

**COURSE  
GUIDE**

**PAD 312**

**TRADITIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS IN NIGERIA**

**Course Team**      Mr. O. J. Babatunde (Course Writer/Developer)-  
NOUN  
Dr. Abdul hamidu abdullahi (Course Editor)-  
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria



**NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA**

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National Open University of Nigeria  
Headquarters  
University Village  
Plot 91, Cadastral Zone  
Nnamdi Azikiwe Expressway  
Jabi, Abuja

Lagos Office  
14/16 Ahmadu Bello Way  
Victoria Island, Lagos

e-mail: [centralinfo@nou.edu.ng](mailto:centralinfo@nou.edu.ng)

URL: [www.nou.edu.ng](http://www.nou.edu.ng)

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This course, PAD 312 Traditional Administrative System in Nigeria is a three (3) credit unit compulsory course for students studying Bachelor of Arts (B.A) in Public Administration and other related discipline.

Traditional Administrative System in Nigeria is both comprehensive and easy to understand, geared toward policy analysts and public managers.

This study material is aimed at students as well as practitioners in the fields of public administration, public policy, and various social sciences.

It provides a comprehensive review of the historical analysis of pre-colonial era and its political, social, economic, culture, judicial and administrative system of Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa – Fulani ethnic groups.

The attention was also on other groups in the present day North Central Nigeria and Southern Nigeria. The history of the various conquest undertaken by the various traditional rulers together rate of success and failure etc.

Exercises and pertinent examples are included to assist students in understanding the concepts presented in each module and unit. Despite this fact, this material is not intended to serve as a comprehensive work on public administration and traditional administrative system, the reviewer only present a wide variety of approaches for the students in the field of administration and management.

This course is meant to acquaint graduate students with the fundamentals of public administration and traditional administrative system. Students will be taught on the diversity of traditional administrative system from the precolonial era.

The course has been conveniently arranged for you in eighteen distinct but related units of study activities. In this course guide, you will find out what you need to know about the aims and objectives of the course, components of the course material, arrangement of the study units, assignments, and examinations.

## **COURSE GUIDE**

The purpose of this course is to present an examination of traditional administrative system in the precolonial era and how traditional rulers were able to run their various domain based on such system. The Areas

of focus include the centralised Kingdom such as the Hausa Fulani, Kanem Bornu, Oyo etc to the non-centralised such as the Ebiras, Tiv, Igbos, Igala, Benin Efik etc.

### **MEASURABLE LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Upon successful completion of these modules, you will be able to:

- Discuss the nature of culture and tradition within your locality.
- Analyse the nature of appointment or selection of traditional rulers of any of the kingdom we have discussed?
- Demonstrate your knowledge of the elements of culture using your locality as illustration.
- Evaluate the difference between traditional administrative system and the contemporary administrative system.

### **THE COURSE AIM**

The course is aimed at acquainting you with the basics of traditional administrative system before the emergence of public administration in Africa. It will enable you also know the culture, traditions, values, societal ethos that make up the ingredient of administration in the pre-colonial Nigeria. The course is relevant in identifying and explaining the evolutionary trends to the emergence of traditional rulers and institutions such as that of the Oyo Empire, Benin Kingdom, Sokoto Caliphate and Borno Empire. It will further enable you understand the reasons behind the continuous relevance of the traditional administration system in our contemporary democratic setting. And the place of traditional rulers as it is generally accepted that there is the existence of ‘duality’, made of the traditional administrative system based on indigenous social values and contexts, and the democratic system based on western democracy in Nigeria (ECA project paper, 2006: iii).

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT-EXERCISE (SAES)**

Two Self-assessment Exercises each are incorporated in the study material for each unit. Self-assessment Exercise helps students to be a realistic judge of their own performance and to improve their work. Promotes the skills of reflective practice and self-monitoring; Promotes academic integrity through student self-reporting of learning progress; Develops self-directed learning; Increases student motivation and Helps students develop a range of personal, transferrable skills.

## **SUMMARY**

Each Unit contained a summary of the entire unit. A summary is a brief statement or restatement of main points, especially as a conclusion to a work: a summary of a chapter. A brief is a detailed outline, by heads and subheads, of a discourse (usually legal) to be completed: a brief for an argument.

## **POSSIBLE ANSWERS TO SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE(S) WITHIN THE CONTENT**

The materials contained Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s) within the content. The possible Self-assessments answers enable you to understand how well you're performing in the contents. It is a way of analysing your work performance and any areas for growth. Reflecting on your strengths, weaknesses, values and accomplishments can help you determine what goals to work toward next.

## **COURSE MATERIAL**

The course material package is comprising of following Modules and unit structure:

### **MODULE 1**

- Unit 1            Traditional Administrative System
- Unit 2            Characteristic of Precolonial Traditional Administrative System
- Unit 3            Traditional Rulers in The Contemporary Nigeria

### **MODULE 2**

- Unit 1            The Kanem Bornu Empire
- Unit 2            Kanem- Bornu as an Empire
- Unit 2            Organisation of The Kanem- Bornu Empire
- Unit 3            The Last Phase of the Kanem-Bornu Empire
- Unit 5            The Sayfawa Dynasty

### **MODULE 3**

- Unit 1            The Hausa and the Fulani kingdom
- Unit 2            Growth and Organisation of the Hausa and the Fulani Kingdom
- Unit 3            Some Outstanding Hausa Rulers
- Unit 4            Fulani Conquest of Hausaland

**MODULE 4**

- Unit 1 The Origins of the Yoruba
- Unit 2 Rise and Expansion of Oyo Empire
- Unit 3 Government of Oyo Empire
- Unit 4 Strength and Survival of Oyo Empire
- Unit 5 Decline of Oyo Empire

**MODULE 5**

- Unit 1 The Origins of the Benin Kingdom
- Unit 2 The Rise of the Benin Kingdom
- Unit 3 The Cultural Heritage of the Benin Kingdom

**MODULE 6**

- Unit 1 The Origin of the Igbo
- Unit 2 Igbo System of Government

**MODULE 7**

- Unit 1 Origin of the Niger Delta
- Unit 2 The Peoples of Southern Nigeria

**MODULE 8**

- Unit 1 Some People of the North Central Nigeria
- Unit 2 The Ebira people
- Unit 3 The Igala Nation
- Unit 4 The Nupe Nation
- Unit 5 The Tiv People

**MAIN  
COURSE**

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**MODULE 1**

Unit 1	Traditional Administrative System
Unit 2	Characteristic of Precolonial Traditional Administrative System
Unit 3	Traditional Rulers in The Contemporary Nigeria

**UNIT 1 TRADITIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM****Unit Structure**

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 Concept of Traditional Administrative System
  - 1.3.1 Meaning of Culture
  - 1.3.2 Meaning of Tradition
- 1.4 Concept of Administration
  - 1.4.1 Administration
  - 1.4.2 Public Administration and Traditional Administration
- 1.5 Concept of Traditional Ruler
  - 1.5.1 The Traditional Ruler
  - 1.5.2 Traditional Administrative System
- 1.6 Summary
- 1.7 References/Further Readings/Web Resources
- 1.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)

**1.1 Introduction**

The study of traditional administrative system is embedded in the issues of culture and tradition. And all societies have their unique ways of doing things that are anchored on the culture and tradition. These traditions and culture manifest in the area of marriage, festival celebrations and other events as well as the system of administering the society. Thus, in this session we shall attempt to look at the concepts of culture and Tradition. Considering that, Nigeria's rich history and traditions led to the emergence of powerful and developed empires and kingdoms, which could serve as foundation for national consciousness and development.

As far back as history extends, human beings have always grouped themselves together into communities with each having a person or a collection to govern it. This was necessary to enable the community defend itself and ensure that customary law and order were maintained and disputes settled without fighting. This is the basics of traditional administrative system before the emergence of public administration in Africa. (Paul, Alih, & Audu, 2017) It will enable you know the culture,

traditions, values, societal ethos that make up the ingredient of administration in the pre-colonial Nigeria.



## 1.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the nature of culture and tradition within your locality.
- analyse the nature of appointment or selection of traditional rulers within your locality.
- demonstrate your knowledge of the elements of culture using your locality as illustration.
- evaluate the difference between traditional administrative system and the contemporary administrative system.



## 1.3 Concepts of Traditional Administrative System

### 1.3.1 Meaning of Culture

There is a seemingly consensus among scholars of different intellectual orientations that the term culture can be define in different ways.

First, it is referred to as the totality of the way of life of a people (Nwabueze, E. 2011:8). As such some scholars view culture as the totality of group expression, ahistorical process and a dynamic entity (Okpeh, & Gbegili,2013:4)

Culture can also be defined as the complex whole of man ‘s acquisition of knowledge, morals, beliefs, arts, customs, technology, traditions and skills which are shared and transmitted from generation to generation.

Taylor in his book, *Primitive Culture* has defined that culture is the complex which includes knowledge, belief, morals, art, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.

The above establish that cultures consist of five basic elements such as Belief (Ideas about how the world operates); Values (Ideas about the meaning of life); Norms and Sanctions (Guidelines for behaviour); Expressive Symbols (Material representations of ideas and values); and Language. These definitions points to the fact that culture can be material or non-material as it includes everything that is socially learnt and shared by the members of the society. Based on the above it

becomes clear that a people's over- all life patterns are conditioned by the adherence to a specific order peculiar to them. These then manifests through the channels of their belief system, justice system, behavioural patterns, feelings, emotions, morality, possessions and institutions. And it further validates the claim that culture is a social inheritance that gives structure to people's lives (Orngu,2016:15).

**Figure 1. cultural dancers**



### **Basic Elements of Culture**

Every society is unique because of the social heritage of culture which is the basis of the patterning of people 's behaviour. And the interaction of people in the society is on the basis of shared beliefs, customs, values and attitudes. Culture can also be viewed as the totality of group expression and cultural identity that is manifested through certain styles of clothing, totems, tattoos and other aesthetic markers. Other channels of group cultural expression are language, graphic arts, sculpture, drama, dance, music, rituals, etc. As a historical process and adynamic entity, culture is further viewed as a factor of development and the establishment of institutions on the basis of specific historical events. This relates to the interdependence of cultural and institutional factors in social transformation, political development and economic growth (Orngu,2016:15). Basically, cultures consist of five basic elements which include:

1. belief systems that are the Ideas about how the world operates;
2. Values, which is the Ideas about the meaning of life;
3. Norms and Sanctions, that serves as guidelines for behaviour;

4. Expressive Symbols for material representations of ideas and values;
5. Language.

Thus, throughout history, societies have assumed a number of different forms due to their unique culture which shaped their political, economic and social settings.

### Self-Assessment Exercise 1

1. Briefly define Culture.
2. Briefly define Tradition.

### 1.3.2 Meaning of Tradition

Tradition is originated from a Latin word “Traditio” which means set of beliefs and customs of a people carried out in the past and transmitted through communication and documentations from generation to generation. In this contemporary era, some aspects of traditions of a people are being modernised based on the enlightenment that western education has brought into our societies. Sometimes too, some persons decide to do things their own ways, mostly, when they belong to a high class in the society. And if they manage to sustain such act or deed over time, there will be followership which will definitely have some amendment effect on the existing tradition. Such attitudes and values held by such personalities influences the general attitudinal behaviours and values of others coupled with their norms which are subsumed in their culture. Tradition also means beliefs or customs handed down from the past; it also means opinions, doctrines, and practices, rites passed from father to son and from ancestors to posterity either oral or written.

**Figure 1. Traditional Eating utensils**



It is distinguished from culture in the sense that culture is the complex whole of man 's acquisition of knowledge, morals, belief, art, custom, technology etc. which are shared and transmitted from generation to generation.

