take modernizing forms, especially if it becomes an aspect of decolonization. Re-traditionalization does not mean returning Africa to what it was before the Europeans came...but a move towards renewed respect for indigenous ways and the reconquest of cultural self-contempt may be the minimal conditions for cultural decolonization.¹⁹

Linking the retention and preservation

of ceremonies like the equestrian parade and competition to something like "retraditionalization" could be a dubious rhetorical move, since it is tied by connotation to a form of discourse about the African mentality that denies it articulate, self-conscious direction. Why should it not be possible to discard this "relic" of colonial nomenclature altogether?

This second alternative - discarding the notion of "traditional" - would imply treating the meaning of these ceremonies in a manner comparable to what is done with overtly similar phenomena in Western society. In effect, traditional man would be reconstituted and become, if not "just like us," significantly more "just like us."

This would serve to highlight contemporary dimensions of these ceremonies that are evidenced and acknowledged by their organizers and participants ("spectators" included), and that may warrant more attention than they generally receive:

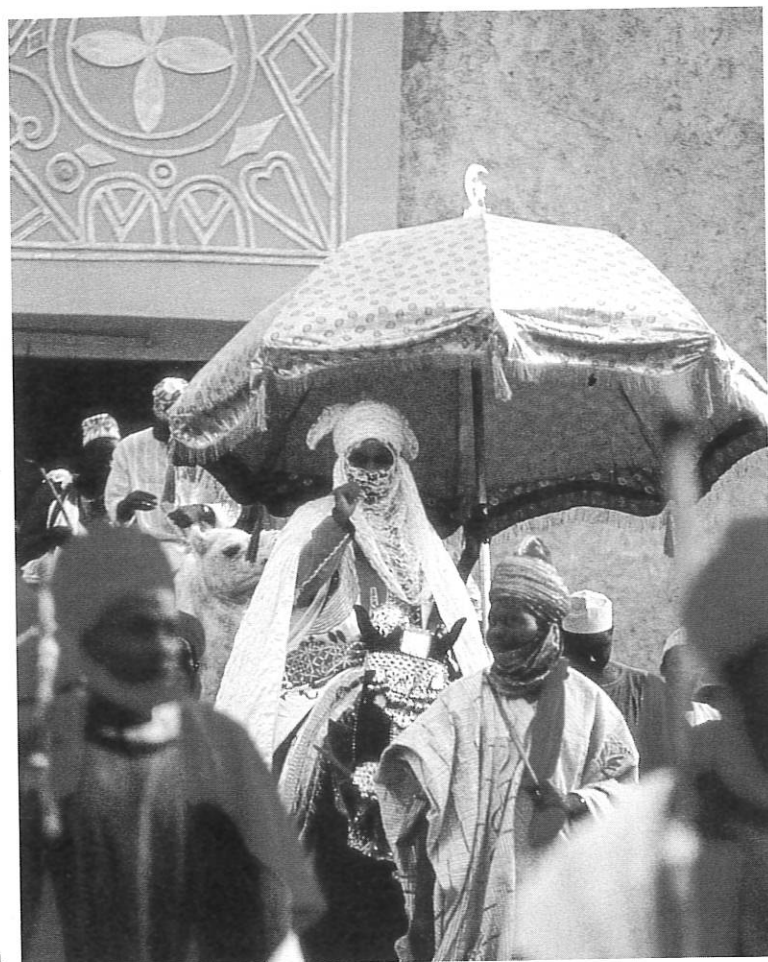
(1) as a form for the celebration of a national public holiday that manifests elements of a spectacle, pageant or show for entertainment. There is an undeniably festive atmosphere. The streets where the parade and competition take place overflow with ordinary citizens wearing their best dress. There are numerous vendors of snacks and soft drinks (also pickpockets). Both parade and competition are broadcast on radio and television, and in rural areas every set is turned in;

(2) as an occasion for the ruler to salute, and to be saluted by (it definitely is symmetrical) the populace. There is a clear element of public relations here. The public equestrian parade and competition provides one of those rare occasions on which both social extremes - rich and poor - can celebrate²⁰ together;



(3) as a rather elegant male fashion show. It is misrepresentative to regard these ceremonies as only a form of masquerade, in which the participants are attempting to "dress up" in costumes that imitate their ancestors.²¹ A more fruitful analogy would be to suggest that the people wearing these magnificent robes regard them as something akin to Western formal wear. In contemporary Nigerian society this is reflected by the nomenclature of formal invitations, where it is referred to as "national dress" and listed as the only alternative to black tie;

Fig. 5 - Each Emir has his own wardrobe of distinctive formal equestrian fashions: a) His Royal Highness, Alhaji Ado Bavero, Emir of Kano; b) HRH Alhaji Usman Kabir, Emir of Katsina; c) HRH Alhaji Shehu Idris, Emir of Zaria.



