Refugees in Africa (1490-1820)

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The history of Africa is marked by human mobility. Migration involves the movement of individuals or groups and their settlement, whether forced or deliberate, in the more-or-less long term, in a given territory. The great ethnic and linguistic diversity in Africa is a consequence of migration processes taking place over time-- These movements had demographic, political and cultural impacts in the long run, and contributed to the expansion of African Empires, including the Moroccan and Borno sultanates and the Kingdom of Kongo. From Bantu migrations to trans-Atlantic slave trade, not to mention Pilgrimage to Mecca, this ceaseless flux was configured by empires' expansion, violence, trade, environmental changes and religious identities. The departure of populations from their homelands was motivated by push and pull factors, while migrants' status and identities changed continuously.

A large portion of these movements involve people who can be fully or partially classified as refugees. Scholars often associate refugees with forced migration. But most refugee movements are partially voluntary. Even when the circulation of refugees was largely controlled by their aggressors, the majority of refugees undertook their journeys by their own means, and decided when and where to go. The coercive aspect of the push reduced their choices but what differentiated their mobility from that of enslaved people, prisoners or captives was their agency. The mobility of refugees does not differ, in some ways, from other kinds of migration: refugees, too, respond to pull and push factors and Refugee mobility could be collective or individual. Renowned figures like the scholar Andag Muhammad al-Kabir in sixteenth-century Walat was a refugee from Timbuktu.[1]

The refugee became a category, referring to a legal status only in the twentieth century. However, a significant number of mobilities in early modern Africa fully or partially fit the modern definition of refugee. Indeed, the refugee seems to be everywhere and nowhere in the historiography of pre-colonial Africa. Scholars of refugee studies and historians have often

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[1] Allan George Bernard Fisher and Humphrey J. Fisher, , *Slavery in the History of Muslim Black Africa* (London: Hurst, 2001), 2.

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failed to acknowledge their presence, even in recent publications dedicated to the refugees in the nineteenth-century central Sahel. As Kopytoff argued, the short lived nature of refugee identity might explain this neglect. When resettled at the fringes of mature regional metropoles, in societies still in formation, short-lived social formations easily became invisible as origin myths were reformulated. This does not mean that refugees were not considered as such in precolonial African societies. The Islamic concept of *hijra*, referring to the forced migration of Prophet Muhammad to Medina-- as well as the one of the early Muslim Meccan community that sought refuge in the Christian Kingdom of Aksum (Ethiopia)--was commonly used as a narrative reference for refugee experiences in African Islamic societies, hiding other political or social dynamics.

The word refugee refers to the place chosen for temporary or permanent resettlement. Places could offer refuge because of their geographical position (forests, mountains, swamps), their socio-political institutions (a city or a state), or their historical occupation by previous refugees coming from a shared cultural, political or social background. The term refugee refers also to the action of fleeing danger, whether posed by political power, a disease or a climatic event. Environmental and political pressures resulted in persecutions on the basis of race, religion, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. Climatic changes, such as the Little Ice Age (LIA), generated climate refugees, although the links between migration and environment are broader than the term implies. Environmental changes might out force practitioners of one occupation while attracting others. Leaving could be precipitated by an immediate or close danger, such as a slaving raid, a royal edict or a drought. It could also be anticipated, as in the context of a growing slave trade. In that case, fear and rumours were important in motivating displacement.[2]

There are many pitfalls in compiling a history of African refugees. The movements of refugees are not always well documented. Current knowledge is mainly based on oral traditions and narratives of origins that are difficult to interpret, while relevant texts are limited. In African oral traditions, push factors figure prominently as explanation. Histories of migration of particular groups and individuals often reveal more about the authors' moral journeys than their actual circulations. Individual and collective stories often tell of ancestors arriving from different areas in different periods. These narratives present ancestors as war or famine

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[2] Philip Marfleet, "Refugees and History: Why We Must Address the Past," *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 26, 3(2007): 136-148; Uwe Lübken, "Chasing a Ghost? Environmental Change and Migration in History," *Global Environment* 9 (2012): 5-23.

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refugees, as disgruntled kin group segments, or as losers in succession struggles within kin groups.

Refugees mark the territories and populations they encounter, whether their presence was temporary or permanent and the populations receiving them typically possessed some perception of these migrants. The encounter between the two changed both identities. The integration of refugees changed the way host societies viewed migrants' region of origin, influencing over time the political, economic and cultural relationships between the two.

This chapter focuses on early modern Africa, from the end of the fifteenth century to the very beginning of the nineteenth century. It surveys several major historical events and climate episodes: the LIA, the expulsion of Muslims and Jews from the Iberian Peninsula, and the apex of trans-Atlantic, trans-Saharan and trans-Indian ocean slave trades. It includes North and Sub-Saharan Africa. The chapter explores the causes and consequences of refugee migrations from a threefold perspective: the impact of climate on human mobility; the imperial politics that created refugees and the way expanding empires managed refugees flows; and the effects on African landscapes, cultures and societies.

