

L. E. Kubbel

ON THE HISTORY OF SOCIAL RELATIONS
IN THE WEST SUDAN IN THE 8th TO THE 16th CENTURIES

In modern science there is no single viewpoint of the periodization of the history of society which existed along the Upper and Middle Niger in the 8th to 16th centuries. Two different views on this problem are especially widespread. Some investigators distinguish the pre-Islamic period and the period when the new religion has already spread in the West Sudan. Others (and they constitute a majority) prefer to divide the history of this region by the continuity of state formations: Ghana, Mali and Songhay.

The first principle cannot be regarded as independent: it does not yield a sufficiently convincing criterion of periodization; second, the introduction of Islam in the West Sudan was not a one-time act but a prolonged process which extended into centuries.

As for the second principle which we may call state-dynastic, it is no doubt convenient in the sense that it presents sufficiently stable chronological limits. However, the state-dynastic principle of periodization *per se* cannot explain either the causes responsible for the replacement of one state formation by another, or the characteristics distinguishing each particular state formation. In other words, no reliable periodization criterion is available in this case either.

Yet a criterion of this type has long been developed by the Marxist-Leninist theory. According to this theory, the principal, decisive factor of historical development is the level of development of the productive forces of society (this concept inherent both to the entire totality of the means of production and the people it involves) and the resulting level of development of production relations. "Assume a particular state of development in the productive faculties of man and you will get a particular form of commerce and consumption", wrote Marx. "Assume particular stages of development in production, commerce and consumption, and you will have a corresponding social constitution, a corresponding organization of the family, of orders or of classes, in a word, a corresponding civil society".¹

The application of this criterion to the periodization of history of the West-African societies of the Middle Ages shows that the three great powers—Ghana (the 8th to 12th centuries), Mali (the 13th to 15th centuries) and Songhay (the second half of the 15th to the 16th centuries)—constitute a socio-political reflection of three different

stages of development of productive forces and production relations in the areas along the Upper and Middle Niger. Thus, the periodization based on the change of these state formations becomes justified with sufficient objectivity. The problem thus reduces to the consideration, at least in a general outline, to the level of development of social production, and on this basis, that of social relations in the above three states.

At the same time this analysis will be incomplete unless we take into account the influence exercised on the West Sudan by its north, more developed neighbours, and if we consider the Sudanese societies in isolation, in their pure form, so to speak. Moreover, the very question of the character and ultimate results of this influence can hardly be answered with rigorous unambiguity. Speaking in the very general form, the mediaeval Sudan presents a very peculiar example of combination of general historical laws and local specifics.

The main specific feature dates from the early stage of development in Ghana in the 8th to 10th centuries: the trade with North Africa acted as a class-forming factor of primary importance. The shaping of the first of the three great states of the West African Middle Ages was caused by the requirements of trans-Saharan trade perhaps to a greater extent than by the internal economic and social development of the nations speaking the Mande languages of the northern group.² It is interesting that the process was not an exceptional peculiarity of West Africa: the history of the class societies of the African coast of the Indian Ocean offers a curious parallel in this respect.³ The French African scholar J. Suret-Canale noted in his study of the possibility of applying the concept of "Asian mode of production" to the pre-colonial history of Africa, the exceptional role of trade in class formation of African society (though in my opinion, he exaggerates the operation of the above factor at later stages of development of these societies).⁴

At the same time it would be wrong to assume that the trade with the northern neighbours merely accelerated the development of the social-economic relations in the West African society. To some extent it did accelerate this development without any doubt. On the other hand, the influence which an incomparably more developed economy of Maghrib and Egypt exercised through the trade on the economy of the West Sudan had a definite and well-pronounced impeding effect. Two items of trade with the Sudan were in fact of interest to the North-African merchants: gold and slaves. Throughout the period under review the demand for these items was remarkably stable. However, their export by no means contributed to the development of the West Sudan's own economy. On the contrary, this intense export of gold and slaves contributed to the conservation of the stagnant economic forms a prolonged existence of which can be explained by several reasons, as has been conclusively demonstrated by Professor M. Małowist of Poland.⁵ A most important reason is, as it seems to me, a combination of extremely low technological standards and unproductive tra-

ditional farming with the tribal community as the principal form of social organization.

Throughout the existence of the great states of the West Sudanese Middle Ages both trends were at work. In different periods one of the trends would predominate or rather would be manifest more clearly, but the operation of both never ceased.

Such are those general considerations which should be borne in mind in the analysis of the data of the sources on the internal social-economic development of Ghana, Mali and Sónghay.

The investigator has at his disposal very scarce data on the occupations of the population of Ghana. Properly speaking, we possess only cursory notes of el-Bekrî and el-Idrîsî on the country's farming. From these notes it is clear that the staple crops were dhorra, cotton and rice, the dhorra playing an especially important role.⁶ This is quite natural: the centre of Ghana lay in Sahel, far from large rivers and drought-resistant dhorra was suitable best of all to the natural conditions of the area.

The authors who wrote of Ghana in the 11th to the 12th centuries were little interested in its economic possibilities, with one exception, extremely important in the present case. The reference is to the trade in gold and slaves in exchange for the Sahara's salt. Of course, one of the primary reasons is the specific character of contacts between the West Sudan and North Africa. However, even with allowances for this fact, it has to be admitted that this attention had an objective basis: the vital role of trans-Sahara trade. The Sudan could not do without salt, but it was able to obtain it only in exchange for those goods which the economy of the Sahara and the Mediterranean basin states needed.

Of definite interest in this respect are the considerations put forward by the Soviet Professor D. A. Olderogge and M. Małowist on the character of the trade between the nomadic steppes and sedentary agricultural area in West Africa which existed from ancient times. Olderogge justly emphasizes that a very limited range of people derived benefit from the trade in gold while the bulk of the population was only interested in salt and livestock products.⁷ The Polish investigator introduces the idea of development and variation in time into the study of the ancient trade. He conjectures that at an earlier time (approximately up to the middle of the 1st millennium B. C.) gold did not figure at all as an item of the Sudan's export which consisted almost exclusively of livestock products and perhaps, iron and iron goods.⁸

Carrying on this idea, we shall come to the indubitable conclusion that this is where the influence on the West Sudan of its more developed neighbours was manifest first and foremost. Indeed, only the emergence on the northern side of the Sahara of societies with antagonistic classes could produce in trade the demand for goods like gold and, which is perhaps even more important, slaves. Naturally, demand gave rise to supply, which was reflected in a rather one-sided treatment

by the early Arab authors, from el-Fazari to el-Idrisi, of the trade of Maghreb and Egypt with West Africa.