(4) a homage to the past. The chain mail shirts, the helmets, the spears, the shields, and the horses, as elements that also commemorate a deservedly famous cavalry heritage, are still important in these ceremony-festivals. But it would be simplistic to say that today this is their *raison d'être*. This would also obscure appreciation of the possibility that the equestrian culture of this region is enjoying a modest rebirth because it has begun to cope successfully with a changed social context;

(5) as equestrian spectator shows and games. The *durbars*²² or horsed competitions are unquestionably the high points of these occasions. This is a key factor - these equestrian competitions, with their splendidly robed principals, have become popular spectator shows and attract as large an audience as major football (soccer) matches.²³

Audiences are anything but passive. They clearly are both thrilled and terrified to be

in close proximity to the snorting, thundering companies of horsemen. They actively applaud and censure good and bad displays of horsemanship.

A defender of the orthodox view of the "traditional" might protest that, while these "additional perspectives" on the equestrian parade-and-competition as a contemporary social phenomenon may be true, they are only trivially so. And, as superficially true, they distract attention from what is unique and important about these events as cultural statements in and of a traditional society.

Postponing for the moment coming to terms with the nagging problem of just what this unique "traditional" element may be, an obvious riposte is to enquire if the orthodox defender would be willing to admit that these additional, superficial reasons for or meanings of these ceremonies may have always been "true," even centuries ago, in distant and legendary times. If so, does this not make the parades much more conventional, as cultural "statements," in their own right?

The orthodox defender might respond by suggesting that this account of these ceremonies is not representative because - to detail just one of its shortcomings - it pays insufficient attention to the significance and meaning of the Emir's participation. By convention, in the relevant literature, the Emir is also referred to as a "traditional" ruler.²⁴ In the English-language contemporary Nigerian press, rhetoric such as the following is commonplace:

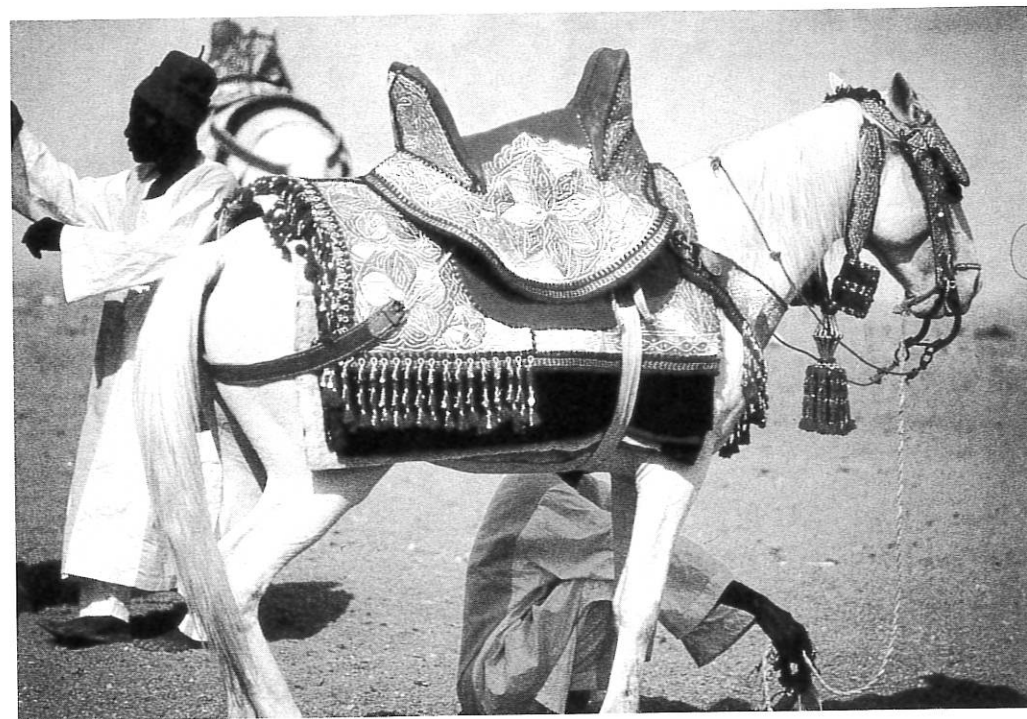
Alhaji Ado Bayero, the thirteenth Emir of Kano and the fifty-sixth in the line of rulers that ruled Kano from 999 A.D. to date is undoubtedly one of the most successful traditional leaders [in the history] of the Emirate.²⁵

