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Einführung in die afrikanische Geschichte

Kurseinheit 5:
Reader 2

Fakultät für
**Kultur- und
Sozialwissen-
schaften**

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Text 1:

Hugh CLAPPERTON:

**Journal of a second expedition into the interior of Africa, London 1829,
S. 207-208, 210-211, 213-214, 222-224.**

Allgemeine Beschreibung Sokotos, November 1826.

The city of Soccatoo stands on the top of a low hill, or rising ground, having a river passing at a short distance from the northern wall. It is formed of the united branches of the several streams, which take their rise to the south of Kashna, and flow past Zirmie. Having passed Soccatoo, it crosses the district of Cubbé in a southwesterly direction, and at the distance of four days' journey enters the Quorra. It is well stored with fish, which afford the poor people of Soccatoo a very considerable part of their food. The city is surrounded by a wall, about twenty-four feet high, and a dry ditch. The wall is kept in good repair, and there are eleven gates; seven having been built up at the breaking out of the rebellion. The clay walls which surround all African towns, clusters of huts, and even single coozies, give a deadly dull appearance to them all, whether negro to Mahometan. The only appearance of animation is given by the great number of slaves and others moving to and fro, or lounging, or lying in the shade at the doors of great men. A great part of the town within the walls might be taken for a number of ill-enclosed gardens . . .

The ordinary occupations of the higher, and indeed I may say of all classes of the Fellatas is, they rise at day-break, wash and say their prayers, count their beads for about half an hour, and then chew a gora nut, if they have any; which done, they sip a quantity of senkie, or furro-furrocoo. These articles are a preparation of half-boiled dourra flowers, made into balls of about one pound, mixed up with dry flour. Senkie is one of these balls, bruised and mixed with milk; furro-furrocoo is the same kind of ball mixed with water. About 10 A.M. they have rice boiled, which they eat with a little melted butter. After this they pay visits, or lounge in the shade, hear the news, say prayers, count their beads, which employ them till sunset, when they have a meal of pudding, with a little stewed meat and gravy, or a few small fish; they then retire to rest.

During the spring and harvest the proprietors of estates ride out to their different slave villages to look after their grain, cotton, indigo, etc.; or to the place where they have their cattle. The occupations of the poorer class, who are not engaged in trade, are much the same as those of their superiors; their food is somewhat different, being principally confined to furro-furrocoo . . .

The domestic slaves are generally well treated. The males who have arrived at the age of eighteen or nineteen are given a wife, and sent to live at their villages and farms in the country, where they build a hut, and until the harvest are fed by their owners. When the time for cultivating the ground and sowing the seed comes on, the owner points out what he requires, and what is to be sown on it. The slave is then allowed to enclose a part for himself and family. The hours of labour, for his master, are from daylight till mid-day; the remainder of the day is employed on his own, or in any other way he may think proper. At the time of harvest, when they cut and tie up the

grain, each slave gets a bundle of the different sorts of grain, about a bushel of our measure, for himself. The grain on his own ground is entirely left for his own use, and he may dispose of it as he thinks proper. At the vacant seasons of the year he must attend to the calls of his master, whether to accompany him on a journey, or go to war, if so ordered.

The children of a slave are also slaves, and when able are usually sent out to attend the goats and sheep, and, at a more advanced age, the bullocks and larger cattle; they are soon afterwards taken home to the master's house, to look after his horse or his domestic concerns, as long as they remain single. The domestic slaves are fed the same as the rest of the family, with whom they appear to be on an equality of footing.

The children of slaves, whether dwelling in the house or on the farm, are never sold, unless their behaviour is such that, after repeated punishment, they continue unmanageable, so that the master is compelled to part with them. The slaves that are sold are those taken from the enemy, or newly purchased, who, on trial, do not suit the purchaser. When a male or female slave dies unmarried, his property goes to the owner. The children of the slaves are sometimes educated with those of the owner, but this is not generally the case . . .

The next article is the white cotton cloth of the country, of which they make a considerable quantity, both for the home consumption and for exportation to Kano and Nyffé; what they export is principally made into tobies and large shirts before it leaves Soccatoo. They have also a cloth called naroo, which is something like our counterpanes; a few checked and red striped cloths, used as tobies, and some as wrappers or zinnies for the women. The weavers of the latter are mostly natives of Nyffé, as are also all their blacksmiths. They have shoe, boot, saddle, and bridlemakers. Another article of export is the civet; the animals that produce it are kept in wooden cages, and fed on pounded fish and corn. A few slaves are also sold out of the province to the merchants of Kano, Kashna, Ghadamis, and Tripoli. A young male slave, from thirteen to twenty years of age, will bring from 10 000 to 20 000 cowries; a female slave, if very handsome, from 40 000 to 50 000; the common price is about 30 000 for a virgin about fourteen or fifteen. The articles brought to Soccatoo for sale by the Arabs are the same as what are brought to other parts of Houssa, and are mentioned in another place. Salt is brought by the Tuaricks from Billma, and also by the Tuaricks of the west. The salt from the latter quarter is much better, being more pure, and in large pieces like ice. Ostriches alive and ostrich skins are brought by these people, but little is given for a skin, only from 4000 to 5000 cowries for the finest. They also bring horses which fetch a good price here; dates from Billma, and a small quantity of goods which they buy from the Arabs at Aghadiz. The articles they could export in considerable quantities, if there were buyers, would be elephants' teeth, bullocks' hides, which, when tanned, only cost five hundred cowries, equal to sixpence of our money. Goat skins, and the skins of antelopes, and other wild animals, might be procured in abundance, but, of course, would rise much in price if there was a great demand. Gum-arabic might also be procured in abundance. What they would take from us in exchange would be coarse scarlet cloths, which in all parts of the interior

bring a good price, say 10 000 cowries a yard; coarse yellow and green cloth; red tape; unwrought silk, of glowing colours; sewing needles, of the commonest kind; looking-glasses, no matter however small, at a penny or twopence each in England; earthenware with figures, plain ware would not pay; the coarsest kind of red camlet scarfs; jugs and hardware of the most common description, but stout; foolscap paper of the coarsest kind, if it did not let the ink through: beads, I think, are sold as cheap here by the Arabs as they are in England; sheets of tin; tin pots and cups; brass gilt rings for the fingers, arms, and ankles; as also ear-rings; copper and brass pots, the more figures the better; paper and wooden snuff-boxes of the commonest sort.

These Africans keep up the appearance of religion. They pray five times a day. They seldom take the trouble to wash before prayers, except in the morning; but they go through the motions of washing, clapping their hands on the ground as if in water, and muttering a prayer. This done, as if they had washed, they untie their breeches and let them fall off; then, facing the east, let the sleeves of their larger shirt, or robe, fall over their hands, and assuming at the same time a grave countenance, begin by calling out, in an audible voice, 'Allahu Akber!' etc. kneeling down and touching the ground with the forehead. When they have finished repeating this prayer, they sit down, leaning over on the left thigh and leg, and count or pass the beads through their fingers. All their prayers and religious expressions are in Arabic; and I may say without exaggeration, taking Negroes and Fellatas together, that not one in a thousand know what they are saying. All they know of their religion is to repeat their prayers by rote in Arabic, first from sunrise to sunset in the Rhamadan, and a firm belief that the goods and chattels, wives and children of all people differing with them in faith, belong to them; and that it is quite lawful in any way to abuse, rob, or kill an unbeliever. Of the Fellatas, I should suppose about one in ten are able to read and write. They believe, they say, in predestination; but it is all a farce; they show not the least of such belief in any of their actions.