From Medieval Drought to Little Ice Age

The early modern history of Africa starts in a peculiar moment of climatic history, known as the LIA. The LIA was initiated by a major shift in several of the most important atmospheric circulation patterns on Earth, including the Northern Annular Mode, the Intertropical Convergence Zone, the West African Monsoon, and the El Nino–Southern Oscillation, between 1400 and 1800. The origins of this global phenomenon are still being debated, but climatologists have explored its African consequences since 1979.[3]

Beginning in the Middle Ages and continuing to the end of the early modern period, we see a shift from a globally warm and dry period, to a cooler period (LIA) that peaked between 1500 and 1800. In Africa, the changes generated by the LIA were regional rather than continent-wide: some regions experiencing a cooler, wetter climate, others faced severe droughts. In the tropical margin of the Sahara and farther south, the climate became generally wetter. In the Malawi basin, the LIA dry period was instead "marked by episodes of unusually cold winters

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[3] Michael E. Mann and others, "Global Signatures and Dynamical Origins of the Little Ice Age and Medieval Climate Anomaly," *Science* 326 (2009): 1256-1260.

or cool summers lasting for a few decades centred on 1600, 1690 and 1820."[4] The Sudanese area, between the coast and the Sahel, experienced a cool and wet phase, while the Middle East, the Ethiopian highlands, Madagascar, South Africa, the Gold Coast, Sahel and the Cameroon/Congo region became warmer and drier. In Uganda, however, drought was more severe during 1450-1680 than during 1720-1840.[5]

The analysis of lake levels in East Africa reveals these regional variations on the hydrography, the topography and the main atmospheric circulation patterns. Lakes Naivasha, Victoria, Abiyata, Abhé and Challa faced wet conditions in easternmost equatorial Africa. On the opposite, lakes Edward, Tanganyika and crater lakes in western Uganda suggest that central equatorial Africa experienced prolonged droughts. These peculiar climatic trends had transregional impacts, especially on the Nile, Chad and Niger hydrographic systems. The droughts in the Ethiopian highlands and the East African lakes affected the fertility of Sudan and Egypt. In the central and western Sahel, we observe the opposite phenomenon: in a context of arid climate, lake Chad reached its highest levels and Timbuktu was regularly flooded. The rivers that fed the lake and the Niger inner delta took their sources from the south, out of regions that were facing wetter climatic conditions.[6]

In many regions of Africa, multi-decade periods of unusual climate extremes and variability severely impacted African societies and provided the ground to mass migrations or transfers of populations, favouring mobilities at regional and continental level. In the Eastern Mediterranean, climate alternated freezing winters and spring droughts, bringing famines and epidemics. Between 1500 and 1840, episodes of persistent aridity were reported in oral and written records in North Africa, the region of the Great Lakes, the Horn of Africa and the Sahel. Several of these climatic events impacted multiple regions of the continent simultaneously, fostering social, political and economic instability that provoked migrations and displacements. In 1543-1544, 1637-1640 and 1701-1705, the Ethiopian royal chronicles, the Bornoan

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[4] Erik T. Brown and Thomas C. Johnson, "Coherence between tropical East African and South American records of the Little Ice Age," *Geochemistry Geophysics Geosystems*, 6, (12), 2005. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1029/2005GC000959.

[5] Dirk Verschuren, "Decadal and century-scale climate variability in tropical Africa during the past 2000 years," 139-158 in *Past Climate Variability through Europe and Africa* eds. Richard W, Battarbee, Francoise Gasse and Catherine E. Stickley (Dordrecht: Springer, 2004); J.M. Russell and T.C. Johnson, "Little Ice Age drought in equatorial Africa: Intertropical Convergence Zone migrations and El Niño–Southern Oscillation variability," *Geology* 35, 1 2007); 21-24.

[6] Fekri A. Hassan,"Historical Nile Floods and Their Implications for Climatic Change," *Science* 212, (1981): 1142-1145; Gijs De Cort and others, "Late-Holocene and recent hydroclimatic variability in the central Kenya Rift Valley: The sediment record of hypersaline lakes Bogoria, Nakuru and Elementeita," *Palaeogeography, Palaeoclimatology, Palaeoecology* 388 (2013): 69-80.

kingslists and the *Tarikh al-Sudan* from Timbuktu all mention a drought that covered the whole Sahel, from Mauritania to the Red Sea. In the summer of 1621, the Luo nyarubanga drought from the Great Lakes region had all along the course of the Nile until Egypt.[7]

The correlation between climatic variability and population's mobility was already recorded during the shift between the Medieval Warm Period and the LIA. The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were marked by the arrival of Arab groups from southern Egypt in a large area starting from Sudan up to lake Chad. This migration, favoured by the Mamluks, provoked the fall of the Nubian kingdom of Maqurra. In the fifteenth century, oral traditions from the lake Chad area report that a regional drought had forced the Fulani populations to move their villages to the dried part of Lake Chad. The return of the swollen rivers, in the end of that century, drowned all of their villages.[8]