Fig. 6 - a) Kano b) Yola. A local cynic commented that the homely alternative of a bare Borno head with its prominent "Roman nose" was good enough reason for extravagant equestrian decoration.



It is the Emir, as traditional ruler, who authorizes the ceremony to "be" and take place. It is the Emir's staff (both in the palace and on the local council) who organize the events, determine who will partic-

Fig. 7 - Yola. The hand embroidered, gold-threaded saddles for the Emir of Yola are specially ordered from a workshop in Alexandria, Egypt.



ipate, and print the official program. It is the horsed company, led by the Emir, that forms the nucleus of the parade. It is the regional chiefs, accustomed to salute the Emir on such occasions, who provide the balance of horsemen.

In more technical language, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the "presence" of the Emir, as an institutionalized traditional authority, is a sufficient cause for the entire proceedings. With his permission and participation they can take place. Without them they could not. The entire ceremony must therefore be viewed, foremost, as an expression or manifestation of the power of this institutionalized traditional authority that transcends any individual.²⁶ This is the way it has been for centuries, and this is the way it still is today. This is therefore one obvious example of what the word "traditional" can mean.

The force of this argument is undeniable.

Yet so is the impact of the other aspects of these occasions that have been loosely described under the headings of "show" or "spectacle." It is this two-sidedness or ambivalence of these occasions that inclines one to refer to them also as entertainment,²⁷ and why perhaps it is more representative to settle on - as our third alternative - further discussion of the meaning of "traditional," to see whether it can be somehow refined so that these diverse elements may be reconciled.

It is at this point that one can appreciate the relevance of a postmodern approach. Some one like Mudimbe²⁸ would lament any "fix-it" attitude towards this process of redefinition. He would encourage us to see further than the typical craftsman of objective knowledge. The craftsman would treat this as essentially a technical problem: when the meaning of a term is shown to be at variance with its referent, when it no

Fig. 8 - Kano. The equestrian rushes once said to be distinctive of durbar competitions are popular with spectators.



longer accurately describes what it is meant to, modify it so that it does. Then one can carry on with the scientific process and progress towards understanding alien cultures better than before.

An alternative form of analysis would be to try and understand better the mentality that originally assigned the meaning of "traditional" that it is now found appropriate to discard, to revise. For the characteristics of alien societies that strike the observer as "definitive" also may tell us a good deal about that observer and his own cultural priorities. What we say distinguishes "them" from "us" (scientifically, aesthetically, ethnically, and so forth) can be of perhaps even greater value for understanding what we want to distinguish "us" from "them", for better understanding what we think is important about our cultural selves.

Something else that makes the "old" meaning of a concept like "traditional" difficult to negotiate, is that it has been differently defined for different contexts. There are, however, three fairly dependable char-

Fig. 9 - Kano. From the moment horsemen issue from the palace gate they are performing for an audience.

Alternative caption: Youthful participants "horsing about" in a manner not entirely appropriate to a formal ceremony.



acteristics shared in common²⁹ when referring to social institutions, social practices, beliefs, or attitudes towards beliefs (these latter two always also somehow social in scale). One is that they are significantly connected with the past. The second is that there has been a notable lack of innovation or change in such practices or beliefs since

Fig. 10 - a) Maiduguri, b) Kano. Painted decoration on the wall of an official room in the Kano palace (soron Ingilia), contrasted with the "real thing" in Borno (Maiduguri). The reins that a rider uses to guide his horse are said to



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b

originally introduced. The third is that they are more clearly and more easily identified and understood by the observation and analysis of behaviour rather than information provided by informants or direct discourse.

