Trade and Traders. The Making of the Cattle Market in Benin
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History of the cattle trade in Benin (1900s - 1960s)

The present chapter is the first to specifically focus on Benin. It roughly covers the period from the beginning of the century to the 1960s and provides a comprehensive historical account of the origin, consolidation and intensification of cattle trade patterns, the functioning of the market and the major events in the trade setting (3.1 - 3.3). Specific attention will be paid to the direct and indirect interventions of the colonial authorities that would leave their mark on the cattle trade (3.2). In a separate section (3.4), we focus on the gradual changes in the number and type of traders. For the period up to the 1960s, it will be demonstrated that the number of traders progressively increased and that their (ethnic) origin started to shift from foreign to local. Chapter 4 will finalise the analysis with respect to the growing number and fluctuating ethnic origin of the cattle traders during the 1970s and the 1990s. Finally, attention will be paid to the practical organisation of trade at the level of traders (3.5). Up until the 1960s, the organisation of trade appears to have a particular time-related nature and we will discover in what ways the traders had to employ their economic, social and knowledge capital to deal with these circumstances. The information provided here has been collected principally through the following sources: fieldwork discussions with key informants, consultation of the national archives of Benin in Porto-Novo (all documents are referred to as ANB), and a review of the relevant literature.

3.1 The origins of the cattle trade

It has already been argued that although cattle were traded in the pre-colonial era, this took place at a predominantly local level. On the West African long-distance trade routes, cattle used to be an item of secondary importance, accompanying caravans of kola nuts, gold and salt on parts of the route only. Manning (1982) mentions the export of some lagoon breed cattle from southern Dahomey to Lagos at the end of the 19th century, a typical example of
local trade. Only after 1900 would market opportunities in Dahomey become attractive enough to trade cattle over larger distances.¹

The first significant long-distance patterns of cattle trade in Dahomey were preceded by what could be considered as the main feature of the commercial history of its northern Borgou region, i.e. the intermediate position this region occupied on the long-distance trade routes between the Haoussa emirates of (today’s) northern Nigeria and the Asante territory of (today’s) Ghana. Nearly all of these routes vertically crossed parts of today’s Atacora and Borgou provinces in northern Dahomey. According to Person (1982, 101), the 'kola route' between Salaga and Kano had been fully operational from the start of the 18th century onwards. Its northernmost variant passed through Say (Niger) where it crossed the Niger river and Fada N’Gourma before terminating at the Salaga market (cf. Map 2.1). Further southwards, the caravans crossed the Niger river at Gaya, Ilo, Yauri or Bussa and this determined at what point they would cross Dahomey. The caravans which used to traverse the Niger at Yauri, for instance, continued to Nikki or Bouay in Bariba territory, then on to Djougou before passing through mid-Togo (cf. Map 3.1). An intermediate itinerary used to be the caravan route which passed through Kandi, an important Bariba commercial centre at that time, and Banikoara. From Banikoara, traders would either join the Gurma country and the Sansanné-Mango market or proceed southwards to penetrate Togo directly via the Kouandé and/or Djougou markets. Even in the 18th century, Djougou was the main commercial centre of northern Dahomey and situated in a densely populated area. Various branches of the trade routes from the east converged at Djougou and from there continued to the different kola markets to the west, of which Salaga and Yendi were the main ones. Being a major market, Djougou had its own trader community of settled Haoussa and Dendi traders who 'serviced' the caravan trade (Norris 1984, 164; Bashabi 1980).

The Haoussa traders would travel along the above-mentioned routes most frequently during the dry season (November - May) when conditions were favourable. On their way, the caravans halted in market towns such as Djougou, Kandi or Kouandé in order to rest and to exchange merchandise. For reasons of security, the traders used to travel in large groups of over 50 persons. In addition to the danger of wild animals, there was the real danger of being attacked by members of local groups whose areas had to be crossed. Person (1982, 102) notes that trade caravans in the Djougou area had to provide substantial gifts (usually kola or potassium) to Bariba and Kotokoli chiefs in order to secure a safe passage. In fact, the whole of what today encompasses northern Benin was dangerous territory during most of the pre-colonial era, a situation which lasted until the end of the 19th century. The region was dominated by the Bariba ethnic group (cf. Section 3.4). Bierschenk (1997, 31) has characterised their society as a 'war-economy' in which the 'means of destruction' outweighed 'the means of production'. On the one hand, this remark puts into perspective the lack of security for passing trade caravans. On the other, it explains the near absence of indigenous commercial activities, which characterised the pre-colonial Borgou region. In the Bariba stratification system, the warriors made up the highest class with their only commercial activity being the sale of slaves. Agriculture was the principal occupation of the rest of the population. An exception can be made for the (mainly Djougou-based) Dendi traders who were known to engage in some local as well as cross-border trade activities.

¹ In this historical chapter, the territory of what constitutes present-day Benin will be referred to as Dahomey, as it was known throughout most of the century. The Republic of Benin only received its current name in 1975.
Until the start of the 20th century, the regional trade role of the northern parts of today's Benin was restricted to the reception of and the occasional exchange with passing trade caravans (cf. Brégand 1998). With the possible exception of Djougou, very few products were 'added to the caravans' and hardly any started their journey from within the region. This is illustrated by the 1902 annual report of the Moyen-Niger district which stated that apart from numerous passing trade caravans, commerce, including the trade in livestock, was virtually non-existent in the region.²

By the end of the 19th century, the main products brought by the trade caravans were salt, tobacco, cloth, hides and skins, dried fish, dried onions and perfume (all going westward) as well as kola nuts, gold and salt (going eastward). Before the advent of colonialism, cattle were rarely identified as a major long-distance trade item although some sheep and goats were traded on particular stretches of the caravan routes.³ The development of the north-south cattle trade followed a growing demand for meat in the coastal areas of West Africa from the start of the 20th century onwards. This rising demand was provoked by settling Europeans as well as by general economic prosperity among the indigenous populations of the coastal, export crop oriented areas. Accordingly, the northernmost part of the kola nut trade route was now used by traders to purchase cattle at Gurma markets such as Pouytenga. From there, cattle were taken southwards to be sold at Asante markets where the demand for meat had increased (Norris 1984).

Similar, newly emerging patterns of southbound cattle trading originated in Dahomey. According to some of the monthly accounts of the French colonial administration between 1900 and 1910, cattle were now part of the trade caravans which headed for Asante.⁴ Equally, mention was made of cattle traded to southern Nigeria.⁵ The animals for both destinations originated from northern Dahomey or Niger. At that time, demand for meat in southern Dahomey was still low. Although no records were found of numbers involved, the situation in southern Togo could give an idea. According to Norris (1984, 173), aggregated demand for Lomé, Atakpamé and Kpalimé totalled 1,000 cattle in 1908. Demand in Gold Coast and Nigeria seemed to be much higher.⁶ As a result, a complex pattern of trade routes, the ancient east-west plus the developing north-south

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² ANB, affaires politiques, 1E13/ Cercle du Moyen Niger, rapport annuel, 1902.
³ Two types of salt are concerned here. First, fine white salt which was imported and transported upriver by the Royal Niger Company and purchased by trade caravans at points where they crossed the river. Second, salt in lumps of 30-40 kg which originated from desert regions in Chad and Niger. Both types were brought westward by the trade caravans (d'Almeida Topor 1995, 95).
⁴ This concerned a third type of salt, coarse-grained and imported from France (ibid.). It was purchased by the trade caravans on their way back to Nigeria at markets such as Sokodé (Togo) and Djougou.
⁵ The Haoussa-Fulani, for instance, traded cattle of northern Nigerian livestock production areas, but less on their 'kola routes' than at a local level with nearby urban centres such as Kano and Sokoto, and on the north-south itineraries linking their emirates with the forest zones (Kerven 1992, 49-50).
⁶ ANB, affaires politiques, 1E4/Colonie du Dahomey, various monthly reports, 1900-1910.
⁷ From southern Dahomey, lagoon cattle continued to be exported to Nigeria. Official statistics mention a record 2,416 animals exported in 1906 (Manning 1982, 367). However, a pneumonia outbreak decimated the herd in the south in 1908 (ibid., 108) and from then on the north took over the position as principal supplier.
⁸ Present-day Ghana was known as Gold Coast throughout the colonial era (until 1957) and will be referred to as such in this chapter.
itineraries, represented commercial activity in the northern parts of Dahomey around 1910. It appears from Map 3.1 that around 1910 the principal east-west caravan routes continued to follow the same itineraries as those undertaken between 1700 and 1900. From major urban centres such as Sokoto, Kano and Maidiguri, in what by then constituted the British 'Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria', the caravans still headed for Salaga (in Gold Coast) either directly or occasionally via Sansanné-Mango (in German Togoland). However, the major change that took place was the emergence of south-north trade, i.e. from the coast to the interior (cf. De Haan 1993, 58-66). For the caravan trade this meant that, at intermediate markets such as Djougou, Parakou and Kandi, imported trade goods from Europe such as fine salt, cloth or matches could be purchased. At that time, imported salt from Europe progressively displaced domestic salt (Manning 1985). The European goods were transported from the coast, first by train to the then railhead at Paouignan and then further on to Djougou, Parakou, Kouandé and Kandi where they were consumed locally or plugged into the trade caravans (cf. Map 3.1). At that time, Yoruba traders were mainly involved in the trade of European merchandise towards the north.