It should be admitted that both Arabs and later scholars were attracted above all by Ghana's trade in gold. This trade itself as well as its importance for the European and Middle-Eastern economies are treated in sufficient detail in several studies, and first of all, in those of E. W. Bovill.⁹ Much less attention was paid to insistent references to the slave trade and the slave hunt in the works of el-Bekri and especially el-Idrisi.¹⁰ From these reports which all refer to the north-west of the territory of the present-day Republic of Mali and the bordering areas of Mauretania and Senegal, i. e., just the central areas of ancient Ghana we can see that the expeditions to get slaves had a wide scope and that they were carried out mainly by inhabitants of the trade cities of the Sudan. For example, el-Idrisi directly refers to "inhabitants of Barissa, Sylla, Tekroun and Ghana".¹¹

Nevertheless, the sources of that time by no means point to the use of slaves inside Ghana. On the contrary, it is always emphasized that slaves were captured for sale. They are not mentioned even in el-Bekri's description of the king's audience.¹² An objection may be raised that the sources are too scanty for such a categorical judgement. However, if we turn to such a late source like the Legend of Soundjata, there is practically no reference there to any appreciable role of slaves in the early Mali, at any rate up to the victory at Krina.¹³ This testifies to a comparatively later emergence of large numbers of slaves inside the mediaeval states of the West Sudan.

This is what constitutes, in my opinion, the basic peculiarity of the social-economic structure of Ghana in the 10th to 11th centuries. The reference is to the fact that gold and slaves which had become major staple exports under the influence of North-African demands, did not and could not be used inside the society of Ghana because the country's economic development was insufficient. The domination of assartage in agriculture and the resulting conservation of tribal relations inside a community kept low the economic level and there was no need for the use of slave labour.

Of course, the information of el-Bekri indicates that rather developed elements of state organization already existed in Ghana by the 11th century. There is no doubt that proprietorial inequality already existed in Ghanaian society as well; the shaping of a future exploiting class could begin on the basis of this inequality. It can be supposed that some rudiments of this class were already in evidence by that time. The facts reported by the sources seem to be pointing that way: Ghanaian society was no doubt familiar with slavery and the slave trade; the supreme power's monopoly of native gold and trade dues;¹⁴ and finally, the existence of a separate royal city and separate royal burials.¹⁵

At the same time there is no doubt that there were many survivals of the pre-class forms of social organization. The most salient of these forms is the maternal count of kinship in the royal family to which el-Bekri refers quite definitely¹⁶ and which was later exceptionally

stable and long-lived. What is even more important is the fact that we have no data which would point to the presence of exploitation of tribesmen (outside the traditional tribal duties, of course) or slaves inside Ghana itself. On the contrary, everything that the sources report seems to speak against this. Therefore, the contention that the process of class formation in the Ghana of el-Bekri's time was at its very early stage does not appear to me too bold.

The following question may arise: does this admission mean that the shaping of a certain state machinery in ancient Ghana preceded the shaping of antagonistic classes? It seems that the question should be answered in the affirmative, if we take into account the specifics of the historical development of the Western Sudan. Since the northern "coast" of the Sahara was taken up by class society, salt so vital for the population of the Sudan, could only be obtained in exchange for gold and slaves (the reference is not to the exchange on local markets which could not supply the necessary amount of salt). Only sufficiently strong central power could organize this trade and ensure the observance of its interests. The emergence of new social needs contributed to the conversion of the traditional tribal top crust into the simplest state machinery called upon to solve wider problems than those involved in a simple functioning of tribal society. The process is rather early (the origin of Ghana dates approximately to the close of the 4th century A. D.) and indeed was of necessity earlier than the growth of proprietorial inequality stimulated by the same trade led to the final division of society into antagonistic classes.

The state that evolved may be given the name introduced by the British ethnologist A. Southall: "segmentary state".¹⁷ By this definition he meant a state in which the principle of territorial dependence ousts the principle of dependence by kinship on the one hand, and there is no bureaucratic machinery while the elements of administration have no well-defined function and are more or less accidental, on the other. For my part I would propose the definition "pre-class state power".¹⁸

What has been said above does not contradict the assumption of the existence of the ruling top crust, discussed above. This top crust could in principle emerge only from the old tribal nobility, by appropriating the traditional duties of rank-and-file members of society as a result of which proprietorial inequality originated. In this sense Ghana was no exception. However, the specific conditions of historical development of the Western Sudan led to essential peculiarities in the shaping of Ghana's top crust.

It seems that we can already refer to the beginning of conversion of such a top crust into the ruling class of Ghana in the 11th century, a class owing his ascension to trans-Sahara trade first and foremost. It was this class that provided the clientele of the North-African merchantry, and it was through their hands that the gold and slaves described by Arab authors passed. There is no doubt that this trade sharply accelerated the proprietorial development of the society of Ghana and

contributed to the process of class-formation. However, the interests of the new ruling class were rather turned outside the confines of their society: to ensure the collection of gold from the southern neighbours and to capture as many slaves for sale as possible. This class did not face as exploiters the ordinary farmer or hunter of Ghana proper. Rather it can be contended that the nascent ruling class of Ghana was parasitic from the outset with respect to society as a whole since it was not in general interested in the economic development of this society but based its economic and political influence on external factors. On the other hand, inside the society there was no evidence of such a growth of productive forces as could accelerate appreciably class-formation from within.

The growth of aristocracy out of the old tribal top crust was paralleled in Ghana—or at any rate at the centre of the state—by the emergence of the new social element which was destined to play the increasing role in the life of Ghana and its successors. I am referring to rich merchants. At this stage this class was essentially heterogeneous as regards its ethnical composition (Arab-Berber) though el-Idrisi already mentions Mande-speaking Wangara tradesmen. For the ruling top crust of Ghana merchants were indispensable intermediaries in trade. It is precisely in Ghana that aristocracy-merchantry alliance took shape, which later became a necessary constituent of the social structure of the great powers of the Sudanese Middle Ages. This alliance began to take shape sufficiently early: Ibadite trade colonies in the Western Sudan existed already at the close of the 8th century,¹⁹ and even they probably had predecessors.

Summing up what has been said above, we can conclude that the Ghana of the period of florescence (the end of the 10th to 11th centuries) was a vast foreign-trade superstructure over a society in which the process of class formation was still at an early stage and proceeded under the influence of mainly external conditions on the basis of a weakly developed domestic economy and with the preservation of many tribal-society survivals.