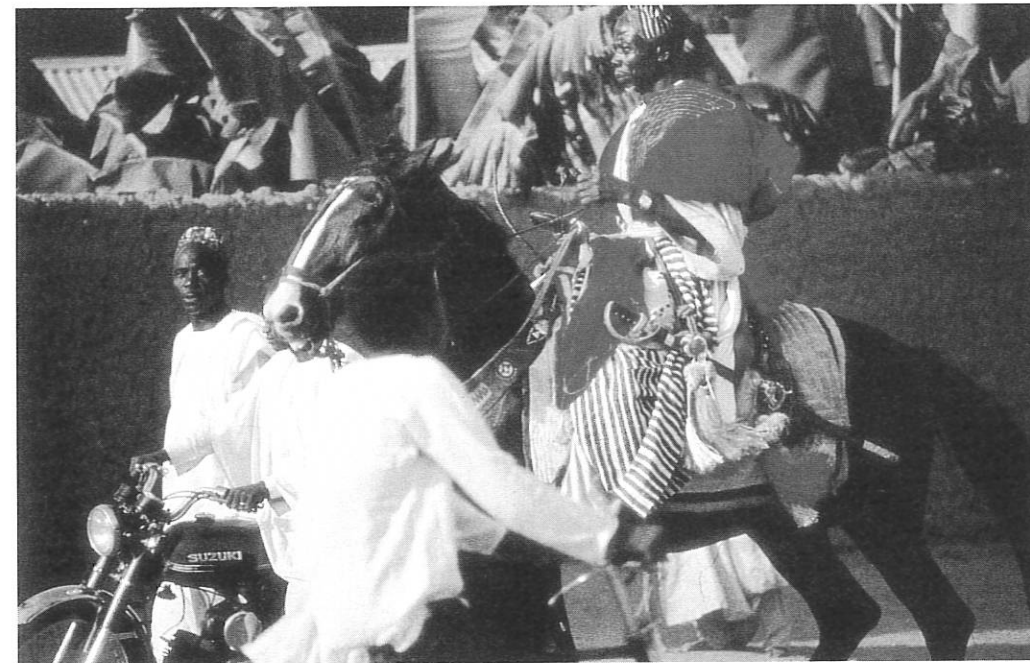
Converting each of these characteristics, so that it reflects back upon the "us" who

be an appropriate visual metaphor for the relationship an Emir bears towards his people. The saber is now interpreted as symbolic of the protective role an Emir bears towards the community.

originally imputed it to "them", can be used to tell us that the (Western) epistemological ideology of the age³⁰ that gave rise to this meaning of "traditional" places a high value upon being independent from (but aware of) the past, upon invention and change as elements of "progress", and upon being articulate, rational, even commonsensical³¹ according to clearly defined methodological standards. It would be controversial to insist that, because the West did place a high ideological value upon such "attitudes" and because these alien cultures were supposed to be/appeared to be so different from our own, we were (pre)disposed to attribute, to "prove" contrary notions to and of them.³²

So as to be equally unfair to all parties concerned, this very pale imitation of Foucauldian³³ analysis can also be applied to the alternative perspectives on these ceremony-festivals that have been suggested in this paper. In an ideological era of multi-

Fig. 11 - Yola. Composite image of a pedestrian, a bicyclist, a motorcyclist, and a horseman: today the latter three are becoming equally practical and economical alternatives.



culturalism, the (no-longer-so) alien is assigned separate, different but equal status. It therefore follows that we would begin to interpret his cultural activities by (new) more conventional, more pedestrian comparisons rather than the (old) exotic and bizarre ones:³⁴ "fashion" shows, "public" holidays, games and sports. "Just like us" status ("Your culture has integrity!") has become a (universal) "natural" right.

What the above also demonstrates is that we cannot get away from, cannot avoid, the concepts and categories of our primary natural language when it comes to translating an alien culture into our own terms. The processes of description and explanation - admittedly approximate³⁵ - must take sense to us in the terms of our language or they have no meaning at all. The alien culture must be made to conform semantically, or it does not translate.

To conclude with an anecdote or, rather, an anecdote within an anecdote, about con-

tinuity and change: Alhaji Magajin Busa is a substantial man of affairs in Zaria, an emirate in the North of Nigeria that in earlier times was known as the kingdom of Zazzau. In this region today the Mercedes has become synonymous with royalty and wealthy businessmen.