During the early modern period, several migrations resulted from climatic change. In the seventeenth century, the Bambara migration to the inner delta of the Niger is connected with the previously mentioned droughts. In the Great Lake region, most of the survivors from the *Luo nyarubanga* were forced to flee to other regions. Other migration movements were clearly documented as the multiple result of climatic variations and eco-political changes. In seventeenth- century Ashante, market prices rose to the point that people were about to abandon their homes. In nineteenth century Zimbabwe, Zambia and Mozambique, documents record the country as ravaged by disease and drought, after the wars with the Portuguese. This combination of devastating political circumstances and worsening environmental conditions forced the so-called Karange migrations.[9]

In other contexts, the correlation between climate instability and increased mobility still needs to be investigated. For example, the LIA might explain the migration waves from Borno towards the Volta basin, the Mandara mountains and the Hausa countries, that took place in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. When the Borno sultanate experienced severe drought, its southern neighbours had a cooler climate that coincided with the rise of Islamic states, such as Wandala and Baguirmi. Several oral testimonies show that Borno merchants,

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[7] Richard Pankhurst, *An Introduction to the Economic History of Ethiopia from Early Times to 1800*, (London: Lalibela House, 1961); Dierk Lange, Le Diwan des Sultans du (Kanem-) Bornu: Chronologie et histoire d'un Royaume Africain, (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1977); Michel Abitbol, *Tombouctou et les Arma. De la conquête marocaine du Soudan nigérien en 1591 à l'hégémonie de l'Empire Peul du Macina en 1833* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1979).

[8] Jean-Claude Zeltner, *Histoire des Arabes sur les rives du lac Tchad* (Paris: Karthala, 2002).

[9] Innocent Pikirayi, *The Zimbabwe Culture: Origins and Decline of Southern Zambezian States* (Walnut Creek, Altamira Press, 2002).

scholars and members of the elite court migrated along the trade routes that lead to the kola nut producing regions, as far as the Ashante country. This migration changed the human composition of many regions and relocated trade routes. Several localities are said to have been created by migrants from Borno, such as Dallol Mauri, 150 km west of Sokoto, or Bakura, 100 km south-east of Sokoto. Other migrants from Borno settled further south and participated in the creation or strengthening of political entities like in Biu. In the course of time, other groups of immigrants from Borno formed the greatest concentration of migrants in Hausa, Nupe, and Yorubaland.[10]

The transition between the eighteenth and the nineteenth century was also characterised by severe climatic conditions. In 1779, Tripoli and its countryside were decimated by plague and famine, which killed nearly 80,000 people in five years and caused the emigration of some 60,000 Bedouins to Tunisia. In 1785, in the south of Morocco, a migration movement from the north depopulated the countryside, which had been decimated by famine and disease.

The LIA also had positive consequences where climatic conditions favoured some areas. In Yorubaland, the drought episodes created favourable conditions for population movements in the areas well-watered by the river Osun. In the Great Lake region, populations congregated near rivers and lakes, favouring the establishment of centralized states. The climatic cataclysm turned Pakwac-Pawir area, close to Lake Albert in Uganda, into a refuge area for a host of people with different languages and cultures. In consequence, the Buganda kingdom was a region where people sought refuge, thanks to its better geographical and climatic position. In central Sahel, the Wandala and Baguirmi sultanates gained more autonomy in the seventeenth century that led to their independence from the Borno sultanate, probably a consequence of the cooling period in Cameroun and East Nigeria. In south Africa, the period from 1600 to 1800 was warm and wet, leaving several populations to establish agricultural settlements in central South Africa.[11]

African Empire Expansions

Climatic variations during the LIA created imbalances between dried areas and wetter places, between refuge regions and disaster-stricken areas, directly altering state and imperial power

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[10] Kalli Alkali Yusef Gazali, *The Kanuri in Diaspora, The Contributions of Kanem-Borno Ulama to Islamic Education in Nupe and Yorubalands* (Lagos: CSS Bookshops Ltd., 2005).

[11] Thomas N. Huffman, "Archaeological evidence for climatic change during the last 2000 years in Southern Africa," *Quaternary International* 33 (1996): 55-60.

balances. While some collapsed or entered into decay, deserted by their starving populations, others took advantage of the ensuing human mobility. Political actors had an active role in movement dynamics and the emergence of refugees: environment only shaped the ground for human decisions and actions, and the push and pull that would motivate refugee mobilities were largely the result of both top-down and bottom-top decisions. As in Europe and Asia, the elaboration of the refugee status in Africa was related to the consolidation of states and empires. Newly founded or reinforced states sought to provoke, control or limit population movements in order to consolidate their influences on space and populations. The political reshaping of Africa, along with the Ottoman and European integration in African politics and with the LIA, generated new waves of forced migrations.