Nevertheless, it is Ghana which prepared that accumulation of new socio-economic elements which became basic to a qualitative leap in the social development of the West-Sudanese society, a leap which was clearly in evidence in the great state of Mali which replaced Ghana as hegemon on the Upper and Middle Niger in the second third of the 13th century. Such new elements were above all proprietorial stratification and the emergence on its basis of rudiments of a ruling class and statehood. These new elements made possible the formation and consolidation of small vassal principalities of Ghana on the Upper Niger and Sankarani which later constituted the nucleus of a new state.

As for the formation of a new large state unit in the upper reaches of the Niger and Senegal, a set of causes was responsible for this. The main cause was no doubt the need of unifying under a single power of the southern half of the caravan route: only comparatively strong power could ensure the safe supply of gold and slaves in exchange for

Saharan salt. The direction of the main efforts of conquest made by Soundjata and his successors up to Sakoura including, confirms this fact. The kings of Mali moved south-west, into gold-mining areas, and north-east, towards Gao. By 1300 they united under their power both gold-mining areas and the key centres of exchange. In the final analysis the influence of the more developed northern neighbours was manifested indirectly in this case as well.

Characteristically, the centre of the new state shifted south-west from ancient Ghana. The Mandingo principalities on the Upper Niger were more immune against a military threat from the desert. A country like Ghana which had no sound economic basis of its own and was completely dependent on trade through the Sahara could not be sufficiently stable in collisions with nomads. On the other hand, areas of long-standing farming much more suitable for agriculture than Sahel where the centre of Ghana was could provide such a basis. The only factor that proved to be more or less accidental was that the nucleus of the new power was Mali and not Sosso which also lay in farming areas of the Upper Niger and with which Mali had to contest, hard and long, for superiority.

The available evidence on Mali is by far more numerous than that on the preceding period. It is true that the most valuable evidence, including the accounts of al-Omari and Ibn Battuta based on the accounts of eye-witnesses,²⁰ dates from the second third of the 14th century, i. e. the prime of the Keita power. As for the 13th century, we have at our disposal nothing but the rather short accounts of Ibn Saïd and the Mandingo folklore.²¹ Unfortunately, the sources of Ibn Khaldun's evidence, the only one which furnished the dates of the rule of Mali's kings from Sundjata onward, are not clear.²² Nevertheless, the above materials present evidence sufficient to enable us to assess the economic development of Mali more definitely than that of Ghana. A detailed study of the available evidence has already been undertaken by M. Małowist,²³ and therefore we shall confine ourselves to present his general conclusions.

There is no doubt that the backbone of the country's economy was farming, chiefly based on assartage. Relying on the tales of Ibn Saïd, Ibn Battuta and al-Omari we can conclude that cotton seems to have played a somewhat higher part in agriculture. Craftsmanship was undoubtedly much more developed; at any rate it is during this period when the first mention of craftsmen castes was made. On the whole, it is entirely clear that as compared with Ghana, Mali's economy showed a definite quantitative increase.

It should be noted, however, that this increase did not involve any corresponding qualitative changes in the technological level of the economy, and first of all in farming as its basis. Indeed, the rather innumerable population scattered across a large territory did not prompt the intensification of the economy. The traditional assartage system could well satisfy the population's demand for food. On the other hand, the same assartage was a major prerequisite for the perpetuation of

such an archaic form of social organization as tribal community. It is a well known fact that in the Western Sudan it proved to be exceptionally stable. Now, the preservation of tribal community essentially impeded the further development of class formation: the community could resist effectively and for a long time the pressure of the nascent ruling class which strove for the direct exploitation of ordinary members of the tribal community.

It is true that under the specific conditions of the Western Sudan there existed another cause responsible for a comparatively low rate of exploitation: the accumulation in the possession of the ruling top crust of exports: slaves and gold. This fact weakened its interest in the intensification of the Sudan's own economy, especially so since neither the collection of a tribute in gold nor the capture of slaves in disunited and weak neighbour countries required much effort. This factor already noted for Ghana continued to operate in the Mali state as well, especially since new areas in the north of the modern Republic of Ghana were added just at that time to the old gold-mining area between the Niger and the Senegal.²⁴

However, the conditions which had changed compared with Ghana, and above all the consolidation of the ruling top crust and its tendency to dominate the whole of the Western Sudan still required the expansion and reinforcement of its economic basis which could no longer rely on trade alone. Hence followed the need for the growth of this top-crust's own economy. It would have been extremely difficult to do this by intensifying the exploitation of ordinary tribesmen. Their traditional duties were prescribed in a very strict manner and connected with religious beliefs and rites, which made almost impossible any change of their quantitative aspect. Therefore, in Mali the scholar meets for the first time a rather extensive use of slave labour inside the society of Mali and in the basic factor of its economy: agriculture.

The first mention of this is contained in the legend of Soundjata: following the victory over the state Sosso, runs the legend, its inhabitants were converted into slaves²⁵. It is quite evident that the turning to slavery of whole tribes could by no means involve their overall sale to the north. On the contrary, the purpose of this measure was precisely to use the labour of slaves locally. Probably it is in this way that farming colonies the organization of which some tradition variants ascribe to Soundjata were set up. The later sources such as Ibn Battuta, testify to a wider and more varied use of slave labour in the economy of Mali.²⁶ The well known story of twenty four slave "tribes" captured by the Songhays from the governors of Mali indicates how wide the range of use of slave labour was when the Mali state was at its prime.²⁷

Of course, a comparatively low level of economic development and the preservation of numerous survivals of pre-class society led to a peculiar character of use of slave labour in the Mandingo's power. This peculiarity was above all the existence of many features typical of patriarchal slavery, especially in the provisional status of the slave

inside a large patriarchal family as well as in those cases when the slave belonged to the entire clan, i. e., was a state slave. As Suret-Canale notes correctly enough, even when slave farming settlements were set up, there was a trend to reproduce artificially the conventional form of the prevailing social organization, including the patriarchal family.²⁸ Nevertheless, the effect of the use of slave labour, which became customary, on the entire subsequent social-economic structure of the Keita state was so strong that we can definitely contend that in the 13th century a major qualitative leap occurred in the social development of Mali. As a result, the Mali society of the period of affluence (up to the 60's of the 14th century) can be regarded, with a sufficient reason, as an early class society since the exploited and exploiters were already in evidence in this society.