Following these developments, Olowu (1994:4) portrayed that tradition:

*“In spite of the efforts to distort, supplant and suppress it, the precolonial state formation remains the institution which serves the needs of the majority of the African peoples especially in the rural areas, although elements of the pre-colonial state can be discerned even in Africa's largest metropolitan centres”.*

## 1.4 Concept of Administration

### 1.4.1 Administration

Administration as a generic term, is defined in different ways, but generally it deals with the harnessing of human and material resources for the efficient and effective realisation of goals. Administration is a universal process and must exist in any organisation set up for a defined purpose or objective. Whether we think of the religious institutions, the army, a university, an industrial or business concern or a purely social organisation, there has to be administration because each one consists of human beings brought together in a hierarchical set - up, making use of tools, equipment, human and material resources, all in the quest to attain the objective for which the organisation is established (Adebayo, 1981).

Figure 2. Decorated Horse and the rider



Thus, administration is seen as a process of management which is practiced by all kinds of organisations from the household, family and

community level to the most complex system of government. It is considered as determined action taken in pursuit of a conscious purpose and as the systematic ordering of affairs and the calculated use of resources aimed at making those things happen which one wants to happen.

Furthermore, administration may be used to mean the period of office or tenure of a leader of a given entity such as a family head, village head, an organisation's leader and even a country's president. For instance, during president Yar'adua Administration in Nigeria. Administration may also be explained in terms of providing, giving or application of something. For illustration, Judges are responsible for administration of justice while Nurses are responsible for administration of drugs in hospitals after the Doctors' prescription. August Adebayo (1995) defined administration as the organization and direction of persons in order to accomplish a specified end.

From the above we can understand that administration is both a process and as personae at law; that is, as a legal entity. And that administration must take place within social setting; be it as small as a family unit or as large as the universe. Whether you think of the private sector organizations or their counterparts in the public sector, administration is administration. The only difference is the way it is practiced. This also is dependent upon the culture and norms of the organization in question. Whatever the nature and scope of organizations, administration has to exist as every organization deals with human, material and other resources which have to be harmonized, integrated or unified for the common goal of corporate performance.

#### **1.4.2 Public Administration and Traditional Administrative System**

The end of the World War II give birth to the United Nations and the United Nations in order to bring peace and development in 1961 advised that there should be public administration and public service which should in every real sense belong to the society it serves, sharing its culture, its values, its problems and its ambitions (Shiono, 2004:vi; UNDP, 1961). It is pertinent to emphasize on this note that:

...when an outsider comes into a new ecological system, even if he is more skilled he does not necessarily function as effectively as those who have familiarized themselves with the environment over centuries; and the newcomer is likely to look more ridiculous if he is too arrogant to realize that he has something to learn from the „natives“ (Rodney, 1972:46).

This then give rise to the notion of integrating traditional administrative system in the modern bureaucracies to foster growth, service delivery and development. Therefore, Adamolekun (2004:3) submits that the governance context and environment of public administration in Africa continent has attracted considerable attention since the late 1980s which observers note, remain the problem responsible for its underdevelopment. Moreso that the forces determining interdependent change, innovation, or adaptation, public administration in Africa is peculiarly different to others in the world.

Basically, the taking cognizance of African traditional establishment as an important endogenous factor that manipulates the operations of bureaucracy in the continent is the issue

As Umeh (1990:1) conceives, bureaucracies do not function in emptiness but are operations of some ecological factors in which they are found. For instance, Chikwawa (2015) puts forward that succeeding waves of governmental institutional reorganization that occurred during Zimbabwe's colonialism and post-colonial history have been incapable of displacing the power of traditional leaders, customs and norms. Several attempts to do this by successive governments in Africa have been the challenge facing the triumph of bureaucratic principles in Africa.

Following these developments, Olowu (1994:4) portrayed that:

In spite of the efforts to distort, supplant and suppress it, the precolonial state formation remains the institution which serves the needs of the majority of the African peoples especially in the rural areas, although elements of the pre-colonial state can be discerned even in Africa's largest metropolitan centres.

All the above goes to buttress the relevance of traditional administrative system in our communities in the precolonial period. As public administration in the pre-19<sup>th</sup> century and up to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was still at rudimentary stage in the sense that it lacked universal principles to back up its practices in many nations or empires which succeeded the ancient ones (Ngu, 2001:12). While, the traditional administration due to their home-grown and natural legitimacy, various traditional authorities and system continue to play ever-present role in the lives of people in rural areas. They are involved in political and policy administration on the one hand, and resource mobilization administration on the other. For example, Botswana stands at the harmonious end of the spectrum, Sierra Leone is at the conflictual end, and countries like Ghana, Namibia, Nigeria, and South Africa are dispersed in between. Succinctly:



The good practice example in Botswana is the pragmatic accommodation of traditional chiefs in modern governance: They are members of a House of Chiefs, established in the constitution and with a formal advisory role in respect of both executive and legislative functions, and they participate in land administration and the administration of justice (Adamolekun, 2005:60).

The above is also similar to northern and southern part of Nigeria, for instance they already had a well-developed system of government called “Emirate Council” and “Oba and Council” respectively (Otero, 2013:131).

The question therefore is not whether the traditional and “modern” systems of governance are competing against each other but how to integrate the two systems more effectively in order to better serve citizens in terms of representation and participation, service delivery, social and health standards and access to justice (ECA, 2006: iii)

## **1.5. The Traditional Ruler**

### **1.5.1. The Traditional Ruler**

Traditional rulership is an out shoot of the traditional administrative system and institutions, which is refers to as the indigenous political system or arrangements whereby leaders with proven track of records are nominated, appointed and installed in accordance with the provisions of their native laws and customs (Malami, 1978, Orji and Olali, 2010). The essence of the institutions is to preserve the customs, traditions and cultural heritage of the people and manage conflicts and violence arising among or between members of the community by the instrumentality of laws and customs of the people.

A traditional ruler also refers to traditional title holders, in the pre-colonial era is defined as a person who by virtue of his ancestral position occupies the throne or stool of an area and who has been appointed to it in accordance with the customs and traditions of the area and whose throne has been in existence before the advent of colonial rule in Nigeria. The traditional ruler then has absolute executive, legislative as well as judicial powers. These is notifiable in the Kanem Borno empire, Hausa Fulani Emirates, the Oduduwa kingdom etc. To understand more about the traditional rulers, Malami (1978:11) identified three categories of traditional title holders that derive their titles from and through the traditions of the people, although the traditions vary from time, place and depth of cultural roots.

1. Those holding literally honorific titles, conferred on them by superior traditional rulers in recognition and appreciation of the service rendered to the society. This category has no schedules or specific functions seen as a good chain of information and agents of conscientiousness or mobilising people when the need arises.
2. These categories are holders of titles or positions due to recent recognition or creation of such titles. In contrast to the above, they may have executive functions but restricted by the same laws that created them or gave them recognition.
3. The last category is full time executive traditional title holders who perform executive functions from traditions largely rooted, revered and recognized and exercise their executive functions.

### **In-text Question**

1. Who is a traditional Ruler?

### **Answer**

A traditional ruler is a person who by virtue of his ancestry, occupies the throne or stool of an area and who has been appointed to it in accordance with the customs and traditions of the area and whose throne has been in existence before the advent of the British in Nigeria.

### **Self-Assessment Exercise 1**

1. Identify two categories of traditional title holders that derive their titles from and through the traditions of the people.
2. Is the Pre -Colonial Administration in Nigeria similar in all societies?

### **1.5.2 Traditional Administrative system**

The traditional administrative system is also referred to as the Pre-colonial administration in Nigeria. It is the administration of the then traditional societies through the organization and management of men, material and resources in accordance with the beliefs, doctrines, customs and opinions passed from ancestors to posterity either oral or written. The administration existed in traditional society of the pre-colonial Nigeria as goals were identified, human and material resources were allocated, and policy objectives were pursued. The function of administration then was simple, e.g. the declaration of wars (especially inter-tribal wars); the taking and implementing of decisions on the migration and resettlement of tribesmen; the coordination of hunting and pastoral activities; the construction of shrines, palaces and communal

wells; the exaction and collection of tributes; the construction of fortresses and embankments; the maintenance of public order; and the settlement of family and other disputes (Balogun, 1983). The traditional administrative system was very effective and efficient to the extent that during colonialism, central government was in the hands of Governor, while the local government was largely in the hands of the tribal leaders and traditional authorities under the supervision of British officers. Kay & Thomas, (1965:120) quoted Lord Lugard as saying that:

*The government utilizes and works through the native chiefs and avails itself of their intelligence and powers of governing.*

The Pre-Colonial Administration in Nigeria varies from the centralised and non-centralised societies. For instance, the Hausa traditional administrative and political system was highly centralised with elaborate structures and organs for the performance of its social roles. There was central bureaucracy, structures for law enforcement, tax collection and external defence.

Though, according to Yakubu (2006) the Hausa states were not collectively administered as a single entity, but they shared fundamentally uniformity in their ideas of authority and form of government. At the head of the Hausa political system is the Emir -*Sarki* who is ably assisted by a *Majalisa* (council) of *Masu Sarauta* (other officials).

The above is almost similar to what was obtainable in Kanem Bornu kingdom. Yakubu (2006) states that, in Kanem Bornu kingdom, *Mai* (King) the apex was selected from among the princes. In his exercise of power, he is bounded by members of the ruling family as well as a *Majlis* (council of state) which derived its membership from four sources viz the *Ulamas* (scholars); descendants of the foundation members of the empire; and the two Provincial Governors, *Yerima* (Northern Province) and *Galadima* (Western Province). The Pre-Colonial traditional administrative and political system of the Igbo on the other hand was participatory in line with the segmented system. In the Igbo societies, villages constitute political community, they were governed by groups and each community administered by the council of elders. There was no centralisation and consolidation of political authority.

While in the Pre-Colonial Yoruba Political and Administrative system, there was no common traditional leadership rather they were divided into several political kingdoms. The Yoruba traditional political system is centralised chiefdoms. At the head was the Oba and below him were lesser provincial and village chieftains who exercised some measure of

militancy, administrative and ritual powers. The Oba had a council constituted by the community 's chiefs. The details of all the above will be discussed in the subsequent chapters.

Figure 2 Hores riding for Transport and cultural celebration



## 1.6 Summary

In this unit, the concept of culture and tradition was presented with various illustrations. Culture and tradition give rise to the various traditional administration in our various societies which enable it to create great civilisations.



## 1.7 References/Further Readings/Web Resources

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a. Visit youtube add and watch the video on the cultural history of Nigeria.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8peSHnF9NWo&t=31s>

b. Visit youtube add and watch the history of Nigeria explained in 6 minutes (3,000 Years of Nigerian history)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fMmkmHUAAO0&t=24s>

Figure 1. cultural dancers

<https://www.pulse.ng/lifestyle/food-travel/tiv-culture-a-brief-walk-into-the-lives-of-one-of-the-worlds-greatest-storytellers/njkygn> July 29, 2022 1:43 PM

Figure 2 Traditional Eating utensils

<https://www.pulse.ng/lifestyle/food-travel/tiv-culture-a-brief-walk-into-the-lives-of-one-of-the-worlds-greatest-storytellers/njkygn> July 29, 2022 1:43 PM



## **1.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)**

These are the answers to the SAEs within the content. The answers are arranged in accordance with the way the SAEs appear in the content.

### **Self-Assessment Exercise 1**

#### **Answers to SAEs 1**

1. Culture is defined as the complex whole that consists of all the ways we think and do and everything we have as members of society.