In addition to the ancient east-west itineraries which had recently been linked to the south-north trade flow, a new pattern of north-south trade was induced by the economic growth of the coastal areas. The traders of Djougou, Kandi and Parakou increasingly shifted their orientation to the south and in addition to the merchandise they brought from there, they started to transport local produce or items derived from the caravan trade to southern Dahomey. Djougou obviously provided a major relay market in this new pattern because the caravans from Kano and Sokoto never continued all the way to the coast. Busy trade links existed between Djougou and Paouignan, the railhead and the major salt entrepôt in that particular era (Manning 1982). From Djougou, the German routes towards Atakpamé and the Togolese coast could be joined too. The main items that were brought southwards included shea butter, kola nuts (bought from caravan traders), potassium (from Niger), yams and livestock. Livestock in general and cattle in particular became important items which made up the new north-south flow. An emerging flow of cattle at that time originated in the south-western part of the military territories of Niger and was directed at

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9 The comments made by the French administrator who drew the map reveal the growing importance of north-south and south-north trade. According to him, the route du Niger, which was progressively improved and made more accessible, came to absorb an increasing volume of traffic (ANB, affaires économiques, 1Q32/ Notice sur le mouvement caravannier au Dahomey).

10 ANB, affaires économiques, 1Q32/ Notice sur ....

During the early 20th century, the French authorities did everything they could to control the caravan trade. They were afraid that the caravan traders would buy European merchandise in German Togoland instead of dealing with the French maisons de commerce (trading firms) established in Dahomey. Accordingly, attempts were made to divert caravan routes to southern Dahomey and to persuade traders to buy salt and cloth from the French (they even attempted to import kola nuts from Guinea for sale in southern Dahomey, all to attract trade caravans). Several imported products from Togoland now underwent taxation. Moreover, a 1909 report envisaged strategies to prevent the exportation of certain products, such as hides and skins, which eventually could be further exported to Europe through German or English trading firms (ANB, affaires économiques, 1Q32/ Cercle du Moyen Niger, rapport d'ensemble, 1909). However, most of these efforts failed as people diverted itineraries and/or fraudulently transported their merchandise.
Kandi, the administrative capital of the Moyen-Niger district and the second commercial centre of northern Dahomey next to Djougou (cf. Map 3.1).  

Map 3.1  
Trade patterns in northern Dahomey around 1910

Sources: ANB, affaires économiques, 1Q32, Notice sur le mouvement caravanier au Dahomey; Person (1982); Norris (1984).

According to colonial sources, imports amounted to an estimated 500 cattle per year, but the figure was probably higher because several colonial accounts of the period mentioned that official numbers significantly underestimated real flows.  

Fraudulent movements were...
omnipresent since traders were suspicious of the colonial authorities. Some of the imported cattle were slaughtered and consumed in Kandi, the remainder continuing to Nigeria and a few to Cotonou (the economic capital), Ouidah (a garrison town) or Porto-Novo (the administrative capital). Local cattle, from herds in the Moyen-Niger district, were exported too. Although dealing with a limited number of head, some Yoruba traders would purchase cattle around Banikoara and Kandi for export (via Nikki) towards Saki, Abeokuta and Lagos. From Saki, salt would be brought on return to Nikki and further to the north. The cattle trade patterns thus developed independently from the already existing caravan routes and were partly operated by traders other than the Haoussa. An anonymous government report provides an aggregate account of official 1909 and 1910 'exports' originating from the three northern districts (Djougou, Moyen-Niger, Borgou). Some 3,000 cattle were conveyed towards southern Dahomey and some 3,500 to Nigeria (mainly from Moyen-Niger). In 1910, total exports equalled 7,365 against 2,243 in 1909, which indicates a substantial increase. Although these figures give an indication they should be interpreted carefully because, first of all, statistics include only official movements and second, the number of cattle originally from the Niger territories cannot be deduced. Finally, it appears from Map 3.1 that another north-south itinerary originated in south-western Niger at the salt markets of Dosso and Kamba, terminating at either one of the Banikoara, Kouandé and Djougou markets. It covered a relatively short distance only and the array of products traded was limited. Kola nuts from Djougou and Kouandé, which came from the caravan trade originating at Salaga, went up north, together with cotton, kapok and shea nuts from the Banikoara region. In return, salt, potassium and dried fish were taken southwards. In fact, salt would usually be bartered against cotton or exchanged against livestock (small ruminants or calves). The route had existed for some time but differed from the caravan routes not only because of the shorter distances but also because the traders were predominantly local. Thus, the actors involved were mainly Djerma from the Dosso district in Niger as well as a few Bariba from around Banikoara. For many of them this type of trade eventually (from the 1930s onwards) would constitute the entry mode for a start in livestock trade (cf. Section 3.4). Later on, during the 1930s, dried fish and onions were brought from the Malanville/Karimama region southwards. After that period, livestock became an item which was also traded over this itinerary. Sheep and goats were sent to the small-stock market of Djougou and cattle were sent to the new Kolokondé market. In addition to the usual return merchandise, bicycles were now taken northwards to the Banikoara region. Here, they were usually bartered against cattle. The lucrative exchange of (motor)bikes against cattle would later become very important in the cattle trade in Benin (cf. Section 5.5).

13 ANB, affaires économiques, 1Q28/ anonymous source.
14 Section 3.4 deals in more detail with the involvement of Djerma in cattle trade.
15 Following the intensification of north-south trade, Djougou became a major international exchange point for the sheep and goat trade. The somewhat smaller neighbouring markets of Kétao, Niamtougou (both in Togo), Madjatom and Chabi-Kouma (both in Benin) occupied similar positions. Since the 1920s, sheep and goats from northern Benin, Burkina Faso and Niger were exchanged in Djougou against cloth, kola, bicycles and various other items which found their way northwards. From Djougou, small-stock were traded to southern destinations like Atakpamé, Lomé or Cotonou. Many traders of the Banikoara-Kérou axis were involved in this type of trade. On the Cotonou-Zongo market for sheep and goats, people from Djougou served as landlord-brokers. Even today, the president of the small-stock market at Zongo is a Djougou native.
3.2 French colonial policy and concern for an adequate meat supply

Whereas the French trading firms were not very interested in livestock or in livestock products such as hides and skins, the colonial authorities, from the First World War onwards, expressed continuous concern about meat provision in southern Dahomey in general and its two main cities, Porto-Novo and Cotonou, in particular.

In order to understand the role of the French colonial administration in the development of livestock production and trade, some relevant aspects of its policy will be considered. Generally speaking, the principal elements of French policy included: pacification of the occupied territories, recruitment of manpower for public works and for the military, exploitation (mise-en-valeur) of exportable resources and the subsequent levying of taxes (l’impôt). Taxation was a major source of revenue for the administration which had to be financially independent of the motherland (Grégoire 1994, 140).

Effective French occupation of northern Dahomey (le Haut-Dahomey, the former Borgou region) was achieved in 1897 after several missions had already signed treaties with local chiefs. However, the local population’s resistance was fierce, especially among the Bariba. It was only in 1916 that the last revolt of the Bariba (led by Bio Guera) was put down at Bembéréké. Following this, security in the region was improved. This situation was especially advantageous for the trade caravans whose main concern until then had been insecurity (extortion, looting) on large parts of the trade routes that crossed northern Dahomey. Two military garrisons were established in the north: one at Kandi (allegedly the 2nd largest of the French colonial territories in West Africa) and one at Bembéréké (to contain the Bariba). Ouidah was the location for the main regiment established in the south of Dahomey. The majority of the troops making up the various regiments were locally recruited although some of them were brought in from Mali, Burkina Faso and Senegal (the so-called tirailleurs sénégalais). Their numbers peaked in the periods before and during the First and Second World Wars.

The presence of military garrisons produced a regular demand for meat and milk. In northern Dahomey, this demand helped determine relations between the garrisons and the Fulani cattle holders. In Kandi, for instance, the commander of the regiment had direct contact with the Fulani chief (the Rouga) whom he made responsible for the supply of cattle and milk to his troops. The Rouga, in turn, identified (in rotation) the cattle camps which were obliged to satisfy this demand. This policy was known as ‘la vache obligatoire’ (the obligatory cow). In exchange for supplying cattle and milk, the Fulani were, to a large extent, exempted from being recruited for public works (forced labour) and for military service. With respect to taxation, the Fulani used to sell some cattle to fulfil this obligation, or paid in kind. In addition to the ‘compulsory’ supply of cattle and milk, commercial

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17 Although the Sahelian countries known today as Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger were known under different names throughout the colonial era, they will be referred to in this chapter by their present-day names.

18 At the end of the 19th century, during French army expeditions against king Béhanzin, meat provision for French troops appeared to be a problem. Cattle holders in south Dahomey refused to sell for several reasons: they would not accept payment in French currency, many of their cattle had already been ‘taken’ by the French and they wanted to reconstitute their herds. A proposition was made, but never implemented, to import cattle from Argentina in order to overcome the shortage (d’Almeida Topor 1995, 74).
relations also existed between the Fulani and the garrisons, albeit predominantly through the intervention of local cattle traders. Local butchers slaughtered cattle on behalf of the military but it was claimed by one informant that some traders refused to supply cattle to the garrisons.

In general, relations between the colonial authorities and the Fulani cattle owners could be classed as difficult. The administration continuously attempted to control the movements of the Fulani and their herds. Colonial accounts repeatedly mention cases of herds that 'fled' across the border into British occupied territory, probably in an attempt to evade taxes or recruitment, to evade the risk of disease contamination or simply to evade the control of French colonial authorities.\(^9\) Of course, the authorities were anxious to keep the Fulani herds within French territory, since it constituted a major resource for tax revenues (Bierschenk 1997, 41). Kerven (1992, 50-51) discovered a similar situation between the Fulani pastoralists and the colonial authorities of the British Protectorate of Northern Nigeria. Many Fulani migrated to the French territories of present-day Niger after a cattle tax (jangali) was established in 1906. Accordingly, '.. greater efforts were made by the British, under the policy of administrative reorganisation, to create centres of Fulani settlement ..' (ibid., 51), a policy which led to significant increases in the recovery rate of taxes.