Several examples in African history show that Empires took advantage of refugees or forced migrations. They provoked migrations by increasing military or ecological pressures over neighbouring populations and lands, with a twofold objective: to extend their influence and erase competitors. The departure of populations, through slave trades or forced displacement left space for remaining or new, incoming populations. Defeated rulers, with their relatives and supporters, sought new places to escape to and, if possible, to dominate, while ordinary people sought their own more modest refuge from the clash of opposing armies. Hence, behind the stories of the building and the flowering of African kingdoms, great and small, stand political upheaval, oppression, conquest, raids, pillage, and the displacement of a significant number of people.

One of the best documented flows of refugees in early modern Africa was that of the Jews and Muslims after their expulsion from the Iberian peninsula.[12] The Andalusian refugees, expelled in 1492 and 1609 by Spain and Portugal, had a significant cultural and political impact in North Africa and in the Sahel. They contributed, directly and indirectly, to the rise and fall of empires on both sides of the Sahara. After the defeat of Granada by Castile, Muslims and Jews were progressively expelled from the Iberian Peninsula. The north African historian al-Maqqari, of Andalusian origin, related in the seventeenth century that Muslims left their homelands with their families, taking with them their movable possessions but not their jewelry. However, the migration was gradual and driven by Spanish lawmakers. If the Castilians first provided transport to Muslims willing to leave, after the 1500s the policy was to block emigration. By then, the Muslims remaining in Spain were very few and most did not escape. In 1501, the

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[12] Mary E. Perry, *The Handless Maiden. Moriscos and the Politics of Religion in Early Modern Spain* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005).

Spanish crown defeated a first Muslim rebellion and required a new capitulation. The Muslims of Spain had to choose between conversion, slavery or leaving the country as a refugee to Portugal, France or the Islamic world. Several coastal communities tried to organise escape by boat, like the inhabitants from Teresa. The numbers of refugees increased during the sixteenth century, as persons forcefully converted to Christianism --the Moriscos-- had to flee because of the Crown's pressure. The maritime refugee route never really ended, though it is hard to quantify: after the Apuljarras rebellion of 1568-1571, Moriscos contacted skippers to take them out of the Peninsula, from unwatched beaches. By the end of the sixteenth century, the Andalusian population was already a noticeable minority in North Africa. In 1609, the Spanish crown signed the edict expelling all Moriscos from the kingdom. Probably around 300,000 Moriscos left Spain, most of them heading to North Africa, especially to Morocco, Algiers and Tunis. Leaving most of their belongings behind, numerous families embarked in Spanish ports like Alicante, to north African cities. If many of them suffered death or spoliation at the hands of Arab tribes, many Andalusian refugees succeeded in joining their compatriots or came under the protection of local rulers.

In 1492, Spanish Jews were also subject to a royal decree that required them to choose between expulsion and conversion to Catholicism. In 1497, they were expelled from Portugal. Many took refuge in the lands of Islam. From the beginning of the fifteenth century, large Judaic communities settled in Tuwat oasis, a gateway to western African commerce, and Tlemcen, nicknamed the Jerusalem of the West. They also joined Jewish communities in Moroccan cities and desert oases such as Tafilalt, the Sus, the Dra'a Valley, and the Wad Nun. Before they became victim of pogorms in the Sahara, they were important actors of the trans-Saharan trade. They relocated to the northern cities of Morocco, to the oases of the Sahara and probably to the southern shore of the Sahara.

Muslims and Jews from Spain and Portugal affected the economic and political life of North African states and empires. In the Tunis and Algiers *beylicats*, the Andalus participated in the economic growth of the region. Their skills in agriculture and crafting led to the development of a flourishing silk industry in seventeenth-century Algiers and in the exploitation of the fertile lands in northern Tunisia. Although the *beys* of Algiers and Tunis took advantage of the Andalusian community, the Moroccan sultans mostly benefited from their contributions. Thanks to the military and technical skills of the Andalusian community, Moroccan rulers built a regional empire, expanding to the cities of Timbuktu, Djenne and Gao, on the Niger river.

A considerable number of Andalusian refugees fled to Morocco, clustering in specific quarters or village communities. They settled along the coast, where they engaged in corsair activities or were recruited onto the Moroccan armies. The Jews and Muslims of Granada also became trusted technicians, merchants and consultants to the Moroccan administrations. Accustomed to handling firearms and resentful against the Spanish, they reinforced Moroccan military strength on land and on sea, and helped modernize the Kingdom. Andalusian soldiers played a crucial role in many battles, such as the battle of the Three Kings, in 1578, or the conquest of Songhay sultanate, on the Niger.