#### **Answer**

2. Tradition means beliefs or customs handed down from the past to the present or posterity.

## UNIT 2 CHARACTERISTIC OF PRECOLONIAL TRADITIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM

### Unit Structure

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Learning Outcomes
- 2.3 Characteristic of Precolonial Traditional Administrative System
  - 2.3.1 Hausa Pre-Colonial System of Administration
  - 2.3.2 Yoruba Pre-Colonial System of Administration
  - 2.3.3 Igbo Pre-Colonial System of Administration
- 2.4 Traditional Rulership in the Postcolonial Era
  - 2.4.1 Traditional Rulership in the Postcolonial Era
  - 2.4.2 Traditional Ruler During Civilian Democracy
  - 2.4.2 Traditional Administrative System
- 2.5 Role of the Traditional Ruler
  - 2.5.1 Role of the Traditional Ruler
  - 2.5.2 Evolutionary roles of traditional rulers
- 2.6 Summary
- 2.7 References/Further Readings/Web Resources
- 2.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)



### 2.1 Introduction

The concept of administration is ubiquitous as it is found in public organization, private organization, mosque, churches, traditional institutions, household etc. Therefore, traditional administrative system features the combination of the words of traditional and administration, it describes the system of administration especially in the pre-colonial era when various institutions were in place as well as the traditional system of administration in the contemporary. In this session therefore, attempt will be made to explain the meaning of administration and traditional administrative system.



### 2.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the general characteristics of Traditional Administrative system
- analyse the nature of Traditional Rulership in the Postcolonial era
- demonstrate your knowledge of the elements of Traditional Ruler during civilian democracy evaluate the difference between

traditional administrative system of the Yoruba and that of the Igbo.



### **2.3. Characteristics of Traditional Pre-Colonial Administrative system**

The Characteristics of Traditional Administrative system of the various kingdoms in Nigeria have some unique features that shows some similarity and differences. This can be seen clearly as shown through the lens of the three major kingdoms in Nigeria.

#### **2.3.1 Hausa Pre-Colonial System of Administration**

The Hausa political system is the emirate monarchy system with the Emir -*Sarki* as the paramount authority and ably assisted by a *Majalisa* (council) of *Masu Sarauta* (other officials). The administration is run based on the Islamic Sharia i.e., the Islamic legal system. The administration can best be described in summary as follows: -

- a). It was based on absolute monarchy.
- b). The powers were centralized.
- c). Elaborate system of taxation was in place.
- d). No separation of power but fusion of powers.
- e). Based on feudal mode of production and land was the major means of production.

While the emir discharged the following roles:

- a). He appointed most of officials of the emirate.
- b). He saw to enforcement of Sharia and presides over Emir's court.
- c). He allocated farm land.
- d). He performed ceremonial functions.
- e). He was spiritual head of the Emirate.
- f). He made laws, and maintain order.
- g). He imposed and collected taxes (Malami, 2011) (Yakubu, 2006)

#### **2.3.2 Yoruba Pre-Colonial System of Administration**

The Yoruba pre-colonial system of administration was headed by the *Oba* (king) and assisted by the council of elders. The council in some chances together with the *Oba* helped in implementing the law of the land and the *Oba*'s court is the highest in the kingdom.



The Yoruba pre-colonial system of administration have the following features:

- i. It was constitutional monarch
- ii. No formal system of taxation but tribute payment.
- iii. No separation of power.
- iv. There was system of checks and balances.
- v. It was based on feudal mode of production.

### **2.3.3 Igbo Pre-Colonial System of Administration**

To the Igbo, the highest and largest administrative and political unit is the village/village group. This is based on the kindred then the family unit and age-grade.

The Igbo pre-colonial system of administration like other stateless kingdom, have the following features:

- i. Powers were decentralized
- ii. It is run like any Republic Nation.
- iii. It is without the conventional system of taxation.
- iv. No separation of power
- v. the political system operated direct democracy when it comes to decision making. All the kingdoms of the pre-colonial era operate on the above-mentioned system of administration and political organisation in one form or the other.

### **Self-Assessment Exercise 1**

#### **Question**

1. What is the unique difference between the pre-Colonial traditional administrative and political system of the Igbo and the Hausa/Fulani?
2. Mention three features of the Hausa Pre-Colonial System of Administration

## **2.4. Traditional Rulership in the Postcolonial Era**

### **2.4.1 Traditional Rulership in the Postcolonial Era**

During the Early stages of Nigeria's history, traditional rulers played two distinct roles which were later to serve as the foundations upon which further constitutional and political provisions would be made for their increased participation. At the lowest level of the colonial administrative structures, traditional rulers were included through a policy of indirect rule while at the top level, the Legislative Council,

traditional rulers were also included through their participation in early political parties.

That is with attainment of Nigeria independence in 1960, the traditional rulers especially in the 1963 Republican constitution were made members of House of Chiefs of each state as a second chamber or upper House to the House of Assembly with legislative power of the state.

However, by the time, the military took over power, the Native Authority Police as well as the courts and prisons, hitherto managed by traditional rulers were taken over by the State governments. In addition, the subsequent reforms indicate that the traditional rulers are to be projected within the confines of traditional council. The functions of the council in the 1975 reforms include:

- i. To formulate general proposals as advise to local governments.
- ii. Determination of religious matters.
- iii. Determination of customary law and practice on all matters including that relating the land.

Obviously, by the 1976 reforms, the traditional rulers were virtually divorced from decision-making process of duly established democratic local government's council and were made non – executive and non-participatory in their role.

In addition, even the 1979 constitution did not prescribe any executive role or function to the traditional rulers. It only prescribed advisory role on such matters like national population census and compilation, prerogative of mercy and the maintenance of public order. The above function is applicable to all the other tiers of government.

In order to facilitate the enforcement of law and order which is necessary for good and effective government, the government provides for the establishment of a security committee in each local government area with the traditional rulers as members the committee is required to hold regular meetings to consider and make recommendations on all matters concerning the security and preservation of peace in the area and will in particular maintain review of enforcement of legislation made by the local government. The above did not charge significantly even with the promulgation of the 1999 constitution due to the very laudable role the traditional play as fathers of their people, custodian of peace and the link between the people and the government. The above can be seen how various government use the traditional institution to quell communal crises and mobilize people for development for purpose and projects such as immunization population census and crime management.

### **2.4.2 Traditional Ruler During civilian democracy.**

The conceptualisation and the role of a traditional ruler in the postcolonial era attracted different attention especially during military rule and civilian democracy.

The term traditional rulers were defined at the National Conference of Traditional Rulers in Kaduna in 1983 as:

*A person who by virtue of his ancestry occupies the throne or stool of an area and who has been appointed to it in accordance with the customs and traditional of the area and whose throne have been in existence before the advent of the British in Nigeria. The area over which he and his forebears have ruled or designed must have at least a native authority created for it in 1910 or the date of the introduction of native authority to the area concerned. (Najeem 1989).*

But this definition was flawed by the Dasuki Report, on local Government Reform of 1984 the report then gives a more concise and coherent definition. The report defines a traditional ruler as:

*The person who occupies the throne or stool of an area and who has been appointed to it in accordance with the custom and tradition of the area and has suzerainty over the people of that area.*

The above clearly indicate that traditional rulers derived their powers from custom and tradition of their people or area. It is based on the above that they are referred to as the ‘‘father of the people’’ or the custodians of the tradition and values of the country (Biting, 1987). The above then indicate the need to understudy the customs and traditional that gives rise to the powerful kingdoms of Northern Nigeria in order to derive lessons of leadership especially at a critical period of nation building.

## **2.5. Role of the Traditional Ruler**

### **2.5.1 Role of the Traditional Ruler**

The determination of the ideal rule of the traditional ruler attracted different postulations especially during military rule and civilian democracy. And the principles involved in the resolution and management of conflict is the only aspect that is much accepted but contentious. While the role of traditional rulers in that aspect is considered remarkable but held with reservation.

But the traditional rulers employed a lot of effort in helping the government to control conflict and crises. Ibrahim (2010) state that the traditional methods of conflict management and resolution used are basically two forms.

The first form is the elder's council. This form, which is the symbolism of authoritative decisions associated with elders' cultural trusteeship and customary practices, has sustained conflict resolution and management in Nigerian societies. Emirs and Chiefs of various designations practice their indigenous cultures amicably in resolving and managing conflicts within and between their domains.

The principles involved in the resolution and management of conflict by the elder's council are associated with the customary system of government and justice. Elias (1963), Schaper (1956) and Gluckman (1967) have shown how African societies in general use judgment and justice to resolve conflicts and disputes. Otite (1999:339) observes that in the process of sitting in council (with political roles) and turning to court (with judicial role) traditional rulers target and achieve compensation, restitution and reconciliation. This styles in which political authority strengthens judicial decisions is an important way of pleasing and satisfying conflicting parties. These traditional procedures of conflict management are culture-based and have lasting effects.

The second form of the traditional method of conflict management is the intervention of the supernatural power. Traditional religious beliefs and practices are still strong even among the Muslims and the Christians in Nigeria. The world of ancestors is an extension of the world of the living, and the supernatural power is part of the Nigerian system of thought. Ancestors and predecessors, royal and non-royal, like other deities and shrines are believed to impose decisive rightful verdicts in controversial issues of conflict within and between communities.

When kolanut, drinks, food, etc. are shared and prayers said to settle disputants in land, farm and feuding conflicts, participants for all the parties involved regard such disputes and conflicts to be finally settled with divine sanction. Such settlement terms agreed upon in this form of conflict management are generally accepted and obeyed for fear of negative sanctions such as deaths or affliction with bad and incurable diseases from the spirit world. Tempers are cooled and dangerous weapons are put aside in these circumstances of believed supernatural participation in conflict management (Otite, 1999:339).

**Figure 5 The Palace Gate of the Emir of Zazzau**

### **2.5.2 Evolutionary roles of traditional rulers**

The time of Nigeria independence from the colonial masters, the 1960 and 1963 constitutions created a Council of Chiefs for traditional rulers at the regional level. After the overthrow of the then civilian administration and the military took of the rein of governance, Council of Chiefs for traditional rulers at the regional level were abolished in place of the traditional rulers by 1979 were gave representation in the National Council of States at the federal level and Council of Chiefs at the state level. The council played advisory role on customary matters, cultural affairs, chieftaincy matters as well as when requested to give advice on the maintenance of public order.

However, it was the same 1979 constitution that incorporated the constitutional reforms of 1976 that gave birth to the local government system of administration and confiscated and transferred to the local government the responsibilities performed by the traditional institutions in the post-independence constitutions.

From 1979 till date, and coupled with the military interregna, the traditional institution had only been reduced to a mere tool in the hands of politicians who have continued to reduce the political relevance of the royal fathers for their selfish aggrandisement. The 1999 constitution was, nonetheless, a complete erosion of the traditional rulers 'constitutional recognition, including even the advisory role given to them by the 1979 constitution. Despite the fact that the traditional institution remains the oldest surviving cultural-political institution, which has always served as the pivot for social security, national cohesion and meaningful socio-cultural development, the

operative constitution has failed to make any provisions for the existence of the institution.

Nevertheless, it is understood that the national lawmakers have listed the prescription of constitutional roles for traditional rulers as one of the issues for consideration in the ongoing constitutional amendment. Since then, there has been an avalanche of arguments for or against the constitutionality of roles for the royal fathers. This is predicated on the proposition that the traditional rulers are closer to the people at the grassroots and can from time-to-time assist the government in ensuring peace, security and social progress. There is then the need to give them constitutional roles to provide them the legal backing required.

There also the need for defined constitutional responsibilities for traditional rulers to be included in the constitution. And making a case for constitutional recognition of royal fathers is borne out of the conviction that the traditional institutions are still highly respected in most communities in the country and for wielding considerable political and economic influence, and therefore, there is every need to assign specific roles to them in the constitution.

There is also the need to harness the strategic position they occupy in their communities to bring government closer to the people, and that is the only way government could penetrate the grassroots.



## 2.6 Summary

In this unit, the role of traditional rulers was x-ray from the pre-colonial period today. During the pre-colonial period illustrations was on the Hausa, Oyo and Igbo kingdoms. The traditional ruler's contribution was look at in the contemporary settings in Nigeria.



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#### 4.7 Possible Answers to SAEs

These are the answers to the SAEs within the content. The answers are arranged in accordance with the way the SAEs appear in the content.