The French concern for meat supplies for the military as well as for the European citizens of southern Dahomey became particularly acute during the First and Second World Wars. Demand reached unprecedented heights, not least because of the presence of substantial numbers of troops either awaiting departure to France or who were employed to contain local revolts. An 'effort de guerre' (war effort) was required and this not only meant the forced recruitment of troops but also the forced supply of Fulani animals. When the First World War started, various other measures were considered to ensure a regular supply of cattle and meat. In 1914 for instance, all livestock exports to neighbouring territories were banned in order to favour the cattle trade to the Dahomey coast (d’Almeida Topor 1995, 228). A similar decree was proclaimed in 1916. Still, demand from Nigeria resulted in the continuation of fraudulent exports towards Abeokuta, Ibadan and Lagos. However, not only the supply of the garrisons in Dahomey was at stake, la métropole (i.e. France) as well as garrisons in Cameroon (where troops from Dahomey were stationed) had also to be supplied. Thus, in 1915 some 800 live cattle were transported by boat from Cotonou to Douala in Cameroon (d’Almeida Topor 1995, 232) which was apparently easier than organising a supply from northern Cameroon.

The 'meat supply issue' was partly reflected in recurrent attempts by the authorities to attract French trading firms to opportunities in cattle trading and the export of hides and skins from Dahomey. In a 1916 letter, the commander of the Moyen-Niger district complained about the 'representatives of European trade' not being interested in livestock.\(^{20}\) It was frequently mentioned in yearly accounts that between 1900 and 1915 very few if any traders from Europe were interested in setting up in the northern regions.

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\(^9\) ANB, affaires politiques, IE13/ Cercle du Moyen Niger, various monthly reports, 1905-1924. In 1925, the commander of the Moyen-Niger district wrote to the governor of Dahomey, '... il est urgent de faire rentrer ces pasteurs dans l'ordre..' (we should urgently call the Fulani to order) (ANB, aff. pol., IE30/ Cercle du Moyen Niger, Lettre du commandant de Cercle au Lieutenant Gouverneur du Dahomey, June 4th 1925).

although the authorities there made it clear they tried to attract them and indicated possible products for export. In contrast to their British counterpart, the Royal Niger Company, French trading firms in Dahomey did not engage in the export of hides and skins to any great extent. First of all, the ingenious collection system that existed in northern Nigeria where hides had for a long time been traded in the trade caravans, was absent. Second, the supply of hides and skins was not only relatively small but hides were (and still are) consumed on a large scale. The widespread habit of eating cooked hides in southern Dahomey made large-scale exports difficult to realise.

Interior and exterior demands for cattle during wartime were such that measures had to be taken to protect the local herds from being overexploited. In 1918 the slaughter of all cattle aged under 4 years was forbidden. Still, the combination of cattle diseases and massive exploitation had negative effects on the cattle herd. In Guinea, where the situation was comparable, Doutressoulle wrote that 15 years after World War I, the effect of the over-exploitation of herds could still be perceived (1947, 125). In the Borgou region, traders recall that until independence the veterinary authorities would occasionally ban the commercialisation of the borgou breed cattle under a specific age.

Similar problems of supply appeared during the Second World War. In 1941, the governor of French West Africa urged all colonies to do everything possible to increase the production of dried and salted meat, destined not only for the colonies but also for France itself. However, the industrial production of dried meat was largely insufficient so these objectives could not be met (Doutressoulle 1947). According to a retired trader from Djougou, the colonial authorities in Dahomey between 1938 and 1942 forced cattle traders to sell cattle only in those towns where there were military garrisons. Most traders, though, continued to export cattle to Togo and Nigeria. In Kandi, the Fulani chief (the Rouga) was in charge of collecting cattle in all the surrounding Fulani villages on behalf of the district commander. In return, the owners obtained only very small sums of money from the colonial authorities. Cattle drovers were requisitioned in turn to accompany these herds to Cotonou. Finally, in another attempt to stimulate the internal marketing of cattle, a 1945 decree ordered a ban on all food exports to neighbouring colonies, including cattle and meat.

Since it was already clear that a large share of cattle imports originated from Niger, the colonial authorities now made some attempts to regularise this flow. The local herd within Dahomey was thought to be largely insufficient. On the initiative of the governor of Dahomey and in collaboration with the colonial authorities of Niger, special arrangements

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21 For the AOF countries as a whole, the export of hides did not really develop as it did in Nigeria, despite the huge potential. The majority of hides from Niger and Cameroon, for instance, were treated in and exported from Nigeria. In 1940, the value of Nigerian exports exceeded by a factor 5 the value of all AOF exports (Doutressoulle 1947, 136-145).

22 ANB, affaires politiques, 1E13(3)/ Cercle du Moyen Niger, rapport mensuel, 7/1918.

23 ANB, affaires économiques, 1Q8/ Lettre du Gouverneur Général haut commissaire de l'Afrique Française à Messieurs les Gouverneurs des Colonies, .. 1941.

24 The concern for an adequate meat supply was such that even intelligence reports appeared which contained rumours such as the alleged attempts of the British colonial authorities in Nigeria to persuade cattle traders from Niger to set up in Nigeria, with the ultimate aim of improving the trade in cattle. The French authorities, in turn, did everything to prevent the Fulani pastoralists from going to the British territories (ANB, affaires économiques, 1E48/ Letter from the governor of French West Africa to the colonies, 1940)
were made, from 1944 onwards, to attract cattle traders from Niger. These special arrangements consisted of favourable prices for train transport on the one hand and of opportunities offered to cattle traders from Niger to be partly paid in cloth on the other. The cloth was supplied by the French trading firms in Dahomey. The cattle (about 250 head/month) were trekked from Niger to Parakou on the hoof and were bought there, at an agreed live weight per kilo price, by a Porto-Novo-based butcher who allegedly had very good relations with the colony's veterinary officers. Some of the purchased cattle were financed by the Société Indigène de Prévoyance, a rural insurance and banking agency created by the colonial authorities. It is noticeable that the latter, in their attempt to improve the meat provision of southern Dahomey, only seldom collaborated with cattle traders from the north. Apart from reports on the introduction of licenses for traders and butchers aimed at regulating the sector, the accounts provided few indications of colonial efforts to involve local cattle traders in finding solutions to the deficient meat supply of southern Dahomey. The authorities preferred to collaborate with Porto-Novo-based butchers who were regularly granted loans for the purchase of cattle. The policy makers in Porto-Novo were far more familiar with these butchers than with the small group of cattle traders operating in the northern parts of the colony. In fact, the authorities' perception of the cattle trading community was quite negative. The traders were hard to control, they fraudulently exported the resources of the colony and constituted a small, wealthy group with considerable prestige and influence. A 1936 report, prepared by the chief veterinary officer, describes the cattle trading community as ‘... la véritable ploutocratie de marchands de bétail ..’ (the true money dominion of cattle traders), alleging that they obstructed the cattle trade from becoming a competitive activity. According to the author, the Fulani cattle holders were at the mercy of a small group of traders who tended to buy in those periods when the pastoralists had to sell in order to fulfil their tax obligations. Subsequently, the cattle trade is mentioned as an extremely lucrative activity monopolised by a small group of prosperous traders. The author continued by propagating the usefulness of so-called cattle fairs in northern Dahomey which would alleviate the sales position of pastoralists. Nevertheless, the main objective of the introduction of cattle fairs in the 1930s was still to regularise the supply of cattle to the South.

During the period between the wars as well as after the Second World War, the colonial authorities aimed not only at a stable meat supply for the military and for the European population but at a stable supply of cattle to the whole of southern Dahomey as well. Again, the supply situation was a constant source of concern. Apart from some isolated initiatives and the creation of a cattle market in Cotonou in 1936, periodic efforts were made after the early 1930s to introduce the so-called foires de bétail (cattle fairs) in

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26 ANB, affaires économiques 1Q26/ Ravitaillement .........
27 In contrast, Agier (1983, 127-134) mentions that the colonial authorities in Togo, in 1940, asked the Haoussa and other Moslem traders of Lomé to organise the supply of cattle to this town. The cattle had to be imported because the local herd in Togo was too small.
28 ANB, affaires économiques, 1Q25/ Lettre du Chef du Service Zootechnique à Monsieur le Gouverneur du Dahomey, 1936. In contrast to the generally favourable attitude of the authorities towards the butchers, the author of this report accuses them of slaughtering only limited numbers of cattle at a time in order to maintain high meat prices and high profits at the expense of consumers.
northern Dahomey. These cattle fairs were expected to increase the number of cattle commercialised under competitive circumstances and to improve the (deficient) supply of southern Dahomey, in view of a cattle trade which was predominantly directed at Nigeria and Togo.\(^\text{29}\) The organisation of the fairs, which were held on fixed dates, was in the hands of veterinary officers: those established in the north had to inform and persuade the Fulani pastoralists to come and sell and local traders to come and buy, those in the south had to organise the butchers and traders and persuade them to travel to the north in order to participate at the fairs. During a fair, the cattle supplied by the Fulani pastoralists were sold by auction. The offered obtained could be rejected by the seller who would then withdraw his animal. Success clearly depended on the presence of traders and butchers: with few buyers present prices could easily be manipulated and pastoralists would then usually prefer to return home without selling. In practice, the participation of pastoralists appeared equally difficult to achieve. They were accused of being ‘... very suspicious of each innovation ...’\(^\text{30}\) Following a few consecutive failures, primarily caused by the refusal of traders as well as pastoralists to participate, the fairs then disappeared for several years. Depending on the efforts made by individual civil servants, the phenomenon of foires de bétail would continue to appear and disappear irregularly until the 1960s.

### 3.3 The expansion of the cattle trade

From 1910 onwards, the southward-oriented trade patterns consolidated which was reflected in the increased numbers of cattle traded from northern Dahomey. Demand rose considerably among the military, the (urbanising) population of southern Dahomey as well as the population in neighbouring colonies, Nigeria in particular. Or as Doutressoulle (1947, 118) preferred to put it ‘... l’indigène évolue, dispose de plus d’argent, et mange plus de viande ...’ (the local improves his lot, has more money and consumes more meat). Although it is extremely difficult to obtain reliable figures of numbers of cattle transported to the various destinations given the omnipresence of fraudulent cattle movements, some trends and conclusions can be deduced from the statistics available. The following table presents the export of cattle from the Djougou district towards internal and external markets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Official number of cattle traded from Djougou district (1915-1917)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to the Dahomey coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>537</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ANB, affaires économiques, Cercle de Djouogu rapport annuel, 1918.