The preservation of many survivals of patriarchal slavery appreciably facilitated the association between free communal men and slaves planted on land—at least in the economic if not legal sense. Evidently, it is just at that time that in Mali for the first time in the history of West Africa there started a process of fusion, quite characteristic of the early Middle Ages in Europe (and partly in the Near East), of free people and various categories of dependent people into a single class of dependent peasants, quite uniform socially and economically. However, in West Africa this process was much more prolonged as a result of a far lower level of development of social production.

On the other hand, a major manifestation of the formation of class society in Mali was a change of the composition of the ruling top crust. Trying to be as independent as possible from the tribal community, *dougou*, the ruling nobility, and above all the top crust of the Keita clan, undertook such a measure like the establishment of troops of the slaves. At the first stage the slave guards indeed made the royal power independent of the tribal community militarily. But very soon the strength and influence of its commanders made them a decisive political force at the centre of the state. In two decades after the death of Soundjata we observe a palace coup d'état made by the guards: that was precisely a palace coup d'état and not the change of a ruler possible in the framework of the tribal organization.²⁹ Thus, new African aristocracy which originated from slaves pushed rapidly and effectively the old tribal aristocracy into the background.

The new aristocracy was not connected with free tribesmen by any traditional ties, such as ritual ties. Therefore, the new aristocracy could not count on the appropriation of traditional tributes which all ascended to the old standards of social life and required their own economic basis. Large land estates which appeared for the first time in Mali constituted that basis.

The legend of Soundjata already refers to the granting of whole regions conquered by the Mandingo troops to the nearest associates of the hero.³⁰ If in this case we still can suppose simply the transfer of government of new lands to royal vicegerents, a century later the text

of el-Omarî describing the court of Moussa I does not permit any devious interpretation: there is a direct reference to *iqtâ*, i. e. military fiefs. The further text emphasizes even more the conventional character of these grants in land to royal warriors.³¹ Quite soon large-scale land property³² also became basic to the trend towards the political fragmentation of the country which finally led to the situation when "everyone on his plot of land with his detachment regarded himself as a sovereign".³³

At the same time, as far as we know, legally Western Africa knew in the Middle Ages no form of land property except the collective form. On this ground J. Suret-Canale who once admitted, though with some reservation, the existence of feudal relations in the Medieval Sudan³⁴ now believes that "nowhere... does pre-colonial Africa furnish an example of land relations which would include the existence of private rights and which could be called feudal."³⁵ A possible objection is that even highly developed feudal states of the Muslim East did not as a rule recognize theoretically private land property, and all their lands were regarded as owned by the state. Similar examples can be found in Africa itself: even at the close of the last century the legal fiction of state ownership of land was strictly observed in Ethiopia the feudal social character of which at that time is beyond doubt. In this case it should be borne in mind that though the ownership of separate individuals was not legally formalized, the rights to the possession of land usurped by the aristocracy proved to be so wide that practically they did not differ from the rights of ownership. The descriptions of the Mandingo society made by the contemporaries and later investigators confirm this point of view.

The usurpation by the nobility of the right to dispose of land was accompanied by the usurpation of the right to appropriate the labour of direct producers. With respect to free tribesmen this usurpation took the form of appropriating the traditional tributes. As for slaves settled on land, they were under food-rent, unconcealed even by the externally traditional form of communal duty. We have no information as to the existence of a *corvée* in the Mali period. We can perhaps contend that nowhere in the Middle East was there in the Middle Ages such a clearly pronounced unity of the traditional land rent and state tax as in the Western Sudan in the 14th to 16th centuries.

The new aristocracy openly opposed both free tribesmen and slaves on land as ruling exploiting class. The economic and political opposition was emphasized by an ideological contrast: the slave aristocracy became Muslim very early since Islamization strengthened its position in the struggle for influence and power against the old aristocracy which had stemmed from the tribal top crust. On the other hand the bulk of both free and dependent population adhered for a long time yet to pre-Islamic traditional beliefs.

Finally, in the period of Mali we can note major changes in the composition of the rich merchantry. The latter was no longer almost exclusively Arab-Berber as before. The stratum of Muslim merchants:

wangara who belonged by origin to the Mande-speaking peoples and who had appeared already in Ghana, acquired such an important influence in Mali that finally they controlled the entire southern section of the caravan way.³⁶ The stratum of the Muslim theologians among whom there also appeared an appreciable number of local people became much stronger compared with Ghana, was connected closely with the rich merchantry and took an active part in trade. Chronicles indicate, for example, that the cadhis of Djénné were *wangara* by origin.³⁷ The growing role of Islam (practically, evidently the entire ruling class in Mali was Muslim) entailed an appreciable increase of the theologians' influence, up to the emergence of some settlements which were entirely under the control of their cadhis and enjoyed administrative and legal immunity.³⁸

Thus, it can be sufficiently safely contended that if in Ghana the formation of a society with antagonistic classes merely started, Mali was the next stage of this development, a stage at which an early, feudal society, the first one in the history of the Western Sudan took shape.

The further impetus in its development the class society of the Western Sudan received in the great Songhay power of the second half of the 15th to 16th centuries. Properly speaking, the Songhay areas³⁹ already possessed sufficiently strong traditions of statehood. Gao, evidently, was the oldest trade centre of this region, and a report of such an early author like el-Yakoubî definitely points to an extensive sphere of influence of this centre.³⁹ The inscriptions on the tombs discovered in this city and dating from the 11th to 12th centuries indicate that the rulers of Gao were well aware of its importance as a commercial and political centre, and that their claims quite corresponded to this awareness.⁴⁰ Nearly two centuries of Gao's vassal dependence on the kings of Mali could not undermine the former's positions. There is nothing surprising about the fact that it was just the Songhay principality with the centre in Gao that constituted the nucleus around which the Western Sudan united for the third time into a single state.

This time, too, the interests of trade constituted a major reason for the unification. Just as in the previous periods, the trans-Saharan trade called for a single and possibly stronger power over the entire region of trade south of the Sahara. Besides, it was just in the 14th to 15th centuries that the demand for the Sudanese gold sharply increased in Europe. M. Malowist justly drew attention to the fact that the rich merchantry of such cities like Gao, Djénné and Tombouctou was vitally interested in this unification. Therefore, the support of the merchantry was ensured for the creators and architects of the great Songhay power sonni Ali and askia el-Hadj Mohammed I.⁴¹ In this sense a similarity with the process of formation of Mali in the 13th century is beyond doubt. However, several peculiarities essentially distinguish the process of formation of Songhay. Their meaning reduces in my opinion to the fact that in the second half of the 15th century the role of local socio-economic conditions of the Western Sudan sharply

increased compared with a such, essentially external factor, like the trade with North Africa.