##### Answers to SAEs 1

1. Those holding literally honorific titles, conferred on them by superior traditional rulers in recognition and appreciation of the service rendered to the society.
2. The Pre -Colonial Administration in Nigeria varies from the centralised and non-centralised societies. For instance, the Hausa traditional administrative and political system was highly centralised with elaborate structures and organs for the performance of its social roles. There was central bureaucracy, structures for law enforcement, tax collection and external defence.



## UNIT 3      **TRADITIONAL RULERS IN THE CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA**

### Unit Structure

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Learning Outcomes
- 3.3 Traditional Rulers in The Contemporary Nigeria
  - 3.3.1 Traditional Rulers in The Contemporary Nigeria
  - 3.3.2 Functions of Traditional Rulers in Community development
- 3.4 Functions of traditional rulers
  - 3.4.1 Functions of traditional rulers
  - 3.4.2 Traditional Rulers in Security Administration
- 3.5 Some of the roles of traditional rulers in the contemporary Nigeria
  - 2.5.1 Functions of Traditional Rulers in Community development
  - 2.5.2 Roles of Traditional Rulers in Security Administration in Nigeria
- 2.6 Summary
- 2.7 References/Further Readings/Web Resources
- 2.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)



### **3.1 Introduction**

Traditional rulers today are an outshoot of the historical pre-colonial traditional administrative structure. They are relevant today as they were in the past and will be relevant too in the future because the structure of traditional administration is still favoured by the people and could well still serve them. Thus, they are an important linkage tool in the contemporary administrative system in the country. This is more so as they act as an intermediary between the government and the governed. Based on that they receive orders from the government for transmission to their societies. While they further more mobilized people for the response of their society towards the carrying out of some civic and security responsibilities.



### **3.2 Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the general characteristics of Traditional Administrative system
- analyse the nature of Traditional Rulership in the Postcolonial Era
- demonstrate your knowledge of the elements of Traditional Ruler During civilian democracy Evaluate the difference between traditional administrative system of the Yoruba and that of the Igbo.



### **3.3. Traditional Rulers in The Contemporary Nigeria**

#### **3.3.1 Traditional Rulers in The Contemporary Nigeria**

- (i) Traditional rulers act as a linkage tool in the contemporary political system in the country. This is so because the structure of traditional administration is still favoured by the people and could well serve them.
- (ii) They act as an intermediary between the government and the governed, by the fact that the institution receives orders from the government for transmission to their societies.
- (iii) Traditional rulers mobilized people for the response of their society towards the carrying out of some civic and security responsibilities.
- (iv) Government all along regarded and accorded loyalty to them to the extent that they are at times consulted before making some key political appointments at both local, state and federal levels.
- (v) In addition, it helped to security surveillance and demands of the people in a sort of input to the proper channel in the decision-making hierarchy. Generally, traditional rulers have been seen as a factor unifying not only their communities but also, the sub-region and even the nation as a whole.

On several occasions, traditional rulers have been called to mediate in national conflicts. According to Civil Rights Congress, which monitors outbreaks of violence, over the past thirty years, Nigeria has experienced 670 ethno-religious crises, leading to 85,000 deaths and 10 million displaced people. These outbreaks of violence occurred in many parts of the country such as Kaduna, Lagos, Jos, Kano, Bauchi and Benue, Oyo, Taraba and Niger Delta region. To be able to play a more active role in mediating and resolving large-scale civil conflicts, the Northern Traditional Leaders Forum has since been set up with the Sultan of Sokoto as Chairman. They meet regularly to review the peace and security situation. Of note is that the prestige attached to the institution influences conflicts that result from competition among numerous

and potentially eligible candidates and their supporters. Such conflict has the potential to polarize and destabilize communities.

Traditional rulers have been playing the role of peace builders and stabilizing their communities. Cooley, et al, (2010) argued that traditional rulers are perceived as assisting the government in maintaining law and order in the communities as well as promoting peaceful co-existence of people of different religious, ethnic and social backgrounds. The way of life of ordinary people in Nigeria is deeply rooted in their culture and traditional are central to maintaining their cultural values and traditions. They found that, the traditional rulers are more accessible to the ordinary people in times of need and problem than government officials and elected politicians. In addition, traditional rulers treat their people without discrimination.

People generally trust their traditional rulers and respect (Cooley, et al, 2010). It is with these we now move to the next issue of post-colonial basis of the traditional rulers and see the changes that took place.

However, the politicians still need(ed) the institution to get the co-operation and support to quell conflict and restore order and stability. The Traditional Rulers survived not because they were constitutionally recognized but based on their utility to the new political setting. Likewise, since the parliamentary system had allowed opposition, they had to seek the support of the traditional rulers so as to reduce the weight of opposition, provision of surveillance of people coming into their communities. In addition, the state of local government reforms since independence undoubtedly in no small measure affected the roles of the traditional authority, not only in local government administration but of the whole societal officers.

The coming of the military into Nigerian politics in 1966 ushered in a gradual reduction of the participatory role of traditional rulers in local government administration. Thus, structural re-organizations were implemented in various parts of the country with a view to establish new set of objectives in local government structures actions and functions.

The traditional rulers were used as tax collectors and seen as administrative links between the regime and the people. They were used for chancellorship positions of a few universities in Nigeria and very frequently used as informal arbitrators of national as well as regional conflicts. As a matter of fact, the introduction a Federal Constitution in 1954 which brought an end to indirect rule as it was replaced with both new systems of local government supposed to be a turning point for the usurpation of traditional rulers' authority in Nigeria.

In Northern Nigeria the position of the Traditional Rulers from 1967-1972 was greatly undermined in the context of power and authority. The instruments of coercion the police, courts, prisons, were removed from its control. This action undermined the Emir's legal power and authority which ultimately deprived them of the important outward manifestation of their authority.

Similarly, the 1976 local government reforms chaired by Dasuki among others, excluded the traditional rulers from participating actively in political/security affairs. That is to say they were virtually excluded from a decision-making process of duly established local government council and were made non-executive, ceremonial as well as non-participatory in local government administration. The reform among other things only provided for the establishment of traditional council of chiefs at the state and local government levels to handle chieftaincy and religious matters, assist in the maintenance of law and order and such other matters as the government might refer to the council from time to time.

However, the 1979 Constitution was short of the role of traditional institutions, because of the fear of proliferation of Emirs in the Caliphate and ethnic differences necessitated the dissolving of House of Chiefs. The Constitution also gives limited power to traditional institutions to have certain roles in the political system for each state to have a council of chiefs. They were to give advice to government on customary affairs of their own societies. There was also the needed collaboration with the law enforcement agencies for the maintenance of public order within their own territories.

Similarly, on matters with which the Governor may desire with this provision, the traditional rulers are more or less playing the role of executors and legislators of public programmes and policies. It was as a result of these changes whereby the traditional rulers are replaced by policemen and soldiers, that the Dasuki Committee on Local Government Reforms recommended the return of feudal system of traditional rulers and inclusion of them into local government administration. Notwithstanding, the report was heavily criticized by some traditional rulers, notably the Emir of Ilorin.

### **3.3.2 Functions of Traditional Rulers in Community development**

The functions of traditional rulers in community development include the following:

- i) Chair meetings of council of elders of the community.

- ii) Give advice to local government officials for development of their locality.
- iii) Make sure law and order prevail in the community.
- iv) Custodians of culture of their domains.

Use traditional religious beliefs to punish bad behaviour and encourage goodness.

- vi) Supervise chieftaincy matters and confer titles to deserving citizens.
- vii) Settle land and marriage disputes and award damages.
- viii) Assist local government to sensitize the people to pay tax.
- ix) Encourage subjects to gain financial freedom.
- x) Educate the populace to perform their civic duties.
- xi) Get support of subjects for local council chairmen.
- xii) Support good governance by the three tiers of government.

### **3.4 Functions of traditional rulers**

#### **3.4.1 Functions of traditional rulers**

Let's us analyse above functions to expand and clarify them to show the functions of traditional rulers in the community.

1. **Chair Meetings of Council of Elders of the Community**  
Traditional rulers chair meetings of the council of elders which formulate and enforce the rules that govern the domain. This gives direction, political and economic stability in the locality.
2. **Give Advice to Local Government Officials for Development of Their Locality**  
The functions of traditional rulers in community development are vital for the success of the local government administration. These traditional rulers, who are mostly highly influential and experienced citizens, are available to give wise counsel to local government chairmen and their counsellors when they consult them.  
This helps local governments to make good decisions and increase their competence.  
In addition, the local government works with them to provide projects that are beneficial to generality of the people, such as health centres, maternities, boreholes, and repairs of local roads, and schools.
3. **Make Sure Law and Order Prevail in the Community**  
They make sure there is peace and safety in the community and that the citizens obey the laws of the land. They communicate

these ideals through town criers, village at age grade meetings and social gatherings summoned by the traditional rulers.

4. **Custodians of Culture of their Domains**  
They initiate the celebration of village festivals to keep the culture and tradition of the people intact, and sponsor art and culture in their locality to ingrain it in the populace.

For example, they celebrate new yam festivals in the eastern part of the country and Igue festivals in Benin City. These festivals give people from those communities a sense of identity. It is also a way for bringing natives living in other parts of the country and the world back home once in a year. These festivals create happiness in these communities and improve their economy too.

5. **Use Traditional Religious Beliefs to Punish Bad Behaviour and Encourage Goodness.** Another area where the function of traditional rulers in community development is necessary is in the correction and punishment of wrong doing in the society. Fear of the community deity is the beginning of wisdom. The use of these gods, enables Traditional rulers maintain the peace of the community, punish bad behaviour and encourage goodness for economic development to thrive.
6. **Supervise Chieftaincy Matters and Confer Titles to Deserving Citizens** Traditional rulers confer titles to citizens who have distinguished themselves in the society to serve as examples for the people to copy. These titles give honour to worthy citizens and create healthy rivalry among locals to be the best in their career, business or service.
7. **Settle Land and Marriage Disputes and Award Damages**  
They settle all land disputes within the community, marriage quarrels and petty stealing, within the Palace with fairness to all parties. The people prefer settling issues the traditional way than go to the Magistrate court because of the fear of the wrath of traditional gods they worship.
8. **Assist Local Government to Sensitize People to Pay Tax**  
They mobilize the community to pay taxes to the local council authority to enable them repair community roads, public schools, and other public utilities.
9. **Encourage Subjects to Gain Financial Freedom** The functions of traditional rulers in community development are clear from their desire for citizens to be prosperous. Traditional rulers cooperate with the local council to organize seminars to help members of the community to get federal government grants, and soft Agric loans, fertilizer and seedlings for farmers to improve the local economy. This information empowers the people to be self-sufficient in production of food, create employment for young

- people by setting up small medium enterprises to stop rural urban youth migration.
10. Educate the Populace to Perform their Civic Duties It is the responsibility of both the traditional rulers and the local government authorities, to educate the populace to perform their civic duties such as registration to vote, pay tax, vote in elections and participate in Census.
  11. Get Support of Subjects for Local Council Chairmen  
They get the support of subjects for local council administration to succeed and endorse good local government chairmen to retain office.
  12. Support Good Governance by the Three Tiers of Government  
Good governance does not need advertisement because it shows. Traditional rulers desire good leadership from rulers in the three tiers of government and campaign for it all over the country.

### **3.4.2 Traditional Rulers in Security Administration**

Generally, traditional rulers have been seen as a factor unifying not only their communities but also the sub-region and even the nation as a whole. On several occasions, traditional rulers have been called to mediate in national conflicts.

According to Civil Rights Congress, which monitors outbreaks of violence, over the past thirty years, Nigeria has experienced 670 ethno-religious crises, leading to 85,000 deaths and 10 million displaced people.