It appears from the table that compared to the cattle which were officially transported to the Dahomey coast, exports to foreign markets (Nigeria and Gold Coast in particular) rose more rapidly. This not only reveals the strong demand in neighbouring colonies but equally shows the failure of French colonial policy, especially in wartime, to keep (cattle) trading patterns within the colony. Only when the British authorities decreed very low

\(^{29}\) ANB, affaires économiques, 1Q25/ Lettre du Chef du Service Zootechnique ...

\(^{30}\) ibid.
rates for train transport between Kano and Lagos in 1914 did northern Dahomey traders temporarily divert their trade to the south of Dahomey because their cattle had become less competitive at Nigerian markets (Manning 1982).

Apart from the Djougou district to which Table 3.1 refers, the cattle trade continued to expand in other districts of northern Dahomey as well. A 1918 report on the sub-district of Guéné, which was part of the Moyen-Niger district, claimed that although hampered by various cattle diseases, the trade in cattle was developing by the day. Whereas only a few cattle were conveyed to Cotonou, the region was now frequently visited by Haoussa traders from Nigeria who purchased cattle for sale in Lagos and other Nigerian towns. An anonymous source estimated the annual exports from the Moyen-Niger district at 2,000-3,000 cattle. It is not clear whether the exports from northern Dahomey included cattle in transit from the Niger territories. Still, the main conclusion to be drawn is that the north-south patterns of cattle trade were consolidated and on the increase with respect to volumes traded. In 1923, an estimated 700 cattle were exported on a monthly basis from Kandi to Nigeria, already double the 1910 figure.

Recurrent livestock diseases were the major obstacle confronting livestock production in general and cattle trade in particular during the period between 1910 and 1925. The eradication of these livestock diseases was an important objective of French colonial policy in the countries of Afrique Occidentale Française (AOF, i.e. French West Africa). In the whole of the AOF territories, the cattle herd had grown substantially until 1912 but that particular year, an outbreak of pneumonia hit many herds annulled growth. In 1915, the situation was aggravated by an outbreak of rinderpest, also causing significant losses (Doutressoule 1947, 108). Numerous reports from the 1910s and the 1920s show that recurrent epidemics, notably of rinderpest, and disease occurrence within tse-tse fly infected areas, caused substantial reductions in the cattle herd of sometimes up to 25 per cent (d'Almeida Topor 1995, 227). In 1925, the commander of the Moyen-Niger district estimated the combined effect of cattle losses resulting from livestock diseases and out-migration of Fulani herds at 55,000 animals since 1908. The increase in the imports of cattle from the Niger territories was accompanied by the introduction of diseases and the likelihood of contaminating local herds. French veterinary officers were anxious to locate cases of rinderpest, and frequent bans on cattle transportation occurred when areas were thought to be affected. Other measures taken by the colonial authorities to prevent the spread of diseases consisted of quarantine, the slaughter of herds and a ban on sales. In combination with the direct impact of disease, these measures subsequently affected the trade in cattle at a time when demand was rising considerably as a result of the effects of war and increased local consumption. It was only by the end of the 1920s that the various veterinary measures had succeeded in greatly diminishing the occurrence of livestock diseases. At that time, rinderpest in particular was brought under control all over West Africa (Hopkins 1973, 261). From another perspective, the veterinary policy was considered as beneficial by the cattle traders. Vaccinations were free of charge and most traders voluntarily submitted their herds to quarantine.

31 ANB, affaires politiques, 1E30/ Cercle du Moyen Niger, Notes sur la subdivision de Guéné, 1918.
The cattle trade still continued to grow. This was partly reflected by the increasing presence of foreign cattle traders on Dahomey territory (cf. Section 3.4). On the basis of 100,000 officially registered slaughters in 1940, Doutressoullé (1947, 188) estimated total bovine meat consumption for all AOF countries at 200,000 head. He also estimated the number of cattle slaughtered in Dahomey at 20,000. An indication of demand in Nigeria reveals that the estimated 1940 consumption in this country exceeded the total estimated consumption for all AOF countries by approximately 150,000 cattle. In the period after the Second World War and during the 1950s, exports of cattle to foreign destinations such as Atakpamé, Lomé, Abeokuta and Lagos most likely outweighed the numbers conveyed to Cotonou and Porto-Novo although exact figures are not reliable or not available. Accounts of cattle traders support this observation. Moreover, some of the cattle ultimately sold in Cotonou were purchased at markets in north-western Niger such as Ayorou, Torodi, Abala and Filingué. The major regional patterns of cattle trade in the 1930-1960 period are presented in Map 3.2.

Map 3.2 Patterns of cattle trade between 1930 and 1960
During the 1950s and also the 1960s, the markets of Lomé and Atakpamé were considered attractive, in particular by the Bariba traders from northern Dahomey. From Banikoara, Atakpamé was reached on the hoof within 30 days: for Lomé, a trader would take the train at Blitta, the railhead. Prices in Togo were relatively high, given the limited local supply, the fact that traders had to smuggle cattle over the border, and the demand from Gold Coast butchers (cf. Hetzel 1974, 209). Sometimes cattle would be sold in the border town of Kpalimé where most Gold Coast butchers showed up. In addition, demand for meat in Kpalimé itself was equally strong because the town was situated in a major cocoa producing area with a prospering economy (De Haan 1993, 72-76). In general, incomes were comparatively high in the colonial export crop economies of coastal West Africa which was reflected in an enhanced demand for products such as meat. A further reason why the cattle traders from Dahomey were able to take advantage of this demand was that most Mossi traders from Burkina Faso had their trade oriented towards the major cities of Gold Coast and only to a lesser extent to Togo. In all towns in Togo, kola nuts from Gold Coast were available for purchase and transport to the north.

Markets such as Atakpamé and Kpalimé in Togo and Abeokuta in Nigeria were important destinations at that time. As intermediate colonial centres situated in cocoa, palm oil or other export crop producing areas they occupied similar positions. In addition to consumption markets, their cattle markets formed purchase points for butchers from urban centres such as Lomé, Accra and Lagos. Today, the importance of these market towns has considerably declined since cattle are directly conveyed to major cities.

The increased use of railway transport

An important contribution to the development of the cattle trade from roughly the 1930s onwards was the improvement in transportation in general and the extension of the railway network in particular. Although the construction of the railway in Dahomey had started before 1910, it took until 1936 for it to reach its present-day terminus in Parakou. However, when the railhead reached Savé (some 210 kilometres south of Parakou) around 1915, a few traders started to use this means of transport to bring their cattle to Cotonou and Porto-Novo. At that time, though, rates were still relatively high and the majority of traders continued to trek their cattle on the hoof (d’Almeida Topor 1995). This could be a hazardous venture and traders were usually armed because of possible problems with farmers when manoeuvring herds through their fields. At a later stage, the traders started to employ Fulani cattle drovers and they would take the train themselves.

The colonial authorities had for a long time considered the railway as an important means of improving meat provision to southern Dahomey, and of increasing ‘insufficient’ commercialisation rates in the livestock sector. From the early stages of colonial occupation, the importance of the rail extension northwards was stressed. In 1911, for instance, a feasibility study was undertaken for a project to extend the railway from Paouignan (which was the railhead in that year) via Parakou to Djougou and eventually

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34 According to cattle traders in Benin, the market at Atakpamé had a widely claimed additional advantage in the 1950s; the presence of an extremely wealthy Djerma cattle trader, originally from Niger, El Hadj Moukailla, ‘the president’ as he was called, purchased complete herds at a time, while paying cash. He subsequently sold these herds to butchers from Lomé, Kpalimé and Gold Coast.
The main objective was to improve the transportation of livestock but the project was never implemented. In fact, the railways were only seldom used for the transport of cattle in the 1910s and 1920s, mainly because of the high costs involved. Most cattle traders still preferred to convey their herds on the hoof towards the south. Occasionally, the authorities would decree special prices for the transportation of livestock, for instance when military garrisons were short of supplies. The intensification of train transport for cattle occurred in the 1930s and 1940s when the railway was extended to Tchaourou (1932) and finally Parakou (1936) and tariffs became more competitive.

The transport of cattle by truck developed at a much later stage despite the improvement of roads in general and in particular the Route du Niger which was a major objective of French colonial policy. It facilitated access to northern regions for traders from the south but until the 1950s most if not all cattle were trekked on the hoof to the railhead at Parakou. The use of truck transport had boosted inter-market connections following the Second World War (Manning 1982) and in the 1950s and 1960s, the Yoruba traders/butchers were among the first to use small trucks for the transport of cattle to Cotonou or Parakou. On their way north, the trucks were loaded with all kinds of merchandise to be sold on the Cotonou-Malanville axis. Most other traders still used to trek cattle to the railhead in Parakou and then continue by train. To reach Ibadan, the whole journey (which took 30 days from Malanville) was covered on the hoof until the mid-1970s when the traders who arrived from Benin started to make use of trucks on the Jahuri (Nigeria) - Lagos stretch. From then on, the embarkation point for trucked cattle moved up northwards via Dakingari to Kamba, where most cattle are loaded today. For the transportation of cattle within Dahomey, some Kandi-based traders started to use small trucks (10 ton) in the 1960s. Truck use intensified during the 1970s and 1980s, when 30-ton trucks from Niger and the Banikoara region became increasingly available (cf. Section 5.6).