In 1590, a Moroccan army led by a Renegade from Las Cuevas left Marrakesh for the Songhay sultanate, the successor of the Mali sultanate. With 3000 to 4000 soldiers, he conquered the Songhay sultanate and established a Pachalik with Timbuktu as capital. The original Moroccan army was predominantly Andalusian, who played a crucial role in this conquest. The Andalusian component of the Moroccan army went back to Morocco and was replaced by Southern Moroccan Saharan troops. The last Andalusian reinforcements from Morocco arrived in 1618. However, some families remained influential among the Arma elite in Timbuktu, and several seventeenth-century Pashas originated from the Iberian Peninsula.

The Moroccan conquest of Songhay created refugees in a chain reaction in the Niger valley. The Songhay ruler fled eastwards with his followers towards Kebbi. This movement preoccupied the Moroccan ruler Ahmad al-Mansur, who wrote to the ruler of Kebbi. He warned him not to help the Songhay refugees who fled Moroccan invasion. Al-Mansur's concern regarding refugees impacted trans-Saharan diplomacy as well as trans-Sahelian diplomacy. The early modern history of the Borno sultanate, in present-day Nigeria, offers a striking example of the intertwined relation between politics and refugee mobility. After the Sefuwa's dynasty settlement on the western shore of lake Chad, in the fourteenth century, many people fled their military and demographic pressure. Migrant populations who had settled in Borno during the previous centuries, were pushed further south-west, towards the Mandara and Bauchi mountains or in the Gongola valley. Demographic upheavals had, in turn, led to further migration, particularly to- and from the mountains.

The relative freedom of movement of populations within many parts of Africa does not mean that political power had no role in migration. Authorities accompanied migratory flows, while trying to organise them. In the Central Sahel, political authorities in the Lake Chad Basin organised forced or negotiated displacements of groups and individuals. Such top-down migration policies emerged during wars initiated by Islamic rulers in the area. These migrations

added to the forced displacements, subsidiary movements (such as women accompanying armies) and slave raiding. The military campaigns of the Borno sultan Idris b. 'Ali (1564-1596), as related by his head imam Ahmad b. Furtu, detailed some of these movements.

In 1564-68, campaigns against the Saw provoked a migration of survivors towards the southeast, on the banks of Lake Chad and towards the Mandara mountains, in present-day Nigeria and Cameroon. Ten years later, during another war between Borno and Kanem, both sultans forcibly moved populations to their respective territories. Some regroupings were negotiated, others were the result of the rampaging of one's own homeland. Ahmad b. Furtu reported then that when the Borno sultan ravaged a region in Kanem, its populations were forced to move to Borno. Such top-down migrations contributed to the economic, demographic, and military development of the Sultanate of Borno. It was preceded by a scorched earth policy on the margins of Borno, which created a demographic imbalance in favour of the Sultanate. At the same time, the margins of the Borno became deserted territories, emptied of their populations.[13]

The push and pull of refugees following the expansion of empires are reported in many parts of Africa. As Jeffrey Herbst states, it was often easier to escape from rulers than to fight them. In the mid-fifteenth century, the reign of Oba Ewuare of Benin was so unpopular that it generated waves of protest migrations. In the eighteenth century, Muslims fleeing Atlantic slave raiding led to the creation of empire and a trade crossroads in the Fouta Djalon mountains. The same phenomenon could be observed along the Gold Coast. In the seventeenth century, the growth of the Allada kingdom, in the present-day Republic of Benin, triggered the creation of new communities formed by bands of refugees. A century later, refugees from Allada, which had been destroyed by Dahomey, resettled in turn at Porto Novo, which rapidly became the principal outlet to the coast for Oyo. Aowin in south Ghana and Ivory Coast, regained its independence from Denkyira during the last decade of the seventeenth century and, strengthened by the influx of refugees fleeing the Ashanti-Denkyira wars, was able to take control of gold and ivory-producing regions during the first decade of the eighteenth century. Elsewhere, the rise of the Buganda kingdom, in the eighteenth century, provoked an increasing flux of refugees in the neighbouring countries. In Angola, many runaway slaves fled from

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[13] Ibrahim Waziri,"The pattern of migrations of the Chadic groups in the western and south-western parts of Chad basin", 253-269 in *Migration et mobilité dans le bassin du lac Tchad. Actes du XIIIe colloque international du Réseau Méga-Tchad Maroua, 31 octobre-3 novembre 2005*, eds. Henri. Tourneux and Noé. Woïn (Marseille: IRD Editions, 2009). .

seventeenth century Luanda and joined Queen Njinga to fight the Portuguese in the city's hinterland.[14]