One of Alhaji Busa's sidelines is to rent out the beautiful robes that horsemen wear on the occasions of the Muslim holidays. He does this in a very discreet manner, because such people would prefer it never be known that the gown is not their own. Still, the service the Alhaji provides is very much comparable to the businesses that rent out formal wear in Western society.

One afternoon while relaxing in his garden the Alhaji told an anecdote that dates from when the Emir of Bida³⁶ bought his town's first motor car, a Mercedes. The population was very impressed by this magnificent limousine when they saw it being delivered to the palace. Now their Emir

would be able to travel in modern comfort to places like Ghana, Cairo, even Mecca!

Then it was announced that all the people of the town should begin to report to the palace every morning to assist with the construction of roads. Because unlike the horse, which could travel over open country, this new "iron horse" required roads to travel on. If this was called "progress," the Alhaji told us, the people did not know whether to laugh or to cry. Because now they understood that before the "iron horse" could carry their Emir to Mecca they would first have to build a road that reached Mecca!

When we asked the Alhaji where he kept his Mercedes, he pointed to the stables at the far end of the garden and said: "Many of my customers live in rural areas. My Mercedes has four legs!"³⁷

The process of refining the meaning of "traditional" is ongoing. Any number of contemporary movements and sources are contributing to it. In this kind of pluralistic intellectual atmosphere, attempting independently to stipulate, to "fix" a new definition would be counter-productive. The move towards redefinition is already well underway. It is motivated by an increased sensitivity to the meanings of "alien" and of "culture," and by an increased awareness of the influence of subjectivity upon objectivity. All of this underscores, once again, the primacy of self-awareness to understanding generally.
(Milano 8.3.1994)

Notes

- ¹ Hobsbawn E. and Ranger T., eds., *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1983; Kuper Adam, *The Invention of Primitive Society*, Routledge, London 1988; Mudimbe V.Y., *The Invention of Africa*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1988. The basis for a bias against tradition has always been epistemological - its questionable reliability as a source of and justification for knowledge.
- ² Blier S.P., "Truth and Seeing: Magic, Custom, and Fetish in Art History," in Bates R.H., Mudimbe V.Y. and O'Barr J. (eds.), *Africa and the Disciplines*, University Press, Chicago 1993, pp. 139-166; Kasfir S.L., "One Tribe, One Style? Paradigms in the Historiography of African Art," *History in Africa*, 11, 1984, pp. 163-193; Hallen B., "The Art Historian as Conceptual Analyst," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 37/3, 1979, pp. 303-313.
- ³ Hallpike C.R., *The Foundations of Primitive Thought*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1979, p. 485.
- ⁴ Richard Rorty's admonitions regarding hasty generalizations about theoretical traditions when either "Western" or "non-Western" become topics of discussion are relevant. See his "Heidegger, Kundera, and Dickens," in *Essays on Heidegger and Others 2*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1991, pp. 66-82.
- ⁵ Hallen B. and Sodipo J.O., *Knowledge, Belief and Witchcraft*, Ethnographica Publishers, London 1986, p. 125.
- ⁶ Appiah K.A., *In My Father's House*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1992, p. 125.
- ⁷ Borno (Maiduguri) is different, of course, because there the ruler is the Shehu of Borno.
- ⁸ This compares with an estimate of 200 at the same ceremony in 1981, and is further evidence of the increasing vitality of the equestrian culture. See Perani J. and Wolff N., "Embroidered Gown and Equestrian Ensembles of The Kano Aristocracy," *African Arts*, XXV/3, July 1992, p. 103, fn. 28.