3.4 The traders

Sections 3.1 and 3.3 dealt respectively with the foundation and expansion of the cattle trade in Dahomey from the start of the century onwards. Section 3.2 provided the relevant (colonial) policy framework which to a large extent determined the trade setting within which traders had to operate. The present section deals with the role of the traders. It will be argued that not only the number of traders who participated in the cattle trade would gradually increase but the diversity of the ethnic groups involved as well. It will further be demonstrated that the higher participation rates in trade can be interpreted as the combined
result of expanding opportunities provided by the market and the trade setting on the one hand, and progressively modifying attitudes within the respective ethnic communities on the other. Moreover, the increased participation rates were found to contribute, in turn, to changes in the market. This point is particularly well reflected in the shift from a relatively difficult accessible market characterised by few participants to an increasingly accessible market and an accordingly higher number of traders. This tendency is represented in the organisation of the section around 2 periods: from 1900 to the 1930s and from the 1940s to the 1960s.

The period from 1900 to the 1930s: few traders, most foreigners

In Section 3.1 it was argued that from the start of the 20th century patterns of cattle trade were founded and would continue to consolidate and expand. The initial number of cattle traded was small, and significant growth of trade coincided with the outbreak of the First World War and continued to increase from then on.

With respect to the period between the early 1900s and the 1930s, two remarks have to be made. First, the number of cattle traders was small. Second, most of them were of foreign origin. The relatively low number of cattle traders, not only compared to other periods but to traders in other sectors in the same period as well, was partly related to the weak volume of trade. However, it also reflected a most crucial requirement for trading cattle, i.e. the need for capital. The purchase of cattle required relatively large sums of money and this was particularly difficult during the first half of the century when the monetary economy was only beginning to establish itself, the circulation of currencies was limited and a substantial part of exchange activity consisted of barter trade. During this period, the extent of commercial agriculture was still low in northern Dahomey. At a later stage, the sale of agricultural surpluses would appear particularly useful for farmers in providing them with the necessary capital or cattle (through exchange with cattle owners) and allow them entry into the cattle trade. As this was not yet the case, the purchase of cattle had to be financed from other sources such as capital acquired from other trade activities. Additional 'entry barriers' were related to the fact that the only outlets for cattle were in the towns situated in the coastal areas of West Africa. This implied that experience in long-distance trade was essential, notably experience related to safety aspects, dealing with authorities and sales contacts. Moreover, the marketing costs incurred by long-distance trade required economies of scale to be realised and only large herds of at least 30 cattle were conveyed southwards. The purchase of such substantial numbers of animals necessitated considerable investments for which only a limited number of traders had the capacity. In addition, and this will be elaborated on shortly afterwards, members of the local ethnic groups were only rarely involved in commercial activities and, as a consequence, local trade, i.e. within northern Dahomey, was very low key. As outlined in Section 3.1, most trade activity in this region was linked to the caravan trade which became supplemented by a north-south branch. Thus, the traders who participated in the early stages of the cattle trade in Dahomey were predominantly Haoussa and Yoruba, both non-local groups, but who possessed the required trading experience and working capital.

The Haoussa group consisted mainly of traders formerly involved in the caravan trade who had settled in the zongo of a market town situated on the caravan routes, such as Djougou, Kouandé or Kandi but also in Cotonou. Since the trade in imported European merchandise had grown significantly from the start of the century, zongo neighbourhoods
were established in most major towns in southern Dahomey (Manning 1985). Strengthened by the increased urban demand for meat, some of the Haoussa traders would accordingly engage in the cattle trade. According to Agier (1983), they were forced to do so because the locally manufactured products they used to trade now suffered severe competition from European imports. In the market towns, notably those in northern Dahomey, some Dendi traders engaged in the cattle trade too. The Dendi used to be predominantly petty traders whose commerce was closely linked to the caravan trade. The Yoruba, firmly established in the south-eastern corner of Dahomey (Porto-Novo in particular) and in south-western Nigeria, also had experience in trading and, moreover, dominated the butchery sector in Porto-Novo, Cotonou and some Nigerian towns. The Yoruba participated mainly in the trade of European merchandise which was brought northwards to link up with the caravan trade or to be sold in the now urbanising centres of northern Dahomey. From the start of the 20th century, 'substantial Yoruba immigration' (Lombard 1965, 411) from Nigeria took place in Parakou and other towns of northern Dahomey. Some of these immigrants started to exchange imported manufactured cloth, wax and salt for cattle which they subsequently sold in their home country or in Porto-Novo.

Apart from the Haoussa and Yoruba traders, a small group of cattle traders from the Sahelian colonies of French West Africa accounted for cattle trade activity in Dahomey. Again, these were 'foreign' traders who sought to supply the emerging coastal meat markets. They had already acquired the requisite trading experience in the Sahelian colonies where, at that stage, the trade in cattle had matured faster than in Dahomey (Doutresolle 1947). In contrast to their Haoussa and Yoruba counterparts, who traded an extensive variety of commodities, the Sahelian traders specialised in the cattle trade. The area in which they purchased cattle was not limited to the north of Dahomey but extended well into the south and north-western parts of Niger. The number of specialised traders was small, probably not more than 10, and they were predominantly Fulani or Djawando. They were considered the earliest real cattle traders in Dahomey. In fact, it was stated by several of today's traders that Amadou Djawando, a cattle trader originally from Mali, was 'the first cattle trader in Dahomey'. It seems that Amadou had followed the colonial troops sent from Senegal and Mali into Dahomey around 1910, although the precise year could not be traced. As a cattle trader operating in Mali, he had established good contacts with the French and British in Côte d'Ivoire and Gold Coast respectively, to whom he sold cattle. Upon his arrival in Dahomey, he established himself in Cotonou and set out to purchase cattle in the Borgou region, which he sold to the French as well as to the first AOF school which was founded in Porto-Novo at that time. According to our informants, the foundation of this school provoked a substantial rise in demand for meat, which subsequently led to a proliferation of butcheries in Cotonou and Porto-Novo.

In his study on the long-distance trade in and through Togo, Norris (1984, 182) mentions Yoruba and Haoussa as the only ethnic groups who permanently participated in the long-distance trade at the start of the century. Traders from other ethnic groups were only 'target traders' who occasionally searched for scarce commodities.

Djawando (derived from Diawambe) is the name of an ethnic group from Mali and is strongly affiliated to the Fulani (in fact, it is said that the Djawando originally were half Fulani half Arab), and perceived as subordinate by the latter. In Mali, they used to be known as traders or trader caste, who traded on behalf of the Fulani. The Fulani traditionally did not trade themselves. Several of the cattle traders from Mali who operated in Benin were called Djawando. Among the Fulani of Benin, the Djawando do not form a separate caste.
Another example of a trader of foreign origin who keenly exploited the economic opportunities of his era was Adam N’diaye, a wealthy cattle trader from Kandi.

N’diaye was a wealthy trader of, it is thought, Wolof origin (Senegal) who lived in Kandi, the major administrative and commercial centre in the north during the first half of the century. He had well-established relations with the colonial authorities and he provided the garrison with cattle when needed. Like several other traders of his era, he had earned his way into the cattle trade by selling kapok to the ‘colon’. His long-distance destinations were mainly Cotonou and Lomé and he occasionally went to Nigeria. N’diaye bought his cattle in Malanville (from local brokers), Kamba and Gaya or directly from Fulani pastoralists near Kandi. Herds of approximately 50 cattle were frequently sent to Parakou where they awaited train transport to Cotonou. On return, he would bring salt and cloth from Cotonou, both bought from European trading firms, which he sold to passing Haoussa trade caravans and to the Kandi population or which he exchanged for cattle. At that time, the cattle trade was quite lucrative thanks to the increasing demand in southern Dahomey and to the concerns of colonial authorities for a sufficient meat supply to this region. Subsequently, N’diaye was able to accumulate an impressive amount of wealth and he was the first local trader to buy his own vehicle.

Adam N’diaye, Amadou Djawando, the Haoussa traders, the Yoruba: the involvement of local ethnic groups was extremely limited indeed. In the initial stages of an expanding trade in Dahomey, the entry barriers were sufficiently high for the participants to be limited to the few traders who possessed the required capital, contacts and trade experience. However, it will be argued in the next section that cultural restrictions on the part of local ethnic groups should not be neglected either.

The period between the 1940s and the 1960s: the opening up

The period from the 1940s to the 1960s was characterised by the intensification of the cattle trade, an increase in market opportunities and an increase in market accessibility following the establishment of some market places, the use of railway transport and the progressive rise in the number of actors involved. The latter will be central to the following paragraphs which will describe the initial reluctance and then early participation of pioneering traders from local ethnic groups as well as the consolidation and expansion of the involvement of foreign traders. In order to structure the consecutive descriptions of ethnic groups who came to participate in the cattle trade, the present section starts with the case of the Djerma. The trader members among the immigrant Djerma played a catalyst role in the participation process of local ethnic groups.

The term ‘local ethnic groups’ can be somewhat confusing. For the purpose of the present research, ‘local ethnic groups’ refers to those ethnic groups which were among the earliest groups to settle in northern Benin and who make up the vast majority of its population today. Moreover, they correspond to the ethnic groups often mentioned in the literature when the north of Benin is referred to, namely the Dendi, the Bariba, the Gando and the Fulani.
The Djerma

The area of origin of the Djerma ethnic group is the region which covers what today constitutes western Niger. Since the 19th century, the Djerma have been migrating to present-day Benin in small groups and some descended as far south as Djougou (Persson 1982; Bashabi 1980). According to a colonial report on the Guéné district, some Djerma crossed the Niger river between 1910 and 1920 to establish themselves in villages around Guéné and Karimama. More importantly, however, by the end of the 1920s and in the early 1930s, an extensive drought period caused substantial migration of Djerma all over West Africa, notably towards Gold Coast and Dahomey. A large number of Djerma settled along the Karimama-Founougo-Banikoara-Kouandé-Djougou axis in western Borgou and southern Atacora. This axis corresponded to the trade itinerary well known to them (cf. Map 3.1). Upon their arrival in Dahomey in the 1930s, they initially engaged in agriculture and in petty trading of cloth, kola and salt. The latter was bought either from the French at Kopargo or at salt markets to the north. Following this petty trading stage, some Djerma entered the trade in sheep, goats and cattle and they would soon dominate this sector in the Banikoara-Kouandé region, their main sphere of influence. Their activities in the livestock trade sector were not surprising since they had accumulated substantial commercial experience at an earlier stage. In the 19th century, they had traded donkeys and horses from Niger to present-day Benin. Between the 1930s and 1960s, the principal destinations of the Djerma cattle traders were Cotonou, Lomé and to a lesser extent Nigeria to which mainly sheep and goats were traded. In short, the Djerma 'introduced' the cattle trade not only to the Banikoara-Kouandé region but to the surrounding Bariba farmers as well.