Internal struggles also created refugees. Competition and conflict within dynasties or factions often led defeated parties or opponents to flee imperial capitals. After the Songhay and Moroccan conquests of Timbuktu, respectively in 1465 and 1591, many scholarly families who did not support the new power were forced to leave. The city of Walata served as their haven, temporarily revitalizing the Saharan city and contributing to its renewed literary production. Conversely, a seventeenth century Moroccan cleric crossed the Sahara and settled in Timbuktu, seeking the protection of the king of Segu after being driven out by the Moroccan sultan. In Borno, several oral accounts relate the escapes of scholars and nobles from Borno, after confrontations with the sultans. The Sokoto sultan Muhammad Bello (1781-1837), in his *Infaq al-Maysur*, reports the story of a Sufi mystic who had to flee to Baguirmi after a confrontation with the sultan 'Umar b. Idris (1619-1639). By the end of the eighteenth century, one of the Borno sultan's sons fled his homeland with his followers after a disastrous military expedition against Mandara. He established himself southwards in Nupe, where he founded Lafia, the capital of Nasarawa state. Further East, the Fung sultan Badi Abu Shullukh (1721-1762), in present-day Sudan, condemned the *ahl al-usul* (men of high lineage and rank) to banishment and, with the support of the Nuba slave army and Fur refugees, exercised arbitrary power. In this case, refugees were chased by other refugees.

Fleeing Empires, Changing Societies and Landscapes: The Age of Refugees

The role of the slave army in banishing the Fung elites raises the question of the relationship between slavery and the rise of refugees in early modern Africa. The growth of Atlantic, Indian Ocean and Saharan slave trade increased the mobility of people inside large parts of Africa, with a boom of runaway enslaved people and populations fleeing slavery. Slavery led to a variety of mobilities: forced displacement, flight, repurchase and return of former captives and slave in exchange for ransom. These marginalized people, like refugees, were pushed into marginal lands, provoking ecological or economic imbalances. They were at risk of becoming

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[14] A. I. Asiwaju, "Migrations as Revolt: The Example of the Ivory Coast and the Upper Volta Before 1945," *Journal of African History* 17 (1976): 577-594; Roquinaldo Ferreira, "Slave Flights and Runaway Communities in Angola (Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries)," *Anos 90*, 21/40 (2014): 65-90.

victims of further environmental change and consequent flight. This domino effect created a fertile ground for the elaboration of new identities and new political and cultural communities.[15]

Slavery and its associated mobilities forced people to desert many regions. When rural economies declined, refugees sought havens in forests, mountains or swamps, developing self-reliance through subsistence farming, as in seventeenth century kingdom of Kongo, or reverting to nomadic hunting and gathering, by leaving the savannah for the forest. In the mid-1640s, the Portuguese Antonio de Teruel described the hasty abandonment of Kongo villages and cultures, because of the extortions of the Duke of Mbamba. Forest expanded in Congo and Gabon as populations fled slave raiding in the interior of the slave coast. In Senegambia, Joola populations took refuge from slave raiding in mangrove areas. In Upper Gambia, late-eighteenth century traveller Mungo Park described a landscape dotted with ruined villages. The Bedik communities, whose traditions report their fleeing from slave raiding, installed themselves in villages in the hills.

The expansion of slave raiding favoured the development of depredated landscapes, with the implementation of vegetal fortifications, from Sudan to Senegal. In the Mandara mountains and the plains of the Sudano-Sahelian zone, original social formations and modes of agricultural production took advantage of plants and trees to construct natural fortifications. Installations of defensive fences composed of thorn bushes developed in latitudes where tree vegetation was scarce. In North Cameroun, the German traveller Gustav Nachtigal reported in 1872 that the top of cotton trees (*Ceiba pentandra*) functioned as shelters against slave raids in the Baguirmi sultanate.[16]

Demographic change sometimes created a vacuum for other mobilities. Refugee movements included the migration of tribes who were adjusting their migratory routes. In the sixteenth-century Horn of Africa, the progress of the Oromo people in Ethiopia was favoured by the wars between Muslims and Christians. In the Timbuktu region, the eighteenth-century

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[15] Richard Oslisly and others "Climatic and cultural changes in the west Congo Basin forests over the past 5000 years," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B*, 368 (2013): 1-10; Matthew v. Kroot and Cameron Gokee, "Histories and Material Manifestations of Slavery in the Upper Gambia River Region: Preliminary Results of the Bandafassi Regional Archaeological Project," *Journal of African Diaspora Archaeology and Heritage* 7, 2 (2018): 74-104.

[16] Christian Seignobos, "Des Fortifications Végétales dans la Zone Soudano-Sahélienne (Tchad et Nord-Cameroun)," *Cahiers de l'ORSTOM ser. Sciences Humaines*, 17, 3-4 (1980): 191-222; Lee White and others, "L'Okoumé (*Aucoumea klaineana*): Expansion et déclin d'un arbre pionnier en Afrique centrale atlantique au cours de l'Holocène," 399-411 in *Dynamique à long terme des écosystèmes forestiers intertropicaux, eds. Michel Servant and Simone Servant Vildary* (Paris: IRD UNESCO, 2000).

migration of the Tuaregs, because of climatic pressure and plague epidemics, created new transhumance patterns between the Niger river and the northern pastures.