These outbreaks of violence occurred in many parts of the country such as Kaduna, Lagos, Jos, Kano, Bauchi and Benue, Oyo, Taraba and Niger Delta region. To be able to play a more active role in mediating and resolving large-scale civil conflicts, the Northern Traditional Leaders Forum has since been set up with the Sultan of Sokoto as Chairman. They meet regularly to review the peace and security situation. Of note is that the prestige attached to the institution influences conflicts that result from competition among numerous and potentially eligible candidates and their supporters. Such conflict has the potential to polarize and destabilize communities.

Traditional rulers have been playing the role of peace builders and stabilizing their communities (Cookey, etal, 2010).

Cookey, etal, (2010) argued that traditional rulers are perceived as assisting the government in maintaining law and order in the communities as well as promoting peaceful co-existence of people of different religious, ethnic and social backgrounds. The way of life of

ordinary people in Nigeria is deeply rooted in their culture and traditional are central to maintaining their cultural values and traditions. They found that, the traditional rulers are more accessible to the ordinary people in times of need and problem than government officials and elected politicians. In addition, traditional rulers treat their people without discrimination. People generally trust their traditional rulers and respect (Cookey, etal, 2010). It is with these we now move to the next issue of post-colonial basis of the traditional rulers and see the changes that took place.

Traditional rulers hold the key to the success or failure in security administration in Nigeria because they operate at the grassroots of the society and interact closely with people in their daily activities consequent upon which they are highly respected. Abdullahi (2008) noted; Community based approach as opinion leaders“ traditional authority are first stakeholders if they do not back opinion will face problem as they are closer always in contact with people. Traditional rulers’ specific roles in security maintenance include the following:

- (1) Membership of emirate, district, village and ward security; observation, surveillance and maintenance and the weekly meeting
- (2) Security of village, ward, district and emirate vigilante committees
- (3) Security surveillance reports pass to relevant authorities.
- (4) Head of urban and rural areas, security watchdogs and reporters to know about happenings every minute, seconds, hours, time, days, weeks, months and years.
- (5) Security ICT Networking with CCTV Cameras and gadgets
- (6) Heading of security, safety and protection enlightenment campaigns (7) Sensitising/conscientizing individuals. What citizen ns need to know i.e. do and don ‘to ‘on security tips in form of vigilance, surveillance etc.
- (8) Meetings attendants
- (9) Policy decision making
- (10) Making security surveillance and intelligence reports.
- (11) Watchdogs in numbering all houses to know their occupants and their general conduct (Orji and Olali, 2010:402).

#### In-text Question

Identify four functions of traditional rulers in community development

#### Answer

- i) Chair meetings of council of elders of the community.



- ii) Give advice to local government officials for development of their locality.
- iii) Make sure law and order prevail in the community.
- iv) Custodians of culture of their domains.



### 3.5 Summary

This unit discussed the concepts of culture and tradition which are closely related as they explain the uniqueness of one society or the other. Culture is the totality of the societal ways of doing things and it comprises both material and non-material. Tradition is also the beliefs and customs of the society that are fulcrum of the traditional administrative system.

The unit elucidate the evolutionary trends of the emergence of traditional rulers and institutions such as that of the Oyo Empire, Benin Kingdom, Sokoto Caliphate and Borno Empire. Their remarkable development through the traditional administrative system further buttresses the reasons behind the continuous relevance of the traditional administration system in our contemporary democratic setting. You have seen pictorially the various aspect of material in terms of traditional building architecture, construction and design together with the various aspect of decorations. And the form of traditional technology in terms of the cooking utensils.

In conclusion, there is no gainsaying the fact that the traditional rulers occupy a strategic position in modern Nigeria. This position was substantially recognized by different communities even before the period of colonization. It is this importance that influenced the colonialists to use it in order to achieve their selfish motives.

One singular characteristic of the traditional authority is the capacity to change, as the situations and conditions change. Despite the onerous task, responsibilities and leadership and guiding roles that the traditional authority is expected to provide, it performed certain functions which helped to restore order and stability in Nigeria.

These functions include among others, link with the grassroots, intermediating, mobilising and sensitising people on policies and programmes of the government etc. It is important to realize that, it is because of the considerable power and authority over its subordinates and subjects as well as maintenance of peace and order, security in its territory, coupled with divine and religious roles, that they enjoy degree of respect, loyalty and legitimacy within their territories.



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Figure 3. Decorated Horse and the rider

<https://www.alamy.com/hausafulani-men-display-their-traditional-costumes-during-the-national-festival-for-arts-and-culture-nafest-in-edo-state-nigeria-image3315>

Figure 4 Hores riding for Transport and cultural celebration

<https://www.alamy.com/hausafulani-men-display-their-traditional-costumes-during-the-national-festival-for-arts-and-culture-nafest-in-edo-state-nigeria-image3315>

Figure 5 The Palace Gate of the Emir of Zazzau

The New Gate to the palace of the Emir of Zaria in northern Nigeria | © Shiraz Chakera / Flickr  
<https://theculturetrip.com/africa/nigeria/articles/21-essential-hausa-phrases-youll-need-in-nigeria/>



### 3.7 Possible Answers to SAEs

These are the answers to the SAEs within the content. The answers are arranged in accordance with the way the SAEs appear in the content.

#### Answers to SAEs 1

Some specific roles of Traditional rulers in security maintenance include the following:

- (1) Membership of emirate, district, village and ward security; observation, surveillance and maintenance and the weekly meeting
- (2) Security of village, ward, district and emirate vigilante committees
- (3) Security surveillance reports pass to relevant authorities.

#### Answers to SAEs 2

##### Answer

The Igbo system is participatory in line with the segmented system of groups and communities.

While the Hausa/Fulani system is highly centralised with elaborate structures and organs for the performance of its social roles.

**MODULE 2**

Unit 1	The Kanem Bornu Empire
Unit 2	Kanem- Bornu as an Empire
Unit 3	Organisation of The Kanem- Bornu Empire
Unit 4	The Last Phase of the Kanem-Bornu Empire
Unit 5	The Sayfawa Dynasty

**UNIT 1 THE KANEM BORNU EMPIRE****Unit Structure**

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 Historical Background and the Development of the Kanem Bornu Empire
  - 2.3.1 Historical Background of Kanem Borno Empire
  - 2.3.2 The early people in Kanem-Bornu Empire
- 1.4 Summary
- 1.5 References/Further Readings/Web Resources
- 1.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)

**1.1 Introduction**

In this unit, attempt is made to present to you a general overview of the emergence of the Kanem Bornu Empire. In this study unit therefore, you are going to learn the historical background of the Kanem Bornu Empire, the peoples of the land and the notable early rulers of the Empire.

The expedition of the rulers in various wars of supremacy with neighbouring states will be highted together with the struggle for the leadership and developmental efforts of some rulers will be seen in this unit. For instance, the contributions of Idris Alooma to the expansion and development of the Kanem Borno empire.

**1.2 Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the contribution of early important rulers of Kanem Bornu Empire.
- analyse the historical background of the Kanem Bornu Empire

- demonstrate your knowledge of the Peoples in Kanem-Bornu Empire
- evaluate the performance of rulership of the earliest rulers and later rulers.



### **1.3 Historical Background and the Development of the Kanem Bornu Empire**

The people of the Kanem Bornu Empire are also known and referred to as Beri Beri by their Hausa neighbours. They are predominantly Kanuri found in the present-day Borno and Yobe State and a substantial number of them are also in Kano and Nasarawa State. They are predominantly farmers and fishermen and are known for their long facial marks. (Dzeka & Okla 2016:21)

The historical background of the Kanem Bornu Empire is traced to the Kisra legend or tradition of origin. Accordingly, a prince called Kisra and his followers migrated to the east of Lake Chad from eastern Africa. It is believed that the westwards movement of Kisra and his people took place as a consequence of, and sometime after, the destruction of the city of Meroe (in the present-day Republic of the Sudan) by the people of Axum (in Ethiopia) in about A.D.350. By the 9<sup>th</sup> century, Kanuri kingdom had fused with several petty states and developed into a great empire known as Kanem at the east of Lake Chad. However, by the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the seat of government was relocated to Bornu in the west of Lake Chad.

Archaeologists have unearthed several historical remains in Kanem, which seem to point to the influence of Moore. But historians are cautious about the implications of such similarities of culture, since each area could have developed them independently.

The emergence of Kanem can also be attributed to the good and fertile soil on the Lake Chad plains which encouraged agricultural activities. Furthermore, the good policy of Dynastic inter-marriage and consistent integrating actions of government of the different nomadic settlers also played a major role. The possession of a professional army and the strategic location of Kanem-Bornu right in the middle of the trading routes across the great Sahara to North Africa and southern forest kingdom all aided the growth of Kanem.

Kanem-Bornu was probably founded around the mid-9th century, and its first capital was at Njeim, northeast of Lake Chad. Toward the end of the 11th century, the Self may (king) Umme (later known as Ibn Abd al-Jalil) became a Muslim, and from that time Kanem-Bornu was an

Islamic state. Because of its location, it served as a point of contact in trade between North Africa, the Nile Valley, and the sub-Saharan region.

When the ruling dynasty changed, the royal establishment abandoned its capital of Manan and settled in the new capital Njeim further south of Kanem (the word for "south" in the Tada language). By the 13th Tada language rule expanded. At the same time, the Kanyemba people drew closer to the new rulers and increased the growing population in the new capital of Njimi. Even though the Kanembu became the main power-base of the Sayfawa, Kanem's rulers continued to travel frequently throughout the kingdom and especially towards Bornu, west of Lake Chad. Herders and farmers alike recognised the government's power and acknowledged their allegiance by paying tribute.

The long struggle resulted in the collapse of the first Kanuri Empire and the removal of the capital from Najimy to the west of Lake Chad, in the land of Bornu. This occurred under Mai Umar ibn Idris (c. 1384-8). Situated to the south-west of the lake, Nazara became the new capital. It was established by Mai Ali Ghani. It remained the capital of the Kanuri Empire down to 1812, when it was destroyed by the Fulani jihadists.

### **1.3.1 The early people in Kanem-Bornu Empire**

The early people in Kanem-Bornu Empire are made up of the following:

1. The So – The So people were the original inhabitants of the area.
2. The Zaghawa – A group of early settlers in Kanem were the Zaghawa. They were a nomadic people, and are believed to have emigrated from eastern Africa in early times, and to have settled to the east of the lake, in about the eighth century A.D.
3. Kanuri or Kanyemba – Another important group of people in the kingdom of Kanem were the Kanuri or the Kanyemba.
4. The Bulla – Some of the later arrivals into the kingdom were Bulla.

#### **In-text Question**

The people of the Kanem Bornu presently are referred to as what by their Hausa neighbours?

#### **ANSWER**

The people of the Kanem Bornu presently are referred to as Beri Beri by their Hausa neighbours.

### Self-Assessment Exercises 1

1. Trace the historical evolution of Kanem-Bornu Empire.
2. Explain the contributions of one of early rulers of Kanem-Bornu Empire.

#### 1.3.2 Important Rulers of Kanem Borno Empire

The following are the famous rulers who, each in his turn helped to lay the foundations of the future great empire of New-born.

1. The first known Mai (or ruler) who ruled these early settlers as a united people was Dugu; he founded the Safwa dynasty in about A.D. 774. His capital was at Najimy, situated to the north-east of Lake Chad.
2. The next ruler of importance, after Dugu, was the tenth Mai, called Umme Filmi who reigned from about 1085 to 1097. He was the first Safwa king to be converted to Islam. Like other Sudanese Muslim rulers, he made an important pilgrimage to Mecca. And even though he died in Egypt, on his way to Mecca, he had attracted the attention of the Islamic world to his growing kingdom.
3. Umme was followed by his son, Mai Dunam I (c.1097- 1150), another important ruler. During his long reign this powerful ruler made three religious visits to the home of Islam attracted the attention of the Muslim world. Islam began to exercise considerable influence on the social, political and economic life of the growing Kanuri kingdom. Dunam, I introduced into his kingdom a number of Muslim scholars and administrators who helped to run the empire. The king's pilgrimages also encouraged the growth of trade.
4. Another king of importance whose reign saw a remarkable expansion in the size of the kingdom was Dunam II (1221-59), who added several territories.

