

To Article X (1987d: "Evolution – Bayajidda")

As a first attempt at examining the age of one of the great oral traditions of West Africa, this study considers the reflexes of the Bayajidda legend in various written sources and reaches the conclusion that the core elements of the narrative are older than the available texts. Furthermore, it subscribes to the Bornu tax list theory, according to which a tributary relationship between Bornu and the Hausa states is evidenced in the legend.³⁵ Neglecting the distortions and simplifications of the Hausa tradition of origin in other Hausa towns, the study proposes the erroneous concept of an early nineteenth-century enlargement of the story that was done for the purpose of concealing the former political dependency of the Hausa states on Bornu. The single most important argument in favour of an ancient form of the legend, with Bayajidda as the primordial foundation hero and his two sons as the ancestors of two sets of states, is provided by the parallel Israelite narrative of Abraham and his two sons, Isaac/Jacob and Ishmael, defined as tribal ancestors of the Israelite and Arab tribes (1993b: 56; XII: 235-236). However, the real character of the Bayajidda legend as an ancient foundation charter can only be established by recognising the close connections which exist between the main components of the legend and the different cult-dramatic performances of the Gani festival. Involving the participation of key officials of the Daura state, the re-enactment of the legend during this pre-Islamic festival points to the legend's elaboration as early as the period of state formation (see above pp. 221-229 and 285-286).