Whether they settled in mountains, forests, savannahs, deserts or swamps, refugees crossed cultural, political and ecological borders. They brought new techniques, ideas, goods, crops and diseases, increased the circulation of ideas, created networks and generated new societies. Displaced people melted into already existing societies or created ethnically ambiguous marginal societies. In the Lake Chad basin, individuals and groups of refugees left the plains to become temporary or permanent refugees in mountain communities, creating geographical boundaries that were also cultural, as the mountains and plain societies were radically different, though porous one to the other.

If the incorporation of refugees could be done through the institution of slavery, as in eighteenth-century Ivory Coast, many host societies were fully or partially inhabited by former runaway slaves or refugees. They were integrated through religious, diasporic or economic networks, and created new experiences of social organization. In the context of slave raiding, many communities created semi-autonomous villages, bound together through an egalitarian ethos that characterized refugee camps or cities. In Senegambia, among the Serèèr people of the Saluum Delta, north of the Gambia river, villages welcomed refugees from other communities, fiercely defended their autonomy, and struggled against the Jolof state and Islam. In the sixteenth century, the city of Amsaka, in present-day Nigeria, was characterised by the absence of a leader as well as a so-called multi-ethnic character. The Borno chronicler Ahmad b. Furtu stated that the people of Amsaka were not of one tribe but were a mixed people, of different kinds, and they had no single chief. (The description supports the hypothesis that the city of Amsaka served as a place of refuge for populations escaping from raids from the neighbouring Islamic states.) Without extrapolating, it is possible to draw a parallel with the social organization and identity-building of the contemporary towns of refugees, as described in Tanzania by Lisa Malkki. The city repeatedly served as a place of refuge, benefiting from its advantageous geographical position. Today, the Mandara populations who settled there during the eighteenth century tell that the city was inhabited by Kanuri who left for fear of being enslaved.[17]

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[17] Paul Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Dierk Lange, *A Sudanic Chronicle: The Bornu Expeditions of Idris Alauma (1564-1576), according to the account of Ahmad b. Furţū* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1987); Lisa Malkki, "National Geographic: the Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees," *Cultural Anthropology*,7, 1 (1992): 24-44.

Cities were thus both places of refuge and of emigration. Through family, professional and religious networks, members of patrician families could move from one city to another according to changing political circumstances. In the sixteenth century, in the city of Walata, the Sila family, who originated in this city but had moved to Timbuktu several generations before, returned to the city as refugees from the Maghribi invasion of Songhay in 1591. Not only the big families of scholars, but also common people, returned to their original homelands. Timbuktu and Jenne, for example, hosted a floating population that lived in its suburbs. These suburbs grew through raids in the countryside and with droughts. In March 1754, the Bambara chief Dousika led several military raids around Jenné. The populations of Gomitogo, Soa, Pana, Kossoumé and Diéou came to take refuge in the city while it was still in the hands of the Arma. In Timbuktu, where the nomadic Tamashagh-speaking Tuareg and, later, the Arabic speaking Barabìsh, appeared in large numbers during the caravan seasons and at times of drought or instability, internal struggles among the various Tuareg and Barábish clans often led some of those defeated to settle in Timbuktu. These new populations could destabilise the political and economic balance within cities, but they also boosted urban cultural and economic life. In North Africa, Tunis and Rabat hosted an Andalusian quarter; Salé flourished with Andalusians who actively organised piracy against Christian powers in the Mediterranean.[18]

Runaway slaves and refugees brought new ideas and competences to their new homelands. Some of them reached high positions in courts or armies thanks to their linguistic or writing knowledge. In 1805, an African ruler named Caculo Cacahenda employed as a scribe a runaway slave who was literate in Portuguese and charged him with diplomatic and commercial correspondence between Cacahenda and Luanda. Refugees also represented their homelands, contributing to the improvement or deterioration of their image in hosting lands. The settlement of part of the Borno elite in other parts of the Sahel and central Sudan contributed in the following centuries to a positive image of Borno developing there.

In North Africa, the traumatic experience of expulsion of the Andalusians durably affected public opinion against the Spanish and Portuguese Crowns. The arrival of thousands of Andalusian refugees also affected the intellectual, artistic and trading elites. A former *qadi* (judge) of Granada, Ibn al-Azraq, settled in Cairo at the Mamluk court and became a *mufti* in Jerusalem. The circulation of Andalusian refugees favoured the Islamic renewal in North Africa

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[18] Elias N. Saad, *Social History of Timbuktu, the Role of Muslim Scholars and Notables 1400-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Timothy Cleaveland, *Becoming Walāta: A History of Saharan Social Formation and Transformation* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2002).