The first of these peculiarities is that a single trade and craft centre of the Sudan of that day finally took shape in the Gao-Djénné-Tombouctou triangle at the border-line of the 14th and 15th centuries. It is important to emphasize the fact that the role of crafts increased appreciably in the process. While nothing is practically known to us about the crafts of Ghana (except for some references to cotton, which enables us to suppose the presence of weaving),⁴² in the accounts on Mali the investigator comes across the reference to crafts as well as the existence of craft castes, and above all those of smiths, which makes it possible to specify to the incipient isolation of crafts. There is no doubt that in cities like Gao the process had gone much further: the data on developed crafts in Gao, for example, can be traced to the 11th to 12th centuries.⁴³ Finally, the data of Sudanese chronicles make it possible to state that at the close of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th centuries the process of separation of crafts from farming had already ended in large cities⁴⁴ though, of course, this cannot be said of rural localities. Therefore, in the very first years of the rule of sonni Ali the political centre of the new state shifted, perfectly naturally, to the economic centre of the Western Sudan of that day: the Gao-Djénné-Tombouctou triangle. The shift was accompanied by the simultaneous decay of that economic centre which had developed earlier around Niani when the city had been the political capital of the Sudan, the decay of which was described so effectively by Leo Africanus.⁴⁵

However, the fall of the importance of Niani was caused not by the political decay of Mali alone. The Mandingo state inherited from Ghana, along with the political hegemony in the Western Sudan, the traditional trade routes with North Africa. For Ghana these routes had been running in the western part of the Sahara. Now, in the development of the trans-Saharan trade throughout its length there was a trend towards the shift of the principal trade routes eastward. This trend was in evidence very early: in particular, Ibn Hawqal⁴⁶ mentions it. Properly speaking, the foundation of Tombouctou in the 12th century was one of its reflections. The further shift of the principal foreign trade routes eastward, in combination with the political fragmentation and disintegration of the once powerful Mandingo state, was bound to entail the destruction of the economic centre of this state in the area of Niani.

The second peculiarity of the Songhay society is an appreciable difference of its economic basis from what we saw in Ghana and Mali. Here just as in any other mediaeval society, the basis was farming, or in the present case agriculture proper. However, in the Songhay case agriculture was essentially different from their predecessors: it was based not on assartage but nearly exclusively on watered rice sowing. In general of the three great states of the West-Sudanese Middle Ages, Songhay was linked most organically with the Niger: the traditio-

nal division of people into agriculturists and fishermen may furnish a good proof thereof.

The watered character of Songhay agriculture exercised an immense influence on the development of social relations among its people and largely determined those forms which the domestic history of the Songhay state assumed. That was expressed above all in the fact that a more intense and technologically developed form of agriculture contributed to a much lesser extent to the conservation of the archaic forms of social organization than the assartage system. Indeed, a large patriarchal family existed among the Songhays (and has lingered almost to our day); however, the clan has never attained such a degree of development as among the Mande-speaking peoples. Properly speaking, there was no special need even for a tribal community — *douçou* — since watered rice sowing did not require the collective labour of large human masses, though in general its labour consumption was higher than under assartage (in other words, each separate individual had to make a larger contribution of labour)).

As long as the Songhay state remained a comparatively small vassal principality, there was no question of additional hands despite the small number of Songhay people. However, the situation changed drastically when there began the creation of the great power which conquered the entire Western Sudan in due time. Campaigns of conquest, even directed against weak and disunited enemies diverted practically the entire able-bodied masculine population. Besides, it should be borne in mind that throughout the preceding period the Songhays reclaimed slowly but steadily ever fresh lands up the Niger. By the middle of the 15th century the diversion of the masculine population into the army began to curb this peaceful expansion of the Songhays. Besides, after the disintegration of the once single and powerful Mali the Western Sudan turned for nearly a hundred years into a battlefield on which military operations were constantly in progress not only on the border with the Mosi kingdoms but also in long proclaimed agricultural areas. Naturally, this war of all against all had a destructive effect on the country's productive forces. Now, any attempt to stop the decay of agriculture was thwarted by a shortage of manpower. Under these conditions the problem of supplying the troops with food began to loom in its full menacing stature.

Evidently, these considerations prompted askia el-Hadj Mohammed I to divide the Songhay people into two main estates: warriors and "subjects", i. e., peasants. The choice of the time for this reform was not accidental: by the 90's of the 15th century the military and political hegemony of Songhay in the Western Sudan had become a reality, but large armed forces were necessary to maintain it. The reform created an estate of professional and hereditary soldiers on the one hand, and made it possible to provide them with food more or less steadily, on the other.

There was yet another circumstance which stimulated throughout the 16th century an intense development of the Songhay power's

own farming. The discovery of America and the resulting unprecedented flow of precious metals to Europe undermined the demand for Sudanese gold. As for the slave trade, comparatively small rulers of coastal areas became the main contractors of the Europeans in this respect. The Songhays could not re-orient the slave trade traditional of large states of the Sudan westward, towards the coast. The result was an appreciable decrease of the incomes of the royal family and the entire ruling top crust of Songhay society. Perhaps, for the first time throughout the history of the Western Sudan this top crust realized the need for intensifying its own economy.

However, since the Songhay population was not numerous, the shortage of manpower could not be eliminated by the first askia's reform alone. Therefore, in Songhay the establishment of agricultural settlements of slaves, a process which had been in evidence for the first time in Mali (as was mentioned above), became a mass-scale feature. The present author has had occasion to make a special study of the problem.⁴⁷ Therefore, I shall not dwell on aspects like the methods of replenishing the contingents of dependent people, its ethnical composition, the location of settlements, etc. but proceed immediately to those differences which took shape in the organization and utilization of these settlements in the Songhay period as compared with the period of Mali.