He is said to have had a formidable calvary, consisting of about 30,000 men. Among his great military achievements was the successful war fought against the strong Tebu (or Teba) people, a struggle which lasted for about seven years.

By the close of his reign this great ruler had extended his empire as far north as the Fezzan. He thus commanded control of trade with Tripoli. To the south he controlled the fertile area of Mabina which is now Adamawa. To the west, his influence spread as far as Kano, in Hausa land, and to the east his domain included Wadai.



But Dunam II's uncompromising efforts to make Islam the state religion antagonised the majority of his people who would not give up their ancestral religions. This situation weakened the unity of the empire.



#### 1.4 Summary

The unit has thrown light on the historical background and general overview of the emergence of the Kanem Bornu Empire. It showed that the Kanem was founded by a prince called Kisra and his followers who migrated to the east of Lake Chad from eastern Africa. For many years, what came to be officially known as the Kanuri Empire was made up of two parts, separated by the lake. Kanem was in the east and Bornu on the west of the empire. Kanem served as the centre of the empire for many years, but in the fifteenth century, the seat of government shifted to Bornu in the west.



#### 1.5 References/Further Readings/Web Resources

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## 1.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)

These are the answers to the SAEs within the content. The answers are arranged in accordance with the way the SAEs appear in the content.

### Answers to SAEs 1

The historical background of the Kanem Bornu Empire is traced to the Kisra legend or tradition of origin. Accordingly, a prince called Kisra and his followers migrated to the east of Lake Chad from eastern Africa. By the 9<sup>th</sup> century, Kanuri kingdom had fused with several petty states and developed into a great empire known as Kanem at the east of Lake Chad. However, by the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the seat of government was relocated to Bornu in the west of Lake Chad.

The emergence of Kanem can also be attributed to the good and fertile soil on the Lake Chad plains which encouraged agricultural activities. Furthermore, the good policy of Dynastic inter-marriage and consistent integrating actions of government of the different nomadic settlers also played a major role. The possession of a professional army and the strategic location of Kanem-Bornu right in the middle of the trading routes across the great Sahara to North Africa and southern forest kingdom all aided the growth of Kanem.

### Answers 2

Idris Aloom (1564-96) was a most successful politician of the period who gained considerable international prestige. Idris sent an embassy to Tripoli, where he obtained muskets and a band of musketeers. He also obtained the best Arab horses and camels. With the help of these superior forces, he subjugated rebellious vassal states.

Idris extended the empire by further conquests. The areas brought under his control included the so stronghold of Damasak, Bilma, and the Tuareg district of Air in the north and Mandara in the south, as well as other important places. He defeated the Tatala, a warlike people settled near Lake Chad.

Idris also reformed the administration of his empire, basing all his reforms on Islamic principles and thus enhancing the greatness of the empire.

## UNIT 2 THE KANEM BORNU EMPIRE

### Unit Structure

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Learning Outcomes
- 2.3 Historical Background and the Development of the Kanem Bornu Empire
  - 2.3.1 Historical Background of Kanem Borno Empire
    - 2.3.2 The early people in Kanem-Bornu Empire
- 2.4 New Capital
  - 2.4.1 New Capital
- 2.5 Important Rulers of Kanem Borno Empire
  - 2.5.1 Ali Ghaji
  - 2.5.2 Idris Katakarmabe
  - 2.5.3 Mai Muhammad and Mai Ali
- 2.6 Summary
- 2.7 References/Further Readings/Web Resources
- 2.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)



### 2.1 Introduction

In this unit, attempt is made to present to you a general overview of the emergence of the Kanem Bornu as an empire. In this unit therefore, we are concerned with the historical background of the Kanem Bornu as an empire.



### 2.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the contribution of Ali Ghaji to development of Kanem Bornu.
- analyse the role of Mai Idris Alooma to development of Kanem Bornu.
- demonstrate your knowledge of the Peoples in Kanem-Bornu Empire
- evaluate the performance of rulership of the earliest rulers and later rulers.



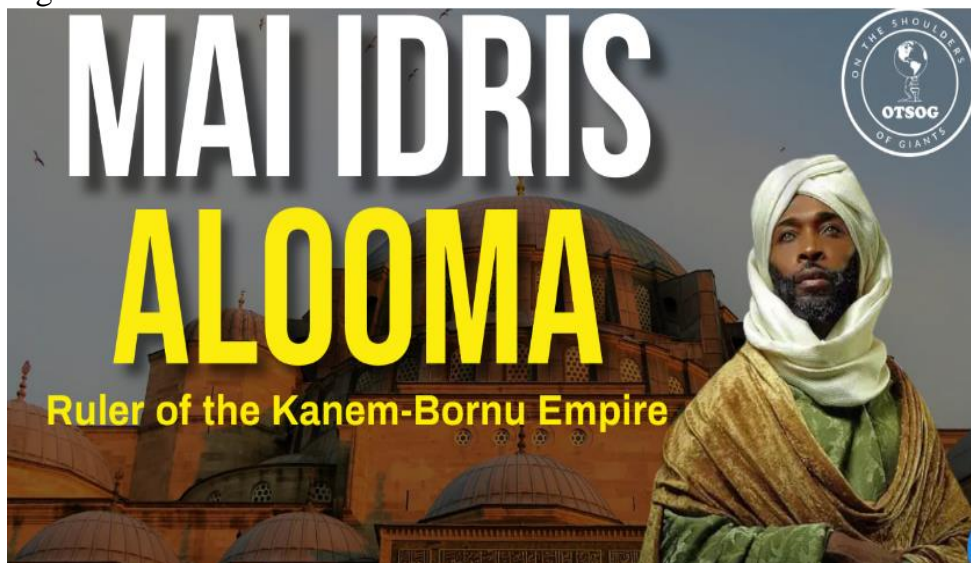
## 2.3 Historical Background and the Development of the Kanem Bornu Empire

### 2.3.1 New Capital

When the ruling dynasty changed, the royal establishment abandoned its capital of Manan and settled in the new capital Njimi further south of Kanem (the word for "south" in the Teda language). By the 13th century, Kanem's rule expanded. At the same time, the Kanembu people drew closer to the new rulers and increased the growing population in the new capital of Njimi. Even though the Kanembu became the main power-base of the Sayfawa, Kanem's rulers continued to travel frequently throughout the kingdom and especially towards Bornu, west of Lake Chad. Herders and farmers alike recognised the government's power and acknowledged their allegiance by paying tribute.

The long struggle resulted in the collapse of the first Kanuri Empire and the removal of the capital from Njimi to the west of Lake Chad, in the land of Bornu. This occurred under Mai Umar ibn Idris (c. 1384-8). Situated to the south-west of the lake, N'gazargamu became the new capital. It was established by Mai Ali Ghaji. It remained the capital of the Kanuri Empire down to 1812, when it was destroyed by the Fulani jihadists.

Figure 2 Mai Idris Aloomaa



### 2.3.2 Ali Ghaji

The first important ruler in the new capital was Ali Ghaji (c.1472-1504). The records indicate that he was really responsible for the transformation of the kingdom into strong Kanuri Empire.

The contributions of Ali Ghaji include the following:

- i) Ali Ghaji first crushed all internal opposition and stopped the civil wars which had plagued the kingdom for many years. He raised a permanent army which maintained internal law and order.
- ii) Having built up a strong army, Ali turned his attention to the neighbouring states which had been causing much trouble. By the close of his reign, he had made Bulla in the east, Tibesti in the north, and Kano in the west into tributary states. Because of these successful conquests, he earned the title El Ghazi, meaning “the warrior”
- iii) Next, Ali Ghaji re-organised the administration of the growing empire more efficiently. A fervent Muslim, the Mai made use of Islam as a unifying force, and Islamic laws and practices were introduced into the administration.
- iv) Ali also contributed to the economic growth of the empire by encouraging trade. Through her trading connections Bornu became known in distant places. It appeared on a Portuguese map drawn about the year 1487.

### **2.3.3 Idris Katakarmabe**

Idris Katakarmabe succeeded Ali Ghaji in 1504. He and his son continue the work of his predecessor and increased the prestige of the empire.

- i) Shortly after his accession, Idris invaded Kanem and reduced the Bulala to submission. His attempt to take Kebbi in Hausaland was, however, unsuccessful.
- ii) Katakarmabe renewed diplomatic relations between his country and North African countries, including Tripoli. Friendly relations with these countries were important for the encouragement of trade.
- iii) Before his death in 1526, he had to renew his campaigns against the Bulala. He succeeded in bringing their ruler Dunama ben Salma, to the point of submission.

### **2.3.4 Mai Muhammad and Mai Ali**

Idris was succeeded by Mai Muhammad (1526-45). He completed the total victory over the Bulala, and extended his conquests to the northern city of Air, then under the Songhai Empire. The control of Air brought Kanuri into undisturbed commercial contact with northern Africa. The

next king was Ali (1545-8). He was a mediocre ruler, and became involved in indecisive wars with the people of Kebbi.

**The contributions of Idris Alooma including the following:**

- I) Mai (i.e., King) Idris Alooma (1564-96) was a most successful politician of the period who gained considerable international prestige. He was named after Aloo, a marshy place near modern Maiduguri, where he met his death on one of his many military campaigns. We know more about his reign because of the detailed accounts of his work recorded by the chroniclers.
- ii) Alooma's reign was preceded by disputes over the succession. On the death of his father Idris, his son by Amsa, a daughter of a Bulala king, was a teenager. His mother managed to protect him from the plans of the rival adult claimants to the Kanuri throne, Mai Dunama and Mai Dala. After Mai Dala's death in 1573, the Magira Aisha usurped power in Borno. Civil war followed, which lasted for about seven years, until Idris could be installed king.
- iii) Soon after assuming power, Idris sent an embassy to Tripoli, where he obtained muskets and a band of musketeers. He also obtained the best Arab horses and camels. With the help of these superior forces, he subjugated rebellious vassal states.
- iv) Idris extended the empire by further conquests. The areas brought under his control included the so stronghold of Damasak, Bilma, and the Tuareg district of Air in the north and Mandara in the south, as well as other important places. He defeated the Tatala, a warlike people settled near Lake Chad.
- v) Idris also reformed the administration of his empire, basing all his reforms on Islamic principles and thus enhancing the greatness of the empire.
- vi) A devout Muslim, Idris made Islam the state religion, and introduced Islamic law.
- vii) Like the Muslim rulers in Mali and Songhai, Idris attracted many celebrated Muslim scholars and lawyers, who assisted him as teachers, administrators, counsellors and judges. Some of these Muslim experts were posted to the provinces as governors. The qadi or Muslim magistrates tried most cases which in the past had been tried by traditional law.
- viii) In the ninth year of his reign, Idris made a pilgrimage to Mecca. He acquired a hotel in the Holy City for his people visiting Arabia on pilgrimage.
- ix) The contacts which Idris made with the Islamic world, including Turkey, helped to increase the prestige of his empire. He himself was regarded great respect throughout the Muslim world.

Addressing himself to an embassy which the Turkish emperor sent to Bornu, Ibn Fartua, the Kanuri chronicler of Idris recorder the following words; O, my wise friends and companions; have you ever seen a king who is equal to our Lord [Idris] at such a moment?