and, by extension, in the Sahara and the Sahel. At the eve of the Muslim year 1000 (1591), it is likely that millenarian ideas were brought to the Moroccan court by Andalusian Muslims, while many of the *ulama* of Fez, who had adopted Sufi brotherhoods, were from Andalusia. This Sufi revival expanded into the Sahara, and sufi ideas were present in Mauritania and Lake Chad from the end of the sixteenth century into the seventeenth century. In the Mandara Mountains, the Borno people settled in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the towns of Bazza, Mubi, Kerawa and Boulo, favouring the conversion to Islam to the Mansara rulers. In the following century, the rise of a slave trade along the coast of Senegambia fostered the propagation of reformist Islamic ideologies, through the circulation of Muslim activists. Many families of Marabouts left the coastal regions and the Senegal River valley to take refuge inland, particularly in Bundu and Fouta-Djalon. The Muslim revolutions in these two regions at the beginning of the eighteenth century were the consequence of this forced mobility.[19]

Conclusions

Every part of Africa bears histories of persons or groups displaced because of climatic or political change, which have been presented in this chapter from interdisciplinary perspectives. Combining political, environmental and economic analysis reveals numerous causes of the more-or-less voluntary movements of men, women and children escaping droughts, political oppression, slave raids, imperial expansion, and religious persecution. These factors were profoundly linked, entangled and, in some places, difficult to differentiate one from the other.

By leaving their homelands and looking for a safer place to live, by changing their way of life and confronting their cultures and identities with those of their hosts, refugees radically changed the natural landscapes, cities, and political orders of the continent. From Spanish villages to Moroccan cities; from plains to mountains; from cities to countryside, refugees travelled long distances, radically changing their habitat and ecosystems. Becoming a refugee entailed a radical transformation and shift of identity, political and economic status. Refugee resilience showed itself the creative answers they found and was itself noteworthy.

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[19] Mercedes Garcia-Arenal, "Sainteté et pouvoir dynastique au Maroc: la résistance de Fès au pouvoir sa'dien," *Annales. Économies, sociétés, civilisations* 45, 4 (1990): 1019-1042; Lotfi A., "Dans la tourmente de l'exil: plaidoirie d'un morisque de Murcie installé à Tunis au XVIIe siècle," *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 79 (2009): 337-349; Remi Dewière, "L'évolution de la légitimité politique face à l'essor de l'islam confrérique au sultanat du Borno (XVIe-XIXe siècles)," *Journal of the History of Sufism* 7 (2018): 15-30.

The cases mentioned here reflect the local and transnational catalysts and consequences of the big waves of refugees that occurred during the first era of globalization. One of the most understudied catalysts, although perhaps the most influential, was the LIA. Extreme climatological events, such as floods or droughts, became more frequent; several areas experienced wetter climate while others faced exceptionally dry periods. This means the LIA was the direct cause of increased mobilities and the breakup of political equilibrium between regions. If the Sahel experienced severe droughts that destabilized and weakened the Arma Pachalik or the Borno sultanate, other states emerged in the South, where climate was more clement.

Human actions also fostered refugees movements in Africa. The expulsion of the Muslims and Jews from the Iberian Peninsula shuffled the political and cultural nexus in the Mediterranean, in North Africa and even in the Sahel, through the Moroccan invasion of Songhay and the diffusion of Sufi ideas to the south of the Sahara. The apex of slave raiding on the Atlantic coast emptied countryside and repopulated forests; the physiognomy of villages changed, and new states increased their influence thanks to the influx of refugees they hosted.

The presence of numerous families among refugees, as in the Andalusian case, raises the issue of gender in refugee mobility, as well as the place of refugee children, particularly regarding identity construction. Numerous oral histories relate marriages between migrants and elite women of the hosting society, as in the case of a Borno *ulama* marrying the ruler of Nalerigu's daughter in Mamprusi Volta basin. In more recent times, the reversed dynamic has been observed: in 1895, Wandala women, fleeing Rabeh's raids, stayed up in the mountains and married local men.[20]

Refugees faced ambivalent reactions from autochthonous populations at every level of society. They were seen both as a threat and as an opportunity, especially in Islamic societies. In Morocco, Oran or Tunis, the Andalusian refugees were often welcomed by political elites, who took advantage of their skills. However, there was a gap between the support from the religious and political elites and of the common people. For example, in the case of the Andalusians, their orthodoxy was called into doubt: the seventeenth century intellectual Muhammad Ibn Abd-al-Rafi al-Andalusi reports the difficulties Andalusians faced when

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[20] Scott MacEachern, *Searching for Boko Haram: A History of Violence in Central Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

installing themselves in North Africa. Consequently, the Andalusians were never truly integrated in North African societies.

This overview of refugee mobility in early modern Africa contributes to a better understanding of the political, cultural and economic developments of the nineteenth century and the links between African refugees in Africa and in the diaspora. As Toby Green states, these bonds connected the revolutions in America, like the Haitian revolution, and refugee communities in Sierra Leone and Fuuta Jaalo.

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