The Bariba

The Bariba presumably entered the Borgou region around 1350. They originally came from the Bussa area in Nigeria. After their arrival in the Borgou region, they gradually extended their territory by founding several independent kingdoms of which the Nikki kingdom was the most extensive and influential. Bariba society is principally stratified along two classes: the warriors (wasangari) and the farmers (baatombu). The reigning of the wasangari elite was based on warfare and tributes. Confrontations among the numerous small kingdoms occurred frequently and Fulani or Gando settlements were pillaged in order to acquire cattle or slaves (Brégand 1998). These two constituted the necessary means (means of exchange, in the case of cattle) to equip the armies (Lombard 1965, 231). In general, the subordinate Fulani and Gando paid tributes to the wasangari in exchange for their safety. The same system applied to passing trade caravans which were often looted or forced to pay a tribute in exchange for safe passage. During the 19th century, the territory controlled by the different Bariba kingdoms covered the area between Kandi, Djougou, Parakou, Nikki and Bussa and could hardly be circumvented by trade caravans. This gives an idea of the importance of the 'tribute system'.

The Bariba themselves traditionally did not trade. In fact, the accumulation of wealth through commerce used to be something that had to be handled very cautiously.

41 ANB, affaires politiques, 1E30/ Cercle du Moyen Niger, Notes sur la subdivision de Guéné, 1918.
42 This kola and potassium trade still exists today, although both products are now transported by small trucks between Malanville (potassium) and Djougou (kola nuts).
43 Although the number of Djerma cattle traders today is low compared with other groups, their previously dominant position is still reflected in the fact that the presidents of both the Kérou and Founougo cattle markets are Djerma.
Many of today's Bariba cattle traders claim that trading used to be 'not done'.

Entering a commercial activity was something that was often looked upon by community members as an act of separation: 'voilà, un enfant égaré' (look, a derailed child). Wealth had to be concealed. A general fear existed that ostentatious investments would provoke the anger of marabouts who could accordingly 'eliminate' the person concerned. The occupation of 'trader' did not form part of the Bariba social stratification system (in contrast, for example, to 'butcher'). Accordingly, many Bariba preferred to focus on agriculture and although they invested in cattle, the animals were entrusted to Fulani herders. Even today, numerous Bariba farmers consider cattle trading as 'suffering'.

Nevertheless, the various contacts with trade and traders inevitably had their impact on the Bariba. During the pre-colonial era, there was interaction with passing trade caravans which stayed for some days in the Bariba villages paying their 'security contributions' to the local chiefs. Furthermore, some of the itinerant Haoussa traders settled in Bariba towns which were situated on the caravan routes. Although they lived in separate neighbourhoods (local, non-trading animists versus foreign, trading Moslems), the Bariba could follow the way in which transactions were carried out. Notwithstanding these influences, it was the changes brought about by colonialism that had most impact on the 'Bariba economy' and the attitude towards trade. The rather autonomous economic system, largely based on acquiring goods (slaves and cattle) through pillage, was abolished when the Fulani and Gando achieved their 'economic independence' under new colonial rule (Lombard 1965, 409). Developments towards an open economy much more based on trade slowly emanated. Tax contributions now had to be fulfilled through participation in the monetary economy. At first, this created tensions between the French colonial rulers and the Bariba. The attitude of the colonial authorities towards the Bariba compared to other ethnic groups during the first stages of colonial occupation is reflected in a written monthly colonial account which dates from 1900 and claims that:

'.. les peuls paieront l'impôt sans difficultés. Les Dendis feront leur possible pour verser leur contribution. Il n'en sera pas ainsi des Baribas qui sont pauvres, paresseux et n'exercent aucun commerce ni aucune industrie. Autrefois ils perçevaient eux-mêmes des redevances sur les peuls, indépendamment des vols nombreux qu'ils commettaient à l'égard de ces derniers et des rançons exigées des caravanes de passage. [ils mettent] ... une mauvaise volonté pour payer l'impôt qui est d'ailleurs trop lourd pour leurs ressources..

In the period before colonial occupation, the authority of the Bariba princes, who represented the top of the hierarchy of the royal families, was such that they could effectively prevent others from accumulating wealth. Although the princes did not trade themselves, they accumulated wealth in the form of cattle herds.

Another indication of the unfamiliarity of the Bariba with trade is the term for 'trader' in Baatombu, the Bariba language. Tenkou is the word for trader which apparently derives from the word tenkoudo in Fulbe (Fulani) language.

'. The Fulani will pay the tax without difficulties. The Dendi will do everything possible in order to make their contribution. This will not be the case with the Bariba who are poor, lazy and do not perform any commercial or industrial activity. In the past, they would collect contributions from the Fulani, in addition to the numerous thefts from the latter, and the money they claimed from passing trade caravans. They are not willing to pay the tax, which, by the way, is rather high compared to their resources.' (ANB, affaires politiques, 1E4/ Cercle du Moyen Niger, rapport politique, 7/1900).
The intensification of the cattle trade resulted from the continuously increasing demand for meat. At first, the majority of the Bariba remained indifferent and often hostile to the new economic developments and opportunities (Lombard 1965, 412). Increasingly, however, the economic activities of the Haoussa, Yoruba and, from the 1930s onwards, Djerma traders, as well as the pressures of monetarisation came to have an impact on the Bariba. A small group who could be qualified as pioneers started to follow the example of their foreign counterparts and engaged in trading. Their main sphere of operation used to be southern Borgou, situated south of the Banikoara - Kandi line. These Bariba pioneer traders were the first to challenge the previously negative attitude to commercial activity. Moreover, they were the first to 'challenge' the dominant position of foreign traders from whom they had 'learned' the profession. It was already stated that the Djerma fulfilled a catalyst role in this respect. Initially, the Bariba farmers entrusted their livestock to Djerma traders who would sell them on their behalf. They were inclined to do so because relations had historically been good between the Bariba and Djerma ethnic groups as a result of a presumed historic maternal bond dating from the Sonray empire era (Person 1982; Lombard 1965, 87). Increasingly, however, some Bariba started to 'follow' the Djerma on trading trips, taking care of the cattle sales themselves. They occasionally occupied a position as apprentice through which they familiarised with the cattle trade. Accordingly, a new class of (cattle) traders, gaining wealth through commerce, came into existence after 1940. Many of today's traders recall the names of the few wealthy Bariba cattle traders of the 1940s and 1950s, which illustrates the significance of this new social category. Like the Haoussa, Yoruba and Djerma traders, the new Bariba traders all converted to Islam which marked a break with their animist tradition. They rapidly gained considerable economic, political and religious prestige.

Notwithstanding the social and economic importance of these traders, their number was still small compared to other trading groups. Their careers reflected the ways in which they could arrange 'access' to capital and skills, which constituted essential entry requirements at that time. The above-mentioned apprenticeships should be considered in this light. Some of the pioneering cattle traders originated from butcher families and usually mastered the Fulani and Dendi languages. In fact, it became quite common to see butchers entering the cattle trade. Another way of collecting the required working capital was by collecting millet, kapok, rice or groundnuts from farmers for subsequent sale to European trading firms (cf. Lombard 1965, 450). Chapter 6 will deal in more detail with issues concerning entry to the cattle trade. It suffices here to demonstrate the factors which have caused increasing participation in the cattle trade of members of an ethnic group who lacked a trading tradition and whose cultural values originally prohibited accumulation through commerce. Unlike the Bariba, the Dendi already had a trading tradition to some extent.

The Dendi
When the history of local ethnic groups in northern Benin is dealt with in the literature, the Dendi are typically identified as traders (Bierschenk 1997, 30; Person 1982; Lombard 1965, 38-39). Initially, the Dendi were farmers and fishermen who lived along both banks of the Niger river, in the area which today constitutes the Niger Republic. The Dendi are presumed to be of Sonray origin and to have migrated into the Niger valley of present-day Benin around the 17th century (Bashabi 1980). Since then, several smaller groups who lived alongside them have been assimilated and today they identify themselves as Dendi. One of the main indicators of wealth among the Dendi was the possession of horses. At an early
stage the Dendi traded horses with the Bariba elite somewhat more to the south. However, agriculture remained their primary occupation, in addition to some petty trading activities. These were closely associated with the Haoussa caravan trade. The first evidence of active Dendi cattle traders is found around the 1920s. It concerns a group of Dendi in Djougou who are supposed to have migrated in that direction already in the 16th century (Bashabi 1980). Since the early 18th century, Djougou had been an important 'caravanserai' (Person 1982, 102). Together with settled Haoussa and Wangara caravan traders, the Dendi were actively involved in trade activities in the Djougou market and its surroundings and they participated in the caravans that went to Salaga. From around 1920, and together with the immigrant Haoussa traders, the Dendi came to develop the trade of cattle and small ruminants between Kérou and Djougou as well as southwards in the direction of Savé, Cotonou and Abomey from where they brought bicycles in return. Moreover, Agier (1983, 127) found evidence of Dendi traders who, in 1918, regularly transited Sokodé (in Togo) with cattle, in the direction of Salaga and Accra in Gold Coast. Indications of active cattle trading among the Dendi of the Niger valley occur at a later stage, i.e. from the 1940s onwards. It was only then that the commercialisation of cattle in this area actually took off, not least because of the great influx of cattle traders from the Sahelian colonies. The Dendi in the Niger valley usually entered cattle trading through the exchange of harvests for cattle, the exchange of small-stock for cattle, or through the purchase of cattle with the profits of petty trade. Their cattle herds used to be entrusted to the neighbouring local Fulani pastoralists who would be employed as cattle drovers too. The conclusion can be drawn that Dendi participation in the cattle trade was characterised by a two-stage pattern. First, before the 1940s there is evidence of Dendi traders who included cattle in their commercial activities which were narrowly linked to the caravan trade between Djougou and Salaga. As such, this trajectory can be compared to that of the Haoussa and Yoruba although the number of traders involved was presumably smaller. Second, the Dendi of northern Borgou would follow a trajectory similar to that observed among the Bariba, pursuing the example of traders of 'foreign' ethnic groups. Like the Bariba, their entry into the cattle trade was further linked to agriculture. Before dealing with the position of foreign traders, we will briefly introduce the third local ethnic group, whose members would gradually come to participate in the cattle trade. The Gando ethnic group is fairly small in numbers.