- x) Idris died when returning from an expedition in a marsh called Aloo. When he died;
  - a) He had expanded the Kanuri empire to its widest extent;
  - b) He had Islamised all aspects of life in the empire;
  - c) He had made his empire widely known and respected throughout the Muslim world in Africa, Asia and Turkey.
  - d) He left Kanuri at the peak of its power and prosperity. His reign coincided with the decline and fall of the Songhai Empire.
- xi) The fame of Idris Aloomo did not end with his death, but persisted down to the nineteenth century. The German explorer, Heinrich Barth, visiting Bornu in the mid-nineteenth century, testified to the greatness of Idris Aloomo in the following words; „ Altogether Idris Aloomo appeared to have been an excellent prince, uniting in himself the most opposite qualities; warlike energy combined with mildness and intelligence; courage with circumspection and patience, severity with pious feeling” The achievement of Idris Aloomo was such that he deserves to be counted among the great men in history.

### **In-text Question**

The people of the Kanem Bornu presently are referred to as what by their Hausa neighbours?

### **ANSWER**

The people of the Kanem Bornu presently are referred to as Beri Beri by their Hausa neighbours.

### **Self-Assessment Exercises 1**

1. Where was the New Capital of Kanem Bornu Empire after its initial collapse?
2. Explain the contributions of one of early rulers of Kanem-Bornu Empire.



## 2.6 Summary

The unit has thrown light on the general overview of the emergence of the Kanem Bornu as an empire.



## 2.7 References/Further Readings/Web Resources

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Figure 1 Idris Alooma

<https://www.ontheshoulders1.com/the-giants/this-african-man-was-the-most-powerful-islamic-ruler-of-his-empire-mai-idris-alooma>





## 1.8 Possible Answers to SAEs

### Answer 1

The contributions of one of early rulers of Kanem-Bornu Empire is illustrated using the first important ruler in the new capital -Ali Ghaji (c.1472- 1504). The records indicate that he was really responsible for the transformation of the kingdom into strong Kanuri Empire.

### Answer 2

When the ruling dynasty changed, the royal establishment abandoned its capital of Manan and settled in the New Capital Njimi further south of Kanem (the word for "south" in the Teda language).

## UNIT 3 ORGANISATION OF THE KANEM- BORNU EMPIRE

### Unit Structure

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Learning Outcomes
- 3.3 Organisation of The Kanem- Bornu Empire
  - 3.3.1 Organisation of The Kanem- Bornu Empire
  - 3.3.2 Political Organisation
  - 3.3.3 Military Organisation
- 3.0 Summary
- 3.0 References/Further Readings/Web Resources
- 3.0 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)



### 3.1 Introduction

In this unit, attempt is made to present to you a general overview of the organisation of the Kanem Bornu Empire. In this unit therefore, we are concerned with the organisation of the Kanem Bornu Empire. This is informed of political, Military and judicial organisation.



### 3.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the contribution of early important rulers of Kanem Bornu Empire.
- Analyse the historical background of the Kanem Bornu Empire
- Demonstrate your knowledge of the performance of Al-Kanemi
- Evaluate the performance of rulership of the earliest rulers and later rulers.



### 3.3.1 Organisation of The Kanem- Bornu Empire

The Kanuri Empire lasted for over a thousand years. As can be expected, during this long period institutions of government underwent changes. However, the following may be regarded as an outline of how the vast empire was organised, when at the peak of its power.

### 3.3.2 Political Organisation

1. At the head of the central government was the Mai, or the king. He was regarded with such great awe that he did not show himself in public, except on two great annual festivals. Otherwise, he remained always hidden behind a curtain, even when receiving guests.
2. Next in importance was the Magira, or queen mother who controlled the domestic arrangements of the royal court. Some of these Magira became so powerful that they had great influence over and occasionally vetoed the decisions of the Mai. Another influential person was the Gumsu, the first or eldest wife of the king.
3. In the early period of the Kanuri Empire, Bornu passed through a feudal phase, when the king ruled indirectly through feudal lords. These men were very powerful. They collected taxes in kind from their subjects, which were then passed to the imperial treasury.
4. The Mai was assisted in the administration of the empire by a state council of twelve men drawn from the royal family. As well as a number of great officials. When the Mai was weak the council of state had considerable power over the state affairs.
5. The empire was divided up into four provinces. These were;
  - (a) The North, headed by the Yerima;
  - (b) The South, headed by the Kaigama, who was also Commander-in-Chief;
  - (c) The East, headed by the Mestrema, who was also warden of the king's household
  - (d) The West, headed by the Galadima;
  - (e) These provincial rulers also served as leaders of the four main divisions of the imperial army.

### 3.3.3 Military Organisation

The military's organisation of the empire is segmented and regimented like the political administration, which is divided up into four provinces.

These divisions corresponded to the military divisions into which the imperial army was organised. The provincial governor was the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces of his territory.

Under each provincial leader were a number of commanders, called the Kacella and the Mai himself had a bodyguard. In the reign of Idris Alooma, the Mai introduced arms and military instructions from Turkey.

The instructors helped to build up formidable armed forces for the empire.

### **Judicial Organisation**

The judiciary of the empire was well structured with the imperial high court of justice being presided over by a chief justice who ranked second in the empire. He was known as the *Mainin Kanendi*. The chief justice-*Mainin Kanendi* works with other twelve judges. The third most important person in the realm was the Talba. His official duty was to keep the records of the high court. Members of the high court were, as to be expected, very learned in the Quranic law. As such, they advised the Mai on most legal and religious matters.

Besides the high court, there were local courts in all the important towns in the empire. These courts were presided over by local judges versed in Islamic law and justice. People could appeal from the local courts to the high court of justice.

### **In-text Question**

Mention the political head in command and his second in the Kanem Bornu empire.

### **Answer**

The political head in command was the Mai, or the king and his second in command is the Magira, or queen mother who controlled the domestic arrangements of the royal court.

### **Self-Assessment Exercises**

1. List at least three main types of traditional administrative organisations of the Kanem Bornu Empire.
2. Enumerate some of the early people of the Kanem Bornu Empire.

**Figure 1 Kanem Bornu Horse Riders**

### 3.4 Summary

The unit has thrown light on the general overview of the emergence of the Kanem Bornu as an empire. It showed that the organisation of the Kanem Bornu Empire lasted for over a thousand years, despite that there are changes in the institutions of government at this empire.



### 3.5 References/Further Readings/Web Resources

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Figure 1 Idris Alooma

<https://www.ontheshoulders1.com/the-giants/this-african-man-was-the-most-powerful-islamic-ruler-of-his-empire-mai-idris-alooma>



### 3.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)

#### Answers 1

1. Political administration
2. Military's organisation
3. Judiciary

#### Answers 2

The early people in Kanem-Bornu Empire are made up of the following:

1. The So – The So people were the original inhabitants of the area.
2. The Zaghawa – A group of early settlers in Kanem were the Zaghawa. They were a nomadic people, and are believed to have emigrated from eastern Africa in early times, and to have settled to the east of the lake, in about the eighth century A.D.
3. Kanuri or Kanyemba – Another important group of people in the kingdom of Kanem were the Kanuri or the Kanyemba.
4. The Bulla – Some of the later arrivals into the kingdom were Bulla.

## UNIT 4 THE LAST PHASE OF THE KANEM-BORNU EMPIRE

### Unit Structure

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Learning Outcomes
- 4.3 The Last Phase of the Kanem-Bornu Empire
  - 4.3.1 The Last Phase of the Kanem-Bornu Empire
- 4.4 Summary
- 4.4 References/Further Readings/Web Resources
- 4.4 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)



### 4.1 Introduction

In this unit, attempt is made to present to you a general overview of the last phase of the Kanem Bornu Empire. In this unit therefore, we are concerned with the last phase of the Kanem Bornu Empire.



### 4.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the last phase of the Kanem-Bornu Empire
- analyse the tenure of one leader of the Kanem Bornu Empire
- demonstrate your knowledge of the Sayfawa dynasty.
- evaluate the performance of rulership of the earliest rulers and later rulers.



### 4.3.1 The Last Phase of the Kanem-Bornu Empire

The last phase of the Kanuri Empire was similar to that of Songhai, after Asika the Great. After Idris Alooma's death, there were three rulers who made some efforts to maintain the empire as the great Mai had left it. They did not have the ability however to improve on his work. These three rulers were Mai Muhammad 11 (1617-32), Mai Ibrahim (1632-9), and Mai Ali ibn Omar (1639-57)

Like Daud in Songhai, Mai Ali ibn Omar did his best to revive the declining power of the Kanuri Empire. He maintained Kanuri's international reputation and the diplomatic links which Idris Alooma had

established. His work meant that the empire remained comparatively strong until the end of the eighteenth century.

Yet, throughout this period, Kanuri was not the powerful empire it had been under Idris Alooma. Although Bornu escaped the Moroccan invasion of the Western Sudan, she was affected by the general unrest and disorder which followed that invasion, and her trade suffered as a result.

Towards the close of the eighteenth century, Tuareg attacks on the empire became more frequent. Several vassal states began to assert their independence. The army was no longer strong. Indeed, the entire army of the last important Kanuri king, Mai Ahmad (1793-1810) perished in a military campaign against the Mandara in the south of the empire. There were also internal conflicts in the eastern part of the empire. These divisions further weakened the empire, which reverted to the two separate states of Bornu and Kanem.

The old ties which linked the two sections of the empire did not, however, completely break apart. In 1808, when the Fulani jihadists attacked Bornu and drove the ruler Mai Ahmad from the capital N'gazargamu, in the east of the empire came across to the rescue of the west. His name was Muhammad Al-Kanemi (1776– 1837) was an Islamic scholar, teacher, religious and political leader who advised and eventually supplanted the Sayfawa dynasty of the Kanem-Bornu Empire.

In 1846, Al-Kanemi's son Umar I ibn Muhammad al-Amin became the sole ruler of Borno, an event which marked the end of the Sayfawa dynasty's eight-hundred-year rule. The current Shehu of Bornu, a traditional ruler whose seat remains in modern Bornu State, Nigeria, is descended from Al-Kanemi.

Born to a Kanembu father and an Arab mother near Murzuk in what is today Libya, Al-Kanemi rose to prominence as a member of a rural religious community in the western provinces of what was then a much-atrophied Borno Empire. The Fulani jihadists, under Usman Dan Fodio's banner tried to conquer Borno in 1808. They partly succeeded. They burnt the capital, N'gazargamu and defeated the main army of the mai of Borno. The latter called for the help of Al-Kanemi to repel his Fulani opponents. By planning, inspiration, and prayer, he attracted a following, especially from Shuwa Arab networks and Kanembu communities extending far outside Bornu's borders. The mai (monarch), Dunama IX Lefiami rewarded the leader with control over a Bornu province on the Western march. Taking only the title "Shehu" ("Sheikh"), and eschewing the traditional offices, al-Kanemi gathered a



powerful following, becoming both the voice of Bornu in negotiations with Sokoto, as well as a semi-independent ruler of a trade rich area with a powerful military. Dunama was deposed by his uncle in 1809, but the support of al-Kanemi brought him back to power in 1813.

### **Self-Assessment Exercises**

1. Mention some rulers during the last phase of the Kanuri Empire.
2. Enumerate some of the achievements of Muhammad Al-Kanemi of the Kanem Bornu Empire.

### **4.3.2 Powerful Leaders of Kanem Borno empire**

(a) Muhammad Al-Kanemi had many advantages over other rulers based on certain characteristics. He was a great soldier, who could stand up against the Fulani commanders. A devout Muslim, he adhered to a strict form of the religion. He could therefore, argue convincingly against Uthman Dan Fodio, his correspondence with Dan Fodio's son, Muhammad Bello, he argued against the intentions of the Fulani, saying that, far from adulterating Islam, Bornu practised the purest form of the faith, and therefore needed no external reformer.

(b) When Mai Ahmad died, Al-Kanemi became the Sheik or Shehu of Bornu and ruled the territory until his own death in 1835. The new line he established replaced the Sayfawa dynasty, which had lasted for about a thousand years. Under Al-Kanemi Bornu Empire came back to live again and the following achievements are attributed to the Shehu;

1. He carried out religious reforms, and made Islamic education compulsory in Bornu;
2. He built his own capital at Kukawa, which thus replaced N'gazargamu;
3. He made strenuous efforts but could not completely restore the frontiers of the ancient Kanem-Bornu Empire.