The principal difference was the trend towards raising the rate of exploiting the dependent population, this trend being well pronounced throughout the existence of the Songhay power. It is in the Songhay period, under sonni Ali and his immediate predecessors that we encounter the first attempt of introducing a *corvée*. The reference is to land tillers from among the same twenty four "tribes" or rather servile castes which passed to the Songhay kings from the rulers of Mali and which were mentioned above. True, this attempt was evidently rather short-lived: already el-Hadj Mohammed I abolished the *corvée* for these "tribes" and returned to food-rent (in the process he made even more rigid the estate boundaries restricting the rights of members of the agricultural servile groups and besides imposed on them a tribute in people for sale).⁴⁸

D. A. Olderogge regards this measure of the first askia as a "transition from the ancient system of slave *latifundia*" to forms of exploitation kindred to serfdom.⁴⁹ It should be noted that the sources offer no information on the existence of the *corvée* in Sudan earlier than the episode indicated. Moreover, it is expressly stated that these "tribes" paid their rent in kind even when they were the property of the *mallikoi*⁵⁰ and this implies their independent land plots, which is in poor agreement with the concept of slave *latifundia*. It is hardly possible that any predecessors of sonni Ali of the first Songhay dynasty had been able to ensure that rigid administrative-police control without which the existence of the "system of *latifundia*" is simply unthinkable. Besides, the difference in the main trend of agricultural production should be borne in mind: a higher yield of marketable products in

case of watered rice growing made it possible to do away with the forced collective labour of large groups of dependent population. Incidentally, the same high rate of marketable products in rice growing explains a smaller territorial scope of the reclamation of new lands in the Songhay epoch as compared with the Mali period. The explanation is not the military rapacious nature of the Songhay state, as Mau ni believes⁵¹ but simply that the Songhay colonialization was turned to the Niger valley and especially the middle delta rather than the vast tracts of free lands in the savanna. The activity of *kanfari* Amar Kon-diagho, brother of el-Hadj Mohammed I, who was populating under a systematic plan and throughout many years the area of Tendirma in the western part of the middle delta may provide a good illustration of the above just as the remains of irrigation structures in the area of Gourma⁵² ascribed to the Songhays. But then I would by no means deny that with respect to its neighbours Songhay acted as a strong and very dangerous beast of prey.

The mass-scale character of slave or rather servile settlements demanded that the top crust of the Songhay society could keep in servitude innumerable unfree and dependent population. Along with purely military means, an important coercive function was performed by a system of castes and the caste endogamy related to this system. In a society where there persisted quite a few survivals of pre-class forms of social organization and ideological vestiges related to them, the caste system in combination with military power was quite effective for keeping in check the population of hundreds of servile settlements situated all over the territory of the state. Characteristically, up to the end of rule of askia Daoud (1583) the dependent groups of subjects created practically no trouble for the authorities. It is only at the very close of the existence of the power of the askias that we for the first time encounter the references to the uprisings of the *dyogorani*, i. e., the descendants of the slaves settled on land.⁵³

It is the caste restrictions which the Songhay government established quite deliberately and strictly observed that largely were responsible for another peculiarity of the Songhay society: comparative rigidity of class and estate boundaries. Though the slave status was not something constant among the Songhays, on the whole Songhay administrative practice delineated very sharply the free Songhay from a dependent man. The existence of a military estate made the formation of troops out of slaves superfluous. The slave could be either the commodity for sale or labour force; in the latter case the caste heredity of occupations doomed his descendants to the same dependent state. It is true that the process of fusion of free communal people and dependent people of different categories into a single class of dependent and exploited peasantry which began, as we have seen, during the Mali period, advanced very far during the Songhay time. Askia Daoud (1549-1583) already actually equated, as Mahmoud Kâti's chronicle reports, warriors to dependent people, having declared himself the owner of their property.⁵³ There is no doubt that the position of "sub-

jects" deteriorated even more. But, though we can refer, on the basis of the chronicles *Tarikh el-Fettâch* and *Tarikh el-Soudân* that the process of formation of an economically uniform class of dependent peasantry was completed by and large on the territory of the Songhay state in the 16th century, it should also be borne in mind that inside this single class there preserved for a long time legal and partially social differences between its different constituents. It is these differences that ensured for the ruling class a comparative tranquillity since usually there was no danger of large-scale united peasant movements.

However, as a whole the formation of single exploited class marked a major qualitative change of the social-economic structure compared with the predecessors of Songhay. The importance of this change can hardly be overestimated especially if we take into account the fact that another aspect of the process of class formation had completed by the same time. In the middle of the 16th century, a single ruling class which united the leadership of all aspects of the life of society — economic, political, ideological and military — consolidated out of various social groups for the first time in the history of Western Africa. To the best of my knowledge, this aspect of the process has not yet attracted any special attention of scholars who had been interested mainly in the opposite aspect: the formation of a single class of dependent peasantry out of such apparently opposite elements like free communal people and captive slaves settled on land. Yet while recognizing the entire importance of this aspect of the process of class formation, we can hardly overestimate the importance of the other, inalienable aspect of this process: the consolidation of a single exploiting class opposing the peasantry as a single whole.

The ruling class of the Songhay power at the time of its affluence (the end of the 15th to the 16th centuries) differed from its Mali counterpart by two important peculiarities.

First, it did not contain the military nobility of the slave origin. As has been mentioned above, in Songhay there were no troops recruited from slaves and hence no slave aristocracy could develop. The entire military nobility consisted of free Songhays who were members of the estate of warriors. All high administrative posts in the state were held as a rule by members of the royal family. The only exception was the duty of the head of the harbour of Tombouctou-Kabara, which was traditionally filled by a royal freedman. Besides, askia Daoud twice deviated from the custom when he made his freedmen the vicegerents of the entire West, *kanfari*.⁵⁴ Yet the same askia Daoud regarded with extreme disfavour all attempts of overseers of servile settlements (who were slaves by origin) to rise in society, and in this respect the askia was supported unconditionally by his entire entourage, both military and civil.⁵⁵

Second, the ruling class of the Songhay power under the second dynasty organically included the commercial and religious top crust of large trade and craft centres. This top crust had exercised a consi-

derable influence even before (as we discussed above), but from askia Mohammed I onward a major change occurred in its position.

The support which had been given to the founder of the new dynasty in his struggle for power by the rich merchantry and the Muslim top crust which had already blended with it entailed immense privileges granted by the new power to this group. As a result the Muslim legislators proved to be a highly influential constituent of the ruling class, hardly inferior in importance to the military-administrative aristocracy.⁵⁶ Properly speaking, the cadhis of such cities like Tombouctou had occupied a prominent position even in the Mali period. But at that time their influence was based on their participation in the trans-Saharan trade and their ecclesiastical authority. The operation of these factors grew even more intense in connection with an appreciable growth of crafts in large cities. However, large land property became basic to the new steep rise of influence of this section of nobility. It was askia el-Hadj Mohammed I who began to grant on a large scale lands with dependent people settled on them (though, the practice had existed in Mali, as is mentioned above); granted slaves numbered hundreds and even thousands. The Muslim theologians occupied a prominent place among those who received such gifts.⁵⁷ In this way the difference between lay and spiritual noblemen was erased. If the latter had not acted before as an exploiting group directly with respect to the peasantry, in the Songhay of the 16th century this peculiarity no longer existed. A single class of feudals, lay and spiritual, took up a ruling position in society. A subsidiary circumstance which had contributed to its formation was a nearly complete ethnic fusion at that time of the commercial-religious top crust and the Songhay military-administrative nobility.