- ⁹ "Ramadan fast and Sallah festival were started in Kano in the fifteenth century...(80)"; "Present day Sallah ceremonies differ little from the northern Nigerian equestrian displays observed by Nachtigal over a century ago (81)", in Perani and Wolff, 1992.
- ¹⁰ The remarkable journey of the toe-stirrup, from India to Ethiopia to West Africa is illustrative (Goody J., *Technology, Tradition, and the State in Africa*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1970, p. 35; Law R., *The Horse in West African History*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1980, p. 89).
- ¹¹ "In the seventeenth century, when imported horses and trappings had become an essential component in Hausa military strategy, Hausa metalworkers probably began to make their own horse trappings, imitating Arab prototypes" (Perani and Wolff, 1992, p. 78).
- ¹² There is a "legend" about a rebel immigrant Prince from Baghdad who, according to some versions, arrived in the area riding an animal that the local people had never before seen. Some scholars suggest this must have been a mule, but given cosmopolitan standards and tastes of the time (A. Smith dates the story's currency to the 17th century) it may have been a pure-bred Arabian horse. See Smith A., "Some Considerations Relating to the Formation of States in Hausaland," in *A Little New Light I*, A. Smith Centre for Historical Research, Zaria 1987, p. 65.
- ¹³ Law, 1980.
- ¹⁴ This is how one of the earliest references to horses in West Africa in Arabic sources, al-Bakri's 11th century description of the 10 splendidly outfitted horses at the court of the king of Ghana, is generally interpreted (Levtzion N. and Hopkins J.F.P. (eds.), *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West African History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1981, p. 80).
- ¹⁵ Goody, 1971, pp. 34-50.
- ¹⁶ Most accounts emphasize the tsetse-fly problem and underrate the equally lethal consequences of midge-transmitted African Horse Sickness (AHS), which has only recently been successfully contained by vaccination.
- ¹⁷ With reference to the Appiah quotation on p. 1 above, there is a significant difference between being oriented towards one's past and being connected with one's past.
- ¹⁸ Law, 1980, p. 206.
- ¹⁹ Mazrui A.A. and Tidy M., *Nationalism and New States in Africa*, Heinemann, London 1984, p. 169, as quoted in Mudimbe V.Y., *The Invention of Africa*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1988, p. 169.
- ²⁰ Different from the Friday Prayer, when they can worship together in the Central Mosque.
- ²¹ The horse as decorated being an extension of the rider's fashionable tastes.
- ²² The events constitutive of the durbar are also undergoing modification, and therefore so is the meaning of this "traditional" term.
- ²³ Polo, played in private clubs, is not a popular sport with the general public.
- ²⁴ For those who may not be familiar with recent Nigerian history, it is partly as a consequence of colonialism and partly as a consequence of policy decisions taken by the national body-politic since independence that the precolonial political structure ("traditional" rulers) continues to exist parallel to and, in principle, subordinate to the civilian and military political structure of the nation-state.
- ²⁵ *The Democrat*, November 12, 1988, p. 6.
- ²⁶ It is noteworthy that, by way of introducing the current Emir, this heritage is immediately invoked in the above quotation from the Nigerian newspaper.
- ²⁷ Robin Horton notes an intriguingly analogical ambivalence, followed by a transition in his thinking, about the role of the Kalabari Ekine society. See *Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1993, p. 446, fn. 90; and the earlier article "The Kalabari Ekine Society: a Borderland of Religion and Art", *Africa*, 32/1, 1962.
- ²⁸ Mudimbe, 1988, pp. 188-192.
- ²⁹ Evans-Pritchard affirmed three well-known characteristics of the "primitive" society: small-scale, preindustrial, and preliterate.

See his *Theories of Primitive Religion*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1965, p. 18.

- ³⁰ Which would be described as “modern” rather than postmodern.
- ³¹ Any number of specialized studies of the (Western) notion of “common-sense” have been carried out. See Lehrer K., *Thomas Reid*, Routledge, London 1991.
- ³² Even if this is an argument advanced by Kuper, 1988. See p. 5.
- ³³ Foucault M., *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Routledge, London 1974.
- ³⁴ Or, at the other interpretative extreme, that all Western notions, categories and methods are (culturally) completely alien and therefore inherently distortive when used to analyze non-Western cultures.
- ³⁵ For a more detailed discussion of some consequences of this and of W.V.O. Quine’s Indeterminacy Thesis of Radical Translation for African studies, see Hallen and Sodipo, 1986: Chapters I and II.
- ³⁶ Many of the people who deal in national dress have links with Bida because of that town’s formidable reputation for the quality of its garments.
- ³⁷ Substantial trans-Saharan horse importation ceased 100+ years ago. A tour of local private stables to view the foals now being bred each year is the happiest evidence of the burgeoning equestrian renaissance in this region. The rugged hardiness of the domestic strains that have been bred over the centuries, easier access to veterinary medicine, and an economic Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) that has made motor cars, motorcycles and even bicycles exorbitantly expensive may combine to make equestrian transport economically feasible after all.