**The Gando**

A distinct entry path, much less hampered by a restrictive attitude but all the more by a pre-colonial situation of captivity, applies to the Gando. The Gando, most of whom speak Fulfulde, are the descendants of former captives of the Fulani and the Bariba and predominantly live in villages spread over the southern Borgou. In the pre-colonial era, they were forced into agricultural labour, construction work and the like for the Bariba kings and wasangari, or for the Fulani pastoralists. Otherwise, they were obliged to make contributions in the form of agricultural produce. Most of them had been captured during local warfare and many were subsequently sold to slave traders from the coast. The captives of the Fulani were those who were sold to them by the wasangari, and children who were

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47 According to Lombard (1965, 38), the traders who called themselves Dendi also included members of other ethnic groups. Some of them were former caravan traders who had settled in market towns such as Djougou, where they adopted the Dendi language and adhered to Islam. This process is similar to that of 'haoussanisation' described in Section 2.1.
rejected by Bariba society according to their custom. Clearly, the situation of captivity severely limited their possibilities for carrying out activities such as trading. The situation altered substantially with the advent of colonialism. The subordinated groups were 'liberated', granted a certain (spatial) autonomy and chiefs were elected among them. Although never fully accomplished, at least not at the psychological level (cf. Hardung 1997), the 'emancipation' process embarked upon under colonial rule would offer new opportunities to the Gando. The variety of economic activities they continued to be involved in, such as agriculture (food crops as well as cotton) and construction work, but also as butchers or as weavers, not only constituted income-earning opportunities but would later appear to provide an opportunity for a start in the cattle trade since profits were predominantly invested in the building up of a cattle herd. So, whereas the Fulani continued to be almost exclusively engaged in pastoralism, participation in the newly developing trade economy was much more obvious for the Gando. Compared to the former, they were less suspicious of authorities, less suspicious of commercial activity and less hampered by occupational and cultural constraints which limited Fulani involvement in the cattle trade (see below). Still, effective entry into cattle trading would take time, and it was around the late 1930s and early 1940s before the first Gando traders appeared on the scene. According to several informants, the rise of Gando traders was finally stimulated by the presence of Djerma traders, in a similar pattern as was found among the Bariba pioneer traders. Finally, the first pioneering Gando traders were limited in number and would remain so in comparison with traders from other ethnic groups, reflecting the overall size of these respective communities.

Table 3.2 summarises the processes which have led to the entry of new cattle traders from various ethnic backgrounds and at different periods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Entry</th>
<th>Main reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900s - 1930s</td>
<td>'foreign traders'</td>
<td>1. growing demand for meat in Dahomey and in neighbouring countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Haoussa</td>
<td>2. cultural restrictions on local groups and few commercial activities among them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Yoruba</td>
<td>3. experienced foreign traders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Djawando</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Fulani</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940s - 1960s</td>
<td>'foreign traders'</td>
<td>1. enhanced demand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Djerma</td>
<td>2. increasing market opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'local traders'</td>
<td>3. declining cultural restrictions and incorporation of trading among local groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Dendi</td>
<td>4. pioneer traders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Bariba</td>
<td>5. increasing market transparency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Gando</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The rejected children were thought to be bewitched when they were born 'upside down' or when their first teeth grew from the upper jaw. If this was the case, they would frequently be killed or rejected.

Cases are even known of Fulani cattle drovers who, during the 1950s and 1960s, were employed by wealthy Gando traders.

Nevertheless, the colonial authorities would recruit heavily among the Gando, much more than from the Fulani, for the military and the execution of public works.
And the local Fulani?

It appears from table 3.2 that the local Fulani were barely involved in cattle trading up to the 1960s. On the contrary, the major local players were the Dendi, Bariba and Gando in addition to the group of 'foreign' traders composed of Fulani, Djerma, Djawando and Haoussa. The role of the local Fulani had for a long time been restricted to that of 'observers' as they were engaged as cattle drovers.

The Fulani of today's northern Benin probably settled there in the early 18th century. They were the first Moslem people to settle in the Borgou region. According to Bierschenk (1997, 32), the first waves of Fulani in-migration consisted of small groups without cattle, coming from the Gurma and Sokoto areas, who hired themselves as cattle herders for the Bariba wasangari elite. In addition to the physical protection of the cattle herders, the yearly recompense in the form of calves enabled the immigrant Fulani to progressively build up their own herds. As such, the relations which linked the Fulani to the Bariba had an important economic component (Lombard 1965, 231). The Fulani used to have a low socio-political status compared to the Bariba, the wasangari in particular, who used to regard the cattle of the former as their 'property', and would take it away when needed. Furthermore, the Fulani commonly had to pay tributes to the Bariba chiefs in order to assure their security (Bierschenk 1997, 32-35). The policy of the colonial authorities to a large extent altered this situation, since the Fulani were granted property rights on their cattle, and chiefs were elected among them. It was in the same philosophy of granting a certain autonomy to each 'group' (Bierschenk 1997, 39) that the Gando, former slaves of the Fulani, were emancipated. Furthermore, as a result of the pax colonial, the violent raids of the Bariba warriors were now contained. Despite the larger degree of political autonomy, relations of economic interdependence between the Fulani and Bariba, based on the complementary features of agriculture and pastoralism in general and the exchange of milk for grains in particular, continued to exist for the most part of this century (De Haan 1997a, 13; Van Driel 1996). In spite of these exchange relations, a crucial feature of the local Fulani of northern Benin has always been their involvement in agriculture. For this reason, it is appropriate to classify their society as 'agro-pastoral', in contrast to other Fulani societies or livelihoods across West Africa, such as the nomadic Fulani of the Sahel or the ruling town-based Fulani of northern Nigeria and northern Cameroon (Azarya 1996; Bierschenk 1997). This is important with respect to the trading tradition of the agro-pastoral Fulani of northern Benin. In contrast to other Fulani groups, such as the above-mentioned Fulani in northern Nigeria and Cameroon (Azarya 1996, 71) or the Djawando in Mali who have traditionally been accustomed to trade, the Fulani of Benin only had a meagre trading tradition. For a long time, their exclusive participation in the marketing channel has been in the sale of cattle. In fact, for most Fulani in Benin, the sale of cattle used not to be based on external incentives but rather on internal needs, the so-called stress sales. Accordingly, the term target-income producer was taken from Bierschenk & Forster (1991) to qualify this 'defensive' economic behaviour. In addition to the limits on sales, involvement in the purchase of cattle for marketing towards long-distance destinations was not an occupation the local Fulani were eager to engage in. In short, the occupation of trader did not form part of their agro-pastoral society.

Henceforth, the term 'local Fulani', as opposed to 'foreign Fulani' is employed when reference is made to those Fulani who were originally established in Benin, in other words, those Fulani whose arrival predates this century.
Chapter 4 will provide an outline of the major changes which have occurred in the pastoral society of northern Benin from the 1970s onwards. These changes appear to have contributed to increasing participation by local Fulani in the cattle trade.

The position of foreign traders remains dominant

It was already explained that in the period before the 1930s, cattle trade in Dahomey was almost exclusively in the hands of foreign traders: the Haoussa, Yoruba, Djawando and a few Fulani from Burkina Faso and Niger. Subsequently, it was shown that other ethnic groups would progressively start to participate.

The position of foreign traders during the period between the 1940s and the 1960s continued to be solid and their number increased. Particularly in northern Borgou, i.e. within the Malanville - Guéné - Karimama triangle, the number of foreign Fulani and Djawando traders steadily rose. The majority of these cattle traders had started their careers in Burkina Faso, Mali or in the north-western parts of Niger. Apart from the few Dendi traders and the occasional visiting Haoussa traders from Nigeria, few other traders operated in the northern Borgou region. In fact, this region was considered a convenient area for the purchase of cattle, in addition to the markets situated in the traditional livestock production zones of north-western Niger (Ayorou, Filingué), north-eastern Burkina Faso (Markoye) and the Gao region in today's Mali (cf. Map 3.2). From these combined purchase points cattle were supplied to the markets of Cotonou, Ibadan, Lagos and Lomé.

The well-established position of foreign traders was further reflected at the market of Cotonou which constituted a stronghold for them in two respects. In the first place, a few long-established Haoussa traders and several Yoruba butchers from Porto-Novo used Cotonou as a starting point to set out for purchases in the north. Second, parallel to the expansion of the cattle trade, the importance of the cattle market in Cotonou had increased over the years. It has already been mentioned that the first colonial attempt to create an official cattle market dated from 1936. However, this attempt never succeeded and the cattle market would, for years to come, remain an 'informal' gathering of traders and butchers, located on an open space in the foreigners' neighbourhood, the zongo. This accurately illustrates the significance of foreigners in the marketing of cattle in Dahomey. At the Cotonou market, cattle were delivered by the whole spectrum of traders who operated in northern Dahomey. Still, between the 1940s and the 1960s, the actors who occupied major landlord-broker (i.e. dillali) positions were foreigners, including the sarkin Djerma, the sarkin Haoussawa and the sarkin Fulani. In the 1950s, the latter used to be the former apprentice of Amadou Djawando, the 'first cattle trader in Dahomey'. Another key position was held by a Fulani landlord from Mali. All were 'foreigners'.