The circumstances enumerated above: the growth of the productive forces of society; the formation of an economically uniform class of dependent peasantry at one pole and a single feudal ruling class at the other; the final confirmation of the large land property of this class with a trend towards the predominance of servile forms of exploitation of direct producers warrant the conclusion that the Songhay state was a higher stage of development of feudal society than Mali. There is a sufficiently good reason to contend that socio-economically Songhay was the highest peak of development of the nations inhabiting the Upper and Middle Niger in the pre-colonial time.

Songhay's independent development was interrupted by Morocco's conquest which destroyed the nascent system of servile exploitation. As a result, by the beginning of the 17th century the population of these areas was thrown back in socio-economic development. Of course, we can only guess how the society of the Western Sudan would have developed without that conquest. However, taking into account an unquestionable relative acceleration of the rates of social development in each of the three great West-Sudanese states of the Middle Ages compared with its predecessors,⁵⁸ there are probably grounds to suppose that in this hypothetical case the gap between the societies

of the Upper and Middle Niger and the countries of North Africa and Near East would have been much smaller than it is in reality.

NOTES

- ¹ K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, M., 1965, p. 35.
- ² Of course, it should be borne in mind that in the general historical sense this trade was a secondary factor. The primary causes in this case as well were the social division of labour between land tillers and nomadic cattle raisers and the exchange of products between them.
- ³ В. М. Мисюгин, *Основные черты этнической истории суахили*, Л., 1966. (Author's thesis).
- ⁴ J. Suret-Canale, "Les sociétés traditionnelles et Afrique tropicale et le concept de mode de production asiatique", — *La Pensée*, No. 117, octobre 1964, pp. 36-37.
- ⁵ M. Małowist, *Wielkie państwo Sudanu Zachodniego w późnym średniowieczu*, Warszawa, 1964, pp. 140, 342-344.
- ⁶ «Арабские источники по этнографии Африки южнее Сахары в X—XII вв.». Preparation of texts and translation by В. В. Матвеев и Л. Е. Куббель. М.—Л., 1965, стр. 164, 165—166, 237, 240 — Arabic text; стр. 186, 187, 285, 288 — translation.
- ⁷ Д. Ольдерогге, *Западный Судан в XV—XIX вв. Очерки по истории и истории культуры*, М.—Л., 1960, стр. 45.
- ⁸ M. Małowist, *Op. cit.*, p. 255.
- ⁹ E. W. Bovill, *Caravans of the Old Sahara*, London, 1933; E. W. Bovill, *The Golden Trade of the Moors*, London, 1958; M. Lombard, "L'or musulman de VII au XI siècles. Les bases monétaires d'une suprématie économique", — *Annales*, 1947, No. 2, p. 141-160; M. Małowist, *Op. cit.*, pp. 291, 304.
- ¹⁰ «Арабские источники X—XII вв.», стр. 163, 236, 238, 240 — Arabic text; стр. 184, 284, 285—286, 288 — translation.
- ¹¹ Там же, стр. 286—240 — Arabic text; стр. 284—288 — translation.
- ¹² It is true that the Arabic *ghulam* (plural *ghilmân*) can be translated as "slave-warrior". However, the context («Арабские источники X—XII вв.», стр. 161) gives no ground for this interpretation and therefore the meaning "youth" is left in the translation (p. 18).
- ¹³ Dj. T. Niane, *Soundjata ou l'épopée mandingue*, P., 1960 (Russian edition: *Сундьята. Мандингский эпос*, М.—Л., 1963).
- ¹⁴ «Арабские источники X—XII вв.», стр. 162 — Arabic text; стр. 183 — translation.
- ¹⁵ Taken *per se*, the presence of some royal burials may occur in a pre-class society as well, viz., reflecting as it did certain religious beliefs of this society.
- ¹⁶ «Арабские источники X—XII вв.», стр. 160 — Arabic text; стр. 181 — translation.
- ¹⁷ A. W. Southall, *Alur Society. A Study in Processes and Types of Domination*, Cambridge, 1953, pp. 246-249; Cf., J. Goody, "Feudalism in Africa?" in: *The Journal of African History*, Vol. IV, 1963, No. 1, pp. 1-18.
- ¹⁸ Cf. L. E. Koubbell, "On the Origin of Statehood in Western Sudan", II International Congress of Africanists (*Papers presented by the Soviet Delegation*), Moscow, 1967.
- ¹⁹ T. Lewicki, "L'état nord-africain du Tahert et ses relations avec le Soudan Occidental à la fin du VIII-e et au IX-es", — *Cahiers d'études africaines*, Vol. II, 1962, No. 8, pp. 513-535.
- ²⁰ Kitâb Masâlik al-abṣâr fi mamâlik al amâr li-Ibn Fadlallâh al-'Omari (later on — I-Omari), Ms. B-278, Leningrad Department of the Institute of Oriental Studies, ff. 102v-109v.; 'Ibn Fadl Allah al-Omari, Masalik el absar fi mamalik el amsar, I. L'Afrique moins l'Egypte. Traduit et annoté avec une introduction et 5 cartes par Gaudefroy-Demombynes, Paris, 1927, pp. 52-84; "Voyages d'Ibn Batoutah". Texte arabe accompagné d'une traduction par C. Deffrémery et R. Sanguinetti, IV, Paris, 1858, pp. 390-436.

- ²¹ Kitâb Djughrâfiyâ fi-l-aqâlim as-sab'â li-Ibn Sa'îd al-Maghribî (later on — Ibn Sa'îd). Ms. C-591, Leningrad Section of the Institute of Oriental Studies, pp. 5-6.
- ²² Youssouf Kamal, *Monumenta Cartographica Africae et Aegypti*, t. IV, fasc. VI, Leide, 1936, ff.; Dj. T. Niane, *Op. cit.*; "Histoire des Berbères et des dynasties musulmanes de l'Afrique Septentrionale" par Ibn Khaldoun. Texte arabe publié par M. G. de Slane, I, Alger, 1847, pp. 263-265.
- ²³ M. Małowist, *Op. cit.*, pp. 133-202.
- ²⁴ E. Meyerowitz, *Akan Traditions of Origin*, London, 1960, pp. 29-42.
- ²⁵ Dj. T. Niane, *Op. cit.*, pp. 127, 129, 140, 142.
- ²⁶ "Voyages d'Ibn Batoutah", IV, pp. 378, 393, 421, 441.
- ²⁷ "Tarikh el-Fettâch fi akhbâr el bouldân oua-l-djouyouûch oua-akâbir en nâs par Mahmouîd Kâti ben el-Hâdj el-Motaouakkel Kâti et de l'un de ses petits-fils". Texte arabe édité par O. Houdas et M. Delafosse, Paris, 1913, pp. 55-58.
- ²⁸ J. Suret-Canale, *Op. cit.*, p. 34.
- ²⁹ "Histoire des Berbères", I, p. 234, See: Л. Е. Куббель, *Из истории древнего Мали*. — «Африканский этнографический сборник», V, М.—Л., 1963, стр. 38, 107—108.
- ³⁰ Dj. T. Niane, *Op. cit.*, pp. 140, 142.
- ³¹ Ал-Омари, лл. 104v—106r. Ibn Fadl Allah al-Omari, pp. 66-67.
- ³² Of course, it was much less developed than that in the Near East and combined with many survivals of a pre-class society; nevertheless, it reflected a definite feudal trend in the development of society. For detail see: Л. Е. Куббель, *Ук. соч.*, стр. 77—80.
- ³³ "Tarikh es-Soudan" par Abderrahman ben Abdallah ben Imran ben Amir es-Sa'di. Texte arabe édité par O. Houdas avec la collaboration de Edm. Benoist, Paris, 1898, p. 11.
- ³⁴ J. Suret-Canale, *Afrique Noire. Géographie, civilisations, histoire*, Paris, 1961, pp. 101-102.
- ³⁵ J. Suret-Canale, *Les sociétés traditionnelles*, p. 33.
- ³⁶ E. W. Bovill, *The Golden Trade of the Moors*, pp. 191-202; M. Małowist, *Op. cit.*, p. 327.
- ³⁷ "Tarikh es-Soudan", pp. 16, 19.
- ³⁸ "Tarikh el Fettâch", p. 179; "Voyages d'Ibn Batoutah", IV, p. 419. See also: Ch. Monteil, *L'oeuvre des étrangers dans l'Empire soudanais du Mali*, — "Révues des études islamiques", année 1929, cahier II, pp. 227-235.
- ³⁹ «Арабские источники VII—X вв. по этнографии и истории Африки южнее Сахары». Preparation of texts and translation by Л. Е. Куббель и В. В. Матвеев, М.—Л., 1960; стр. 39—Arabic text; стр. 41 — translation.
- ⁴⁰ J. Sauvaget, *Les épitaphes royales de Gao*, Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Afrique Noire (Further on BIFAN), XII, 1950, No. 2, pp. 418-440; M. M. Viré, *Notes sur trois épitaphes royales de Gao*, BIFAN, XX, Série B, 1958, No. 3-4, pp. 368-376.
- ⁴¹ M. Małowist, *Op. cit.*, pp. 357-358.
- ⁴² The Kumbi-Saleh excavations in 1949-1950 revealed no appreciable traces of any craft. See: F. Thomassey et R. Mauny, *Campagne de fouilles à Koumbi Saleh*, BIFAN, XIII, 1951; P. Thomassey et R. Mauny, *Campagne de fouilles à Koumbi Saleh (Ghana?) de 1950*, BIFAN, XVIII, 1956.
- ⁴³ See, for example, R. Mauny, Découverte à Gao d'un fragment de poterie émaillée du moyen âge musulman, — «Hespéris», XXXIX, 1932, pp. 514—516.
- ⁴⁴ "Tarikh el-Fettâch", p. 180.
- ⁴⁵ "Della descrizione dell'Africa et delle così notabili che ivi sono per Giovan Lioni Africano", Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi, Vol. I, Venetia, MDL, f. 84; On the connection between the political and economic role of the urban centres of the Sudan see, for example, J. Suret-Canale, *Afrique Noire*, p. 114.
- ⁴⁶ «Арабские источники X—XIII вв.», стр. 45 — Arabic text, стр. 63 — translation. Cf. R. Mauny, *Tableau géographique de l'Ouest africain au moyen âge d'après les sources écrites, la tradition et l'archéologie*, Dakar, 1961, p. 431 seq; M. Małowist, *Op. cit.*, pp. 238-239.
- ⁴⁷ Л. Е. Куббель, *Сервильные поселения и их роль в этнической истории средней дельты Нигера в XVI в. (по материалам «Тарих ал-фаттауш»)*, М., 1964; translated into French: Л. Е. Кoubbell, *Les agglomérations serviles et leur rôle dans*

L'histoire ethnique du delta moyen du Niger au XVI^e s. (d'après le "Tarikh el-Fettâch"), Moscou, 1964.

⁴⁸ "Tarikh el-Fettâch", pp. 14-15 56 ("And askia Mohammed used to take some of their children and turn them to the value of horses").

⁴⁹ Д. Ольдерогге, *Op. cit.*, стр. 58.

⁵⁰ "Tarikh el-Fettâch", p. 56.

⁵¹ R. Mauny, *Tableau géographique*, pp. 513-514.

⁵² J. Rouch, *Contribution à l'histoire des Songhay*, — "Mémoires de l'Institut Français d'Afrique Noire", No. 29, Dakar, 1953, pp. 156-157.

⁵³ "Tarikh el-Fettâch", p. 116.

⁵⁴ "Tarikh el-Fettâch", pp. 116, 126.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 97, 101.

⁵⁶ To the best of the present writer's knowledge, E. A. Tarverdova was the first to have drawn attention to the fact in her M. Sc. theses (*Распространение ислама в Западной Африке в XI-XVI вв.*, М., 1962). However, an elaborate analysis of the fact was beyond the range of her paper.

⁵⁷ See, for example, "Tarikh el-Fettâch", pp. 71, 109, 117.

⁵⁸ This acceleration is directly connected with the reduction of the periods of successive stages of social development coinciding more or less with the periods of existence of the great powers of the mediaeval Sudan. While Ghana existed as a dominating force in this region from the 4th to the 12th centuries (the chronological limits accepted in the present paper — the 8th to 12th centuries — are purely arbitrary: the reason is simply that from the 8th century we possess more or less reliable information of Arab authors), Mali existed as such from the 13th to the 15th centuries, while the thriving period of Songhay continued less than a century and a half: from the 50's of the 15th century to 1591.