Thus, the itinerant traders who arrived in Cotonou did not necessarily stay with a landlord of their own ethnic group. Several Bariba traders claimed to be hosted by the Fulani landlord from Mali. In 1963, some traders performed a coup in which several dillali were thrown out because the difficulties concerning the butcher's repayment of debts were escalating. Since then, only three major dillali acted as such at the Cotonou market, a Djerma and two Fulani originally from Mali. Only by the end of the 1970s and the early 1980s did circumstances alter (cf. Section 8.2).

52 Sarkin means chief in the Haoussa language.
A final group of foreign traders was established near the Kolokondé cattle market, just north of Djougou (cf. Map 3.2). The group consisted of Fulani cattle traders from Mali and Moor cattle traders from Mauritania. The first Fulani and Moor migrants arrived in the early 1930s. The Fulani from Mali came 'à la recherche de l'argent' (in search of money), brought their herds, found enough pasture and water at Kolokondé and decided to stay. The attraction of the nearby commercial centre of Djougou will certainly have played a role in this decision. After setting, the majority of the group's members continued to take care of the herds and related pastoral activities. Initially, only a selected, small number were involved in cattle trading. Apart from the Fulani from Mali, a group of Moor marabouts arrived at approximately the same time. They also decided to establish themselves in the region and it was these marabouts who started to finance the cattle trading activities of the Fulani migrants. In 1935, one of the Fulani created a cattle market in Kolokondé. Since they maintained contacts with the 'home country', in-migration of Fulani from Mali continued and the community grew considerably. In the late 1950s, a substantial number of Fulani pastoralists, originally from Mali but who had been chased from the Gourma region in Burkina Faso as a result of a conflict with local farmers, also settled in the Kolokondé region. From then on, the cattle market grew considerably. At that time, the Moor community had also grown and several members entered the cattle trade as well. Nowadays, the Moor and Fulani traders still dominate the Kolokondé market which is reflected in the key positions they occupy on the market committee.53

3.5 The organisation of the cattle trade up to the 1960s

The previous sections have highlighted the background of increasing participation rates in the cattle trade among members of a gradually broadening spectrum of ethnic groups. The explanations put forward revealed a complex interaction between developments in the market (strengthening of demand) and the trade setting on the one hand, and change within the respective communities on the other. Notwithstanding the higher participation rates as a result of improved accessibility, the community of cattle traders continued to be dominated by a small group of wealthy traders. This is substantiated by the perception of the colonial authorities who reported on the existence of a proutocratie, the meaning of which comes down to a small oligopoly of wealthy traders making substantial profits. Whereas this group used to be composed of foreign traders, it has been shown that from the 1940s onwards it widened to include pioneering cattle traders of local ethnic groups.

One of the major improvements in the trade setting which occurred in the period being considered here was the increased use of railway transport for the conveyance of cattle to the south. This reduced the reliance on the difficult practice of trekking cattle between Parakou and Cotonou and offered an important opportunity for traders who lacked experience. Nevertheless, several other factors related to the organisation of the cattle trade reflect the continuing existence of entry barriers such as the need for capital and the required specific trading skills. The following description of the organisation of long-distance cattle trade shows the situation between the 1940s and the 1960s. It concerns a

53 The Moor and Fulani migrants have always maintained contacts with their area of origin. Every now and then migrants arrive, while others return. When a group of Fulani went back to Mali by the end of the 1970s and started to trade cattle with Conakry in Guinea, a group of Guinean Fulani cattle traders arrived in Kolokondé in 1980.
A number of points are to be highlighted from this account. First of all, it becomes clear that the cattle trade was organised by a few big traders. When the latter had acquired a sufficient number of animals to take to a particular destination such as Togo or Cotonou, smaller traders would bring their cattle along. Generally, these were traders from the same locality as the big trader. The herd would typically consist of 50-60, sometimes up to 100 cattle. In view of the absence of cattle markets, the collection of sufficient cattle to be conveyed could take one to several months. For instance, in the 1950s and 1960s the Dendi and Fulani traders around Karimama and Malanville would go around the pastoralist villages in the Niger valley by (motor)bike. Some also penetrated the ‘W’ park to locate transhumant herds. Instead of going to the cattle camps themselves, the Yoruba traders, who continued to go north to purchase cattle, used to stay in Malanville, Guéné or Bodjékali (within the main pastoral area) and entrust their capital to small local traders who would purchase cattle on their behalf. In Malanville the Yoruba were provided with lodgings by the then Fulani chief, who acted as their landlord (cf. Section 2.2). Together

\[\text{\textsuperscript{54}}\] 'Madugu' in the Fulfulde language means chief and 'plan' is derived from planifier (French) which means to plan.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{55}}\] Virtually no cattle markets existed until the 1970s (cf. Section 4.3). The French administrative post in Kopargo (cf. Map 3.1) supposedly hosted the first real livestock market in Benin, somewhere between 1925 and 1935. During that period, Kopargo used to be a market which, as it was closely linked to nearby Djougou, received trading caravans. Therefore, the Haoussa traders dominated proceedings and some of the Haoussa who had settled here engaged in cattle trading too. The importance of the Kopargo market soon declined when the Kolokondé market was opened in 1935.
with the Porto-Novo-based Yoruba butchers, some of the above-mentioned Haoussa traders from Cotonou (but also Haoussa from Jega and Sokoto in Nigeria, who traded with Abeokuta) made similar trips to Malanville.

The second remark concerns the role of the 'chef de groupe' and the 'madugu plan'. Nowadays, the identification of both, before a journey is embarked upon, is much less strict. This is not to say that their tasks do not exist anymore, they are still relevant. However, experience in dealing with authorities, for instance, is much more widespread today among potential cattle drovers and cattle traders, and no longer concentrated among just a few, as it used to be. Furthermore, journeys have become less complicated: truck transport prevails and trekking itineraries are well known. The responsible trader, the chef de groupe, and the chief drover, the madugu plan, are no longer the specialised functions they used to be, which is an indication for our argument that the cattle trade has become increasingly transparent.

The final point concerns the size of herds and the duration of a journey. In general, a journey to Cotonou or Lomé required more time than it does today. Procedures needed more time, truck transport was virtually absent and the final sale of cattle also took longer. In addition to the limited number of long-distance cattle traders, this led to a situation in which the herds conveyed were large (sometimes even up to 100-150 cattle). In the case of the Fulani trader above, a large herd was collected at Malanville. In a similar setting, the group of traders from southern Borgou (the Bariba, Gando and to a lesser extent Djerma) used to collect large herds in Parakou where they awaited transportation by train. In turn, this herd consisted of smaller units collected in Kandi, Banikoara, Djougou and Kérou. In each of these towns a cattle trader used to be responsible for collection. A Parakou-based cattle trader would arrange the essential formalities for rail transport. When the herds arrived in Parakou, the big traders would meet and after the weighing of all cattle, prices were determined for sale in Cotonou, Ouidah (during the Second World War) or Lomé. The administration was usually taken care of by some of the traders' children who had attended school. The smaller traders who 'followed' and had a few animals in the large herd, seemed to have little understanding about the completion of the transaction. They depended entirely upon the few big traders who they would call their 'patrons'. Since the latter took care of the trade formalities as well as the final sale of their cattle, the small traders were obliged to accept the prices set. It should be noted that the system of weighing cattle in Parakou only pertained to a particular period (the end of the 1940s and the early 1950s) and served to establish 'price markers' for those traders who preferred to stay in Parakou. Afterwards, the system could no longer be maintained because most traders, including the smaller traders, would go to Cotonou themselves.

3.6 Concluding remarks

This chapter has shown that the history of the cattle trade in Benin up to the 1960s can be summarised in the word 'expansion': an expansion of the volume traded, an expansion of trade destinations and an expansion in the number and background of cattle traders. The factors that have been put forward to explain these developments draw from the levels of structure and actor.

First of all, the flourishing of export crop economies in coastal West Africa stimulated demand for meat and hence occasioned an intensification of the cattle trade from the beginning of the 20th century. Additional peaks in demand occurred during the First
and Second World Wars. The expansion of the cattle trade was further encouraged by a series of changes in the trade setting, of which improved safety and infrastructure, notably the railways, were the most outstanding components.

Secondly, the interval between 1900 and 1960 was characterised by a number of essential modifications at the level of cattle traders. Although during the early decades the cattle trade was dominated by a low number of primarily foreign Haoussa, Yoruba and Fulani cattle traders, this would change from around the 1940s to higher numbers of principally local traders. The factors that contributed to the increased participation in the cattle trade of local ethnic groups such as the Djerma, Bariba and Gando were described in detail and attributed to a combination of opportunities in an increasingly ‘open’ and ‘transparent’ trade on the one hand, and internal attitudinal changes to commerce and pioneering behaviour of some traders on the other. As such, the analysis shed light on the interaction between actors and structure in the transformation of trade. It was shown that despite indications of increasing numbers of local traders, the position of foreign traders and the supply of cattle from foreign countries remained prime features of Benin’s cattle trade up until the 1960s. The next chapter will show that a definite change finally occurred from the 1970s and 1980s onwards when the processes outlined in the present chapter were strongly accentuated, leading to a numerical decline in the importance of foreign traders.
3.1. Concluding remarks

The chapter has shown that the history of the cattle trade in French up to the 1960s can be understood as a period of expansion: an expansion of the volume traded, an expansion of the number and background of cattle traders. The factors that have been put forward to explain these developments were the level of demand and supply.

From the beginning of the 1900s, the livestock trade in West Africa diversified, and by the mid-1950s, a reorganization of the livestock trade from the beginning of the 20th century. Additional factors in demand occurred during the French colonial period.