(c) Al-Kanemi was succeeded by his son, Umar (1835-80), who had a very long reign.

(d) Umar I ibn Muhammad al-Amin or Umar of Borno (died 1881) was Shehu (Sheik) of the Kanem-Bornu Empire and son of Muhammad al-Amin al-Kanemi. Umar came to power at the death of his father in 1837 Umar did not match his father's vitality and gradually allowed the kingdom to be ruled by advisers (wazirs).

Umar ruled from 1837 until November 1853 when he was deposed by his brother `Abd ar-Rahman ibn Muhammad al-Amin who became Shehu. The latter only reigned until 1854 when Umar reconquered his throne. Umar ruled as Shehu for a second time from September 1854 to 1880. Borno began to decline, as a result of administrative disorganisation, regional particularism, and attacks by the militant

Ouaddai Empire to the east. The decline continued under Umar's sons, and in 1894 Rabih as-Zubayr, leading an invading army from eastern Sudan, conquered Borno. He tried hard to maintain and expand his kingdom, but he was not entirely successful. This was so because he encountered many difficulties.

Some of the difficulties he encountered were the following: -

1. He had to keep in check provincial rulers who wanted to revive the Sayfawa dynasty;
2. He was preoccupied with his own brother, Abd Al-Rahman, who was plotting to secure the throne for himself;
3. He was also subject to the whims of some court officials who controlled his policy.



#### 4.5 Summary

The unit has thrown light on the general overview of the last phase of the Kanem Bornu empire. It further highlights the efforts put in place by the three different rulers who made some efforts to maintain the Bornu empire as the great Mai had left it and in wish, they did not have the ability however to improve on his work.



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Figure 1 Kanem Borno Horse Riders

Figure 2 Mai Idris Alooma

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## 2.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)

### Answer 1

some rulers during the last phase of the Kanuri Empire include the following rulers - Mai Muhammad 11 (1617-32), Mai Ibrahim (1632-9), and Mai Ali ibn Omar (1639-57)

### Answer 2

Some of the achievements of Muhammad Al-Kanemi of the Kanem Bornu Empire include the following:

1. He carried out religious reforms, and made Islamic education compulsory in Bornu;
2. He built his own capital at Kukawa, which thus replaced N'gazargamu;
3. He made strenuous efforts but could not completely restore the frontiers of the ancient Kanem-Bornu Empire.

## UNIT 5 THE SAYFAWA DYNASTY

### Unit Structure

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Learning Outcomes
- 5.3 The Last Phase of the Kanem-Bornu Empire
  - 5.3.1 The Last Phase of the Kanem-Bornu Empire
- 5.4 Summary
- 5.5 References/Further Readings/Web Resources
- 5.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)



### 5.1 Introduction

In this unit, attempt is made to present to you a general overview of the last phase of the Kanem Bornu Empire. In this unit therefore, we are concerned with the last phase of the Kanem Bornu Empire.



### 5.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

Discuss the last phase of the Kanem-Bornu Empire

Analyse the tenure of one leader of the Kanem Bornu Empire

Demonstrate your knowledge of the Sayfawa dynasty.

Evaluate the performance of rulership of the earliest rulers and later rulers.



### 5.3.1 The Sayfawa Dynasty

As the records show, the Sayfawa dynasty started in about A.D. 774 and lasted until 1810, more than a millennium. It was one of the longest lasting dynasties in world history. Outlined below are some of the reasons which historians give when explaining this phenomenon.

Sayfawa dynasty or more properly Sayfawa dynasty is the name of the kings (or mai, as they called themselves) of the Kanem-Bornu Empire, centred first in Kanem in western Chad, and then, after 1380, in Borno (today north-eastern Nigeria). The dynasty was rooted in the Tubu expansion by the Kanembu.

The first ten kings present in the list in the Girgam are difficult to date and to identify. The dynasty, one of Africa's longest living, lost the throne in 1846.

But we ought to consider these factors cautiously, since most of them, taken isolation, could apply to the history of other kingdoms and empires ruled by successive dynasties.

1. History shows that many dynasties fail to last long because of court intrigues, and disputes over the succession. The Kanuri empire was fortunate in that these occurred only very rarely in its long history.
2. It often happens that either because of natural causes, or because of an assassination, the rightful royal direct line dies out, and a new dynasty emerges. The Kanuri Empire was spared this misfortune.
3. The location of a kingdom may also help to explain the length of life of its dynasty. Unlike the empire of Ghana, Mali and Songhai, which flourished in the heart of the Western Sudan, and which therefore had to face the constant threat of aggressive neighbours, the Kanuri Empire, being in the extreme east of the territory, was not threatened by strong neighbours for a very long time. The relative tranquillity resulting from this helped the ruling dynasty to survive.
4. Added to the advantage just described was the fact that the Kanuri Empire was blessed with a number of outstanding rulers who enjoyed long reigns. Notable examples, as we have seen, were the following; Dunama 1 (53 years), Dunama 11 (38 years), Ali Ghaji (32 years), Idris Katakarmabe (22 years), Mai Muhammad (19 years), and Idris Alooma (32 years). One effect of these long reigns was that the kings were able to consolidate their hold on the throne and prepare peacefully for their heirs to succeed them. There were very few attempts to replace these rulers, in spite of their long reigns because on the whole they concerned themselves with the development of the empire and the well-being of the people.
5. For a long time the vigorous trade of the empire meant that there was general prosperity. The people naturally attributed this situation to the kings who presided over them, and therefore saw no reason to overthrow their dynasty.
6. The fact that most of the rulers were closely involved with the cause of Islam and based their government on Islamic principles was also important. The practice, as we have seen in the case of other Sudanese empires, won for the empire and the rulers the respect and goodwill of the Islamic world.

### Self-Assessment Exercises 3

1. Assess the importance of Muhammad Al-Kanemi as an African leader.
2. Why do you think the Sayfawa dynasty lasted so long?



#### 4.4 Summary

The people of the Kanem Bornu Empire are also known and referred to as Beri Beri by their Hausa neighbours. They are predominantly Kanuri found in the present-day Borno and Yobe State and a substantial number of them are also in Kano and Nasarawa State. They are predominantly farmers and fishermen and are known for their long facial marks. (Dzeka & Okla 2016:21)

These clearly summaries the history of the Kanem Bornu Empire. This unit also analyses showed that the Sayfawa dynasty started in about A.D. 774 and lasted until 1810, more than a millennium and it was one of the longest lasting dynasties in world history and the reasons for this was explained by the historians. Producing great rulers that brought so many vassals state under their rule and exemplify Islamic sharia in administration and the judiciary



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Figure 2 Mai Idris Alooma



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## 2.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)

### Answers to SAEs 3

#### Answers 1

Muhammad Al-Kanemi had many advantages over other rulers based on certain characteristics. He was a great soldier, who could stand up against the Fulani commanders. A devout Muslim, he adhered to a strict form of the religion. He could therefore, argue convincingly against Uthman Dan Fodio, his correspondence with Dan Fodio's son, Muhammad Bello, he argued against the intentions of the Fulani, saying that, far from adulterating Islam, Bornu practised the purest form of the faith, and therefore needed no external reformer.

#### Answers 2

The Sayfawa dynasty, being in the extreme east of the territory, was not threatened by strong neighbours for a very long time. The relative tranquillity resulting from this helped the ruling dynasty to survive.

Added to the advantage just described was the fact that the Kanuri Empire was blessed with a number of outstanding rulers who enjoyed long reigns.

Notable examples, as we have seen, were the following; Dunama 1 (53 years), Dunama 11 (38 years), Ali Ghaji (32 years), Idris Katakarmabe (22 years), Mai Muhammad (19 years), and Idris Aloomo (32 years). One effect of these long reigns was that the kings were able to consolidate their hold on the throne and prepare peacefully for their heirs to succeed them.

There were very few attempts to replace these rulers, in spite of their long reigns because on the whole they concerned themselves with the development of the empire and the well-being of the people.

**MODULE 3**

Unit 1	The Hausa and the Fulani kingdom
Unit 2	Growth and Organisation of the Hausa and the Fulani Kingdom
Unit 3	Some Outstanding Hausa Rulers
Unit 4	Fulani Conquest of Hausaland

**UNIT 1 THE HAUSA AND THE FULANI KINGDOM****Unit Structure**

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 Emergence of the Hausa and the Fulani Kingdom
  - 3.3.1 Original Hausa States
  - 3.3.2 Other Hausa States
- 1.4 The Fulani
  - 3.4.2 The Fulani
  - 3.4.2 The Fulani Expedition
- 1.5 Summary
- 1.7 References/Further Readings/Web Resources
- 1.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)

**1.1 Introduction**

Hausa–Fulani is a term used to refer collectively to the Hausa and Fulani people of West Africa. The two are grouped together because since the Jihad expedition executed by predominately by Fulani, their histories have been largely intertwined within Nigeria.

In this unit, attempt is made to present to you a general overview of the emergence of the growth and organisation of the Hausas and the Fulani. In this unit, attempt is made to also present to you a general overview of how the Fulani conquered the Hausaland through the execution of the Jihad. After the Fulani Conquest of Hausaland, the two produced great rulers make employed the Sharia in the government and governance of the various states that the rulers have controlled over.



## 1.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the contribution of some outstanding rulers of the Hausa and the Fulani Empire.
- analyse the nature of the traditional administration of Hausa and the Fulani Empire.
- demonstrate your knowledge of the main causes and course of the Jihad (Holy War).
- evaluate the Consequences of the Fulani Conquest of Hausaland



## 1.3. Emergence of the Hausa and the Fulani

### 1.3.1 Emergence of the Hausa Kingdom

Hausa is the largest ethnic group in Northern Nigeria and by extension the whole country. The term Hausa also refers to a language spoken indigenously by Savannah peoples across the present far North from Nigeria's Western boundary Eastward to Borno State and into much of the territory of central Nigeria. The Fulani for many years lived together with the Hausa and it become very difficult to differentiate the two.

Thus, Hausa–Fulani is a term used to refer collectively to the Hausa and Fulani people of West Africa. The two are grouped together because since the Jihad expedition executed by predominately by Fulani, their histories have been largely intertwined within Nigeria. For example, when the Fulani took over Hausa city-state of Kano during the expansion of the Sokoto Caliphate, the new emirs ended up speaking the Hausa language instead of Fulfulde over the years. It must be noted though, that a significant portion of Fulani society are opposed to the use of this term, which has been made popular most especially in recent times by its increased use in mass media.

The Hausa and Fulani together account for one out of Nigeria's three major ethnic groupings (alongside the Yoruba and Igbo). The Hausa and Fulani together, account for 29% of Nigeria's population.

The Hausa land, before 1804, was made up of fourteen towns grouped into two. The first group of seven was called Hausa Bakwai while the other group of seven was called Banza Bakwai.

The Fulani took over the political leadership of the Hausa or Habe states in the early 19th century. The Jihad that preceded this occupation was seen as religious expedition (Buah,1978).

The Fulani's settled in Hausa land and intermarried with the Hausa people after conquering them and this was how the name Hausa-Fulani came about. There are conflicting legends about the founding of the Hausa states. As is the case with several other early Muslim kingdoms of the Western Sudan, the later chroniclers whose accounts have reached us trace the origin of the Hausa to the Middle East, seat of Islam.

The Kano Chronicle records that the people of Hausaland came originally from Baghdad. It is said that a certain Bayajidda emigrated from Baghdad to Kanem-Bornu. The precise date is not given. Though Bayajidda was privileged enough to marry the daughter of the Kanuri ruler, later developments in the kingdom forced him to flee westwards.

He first stayed at Biram-ta-Gabas, where his wife bore him a son. He left his family there and came to Daura, where he was said to have performed a great feat, killing a sacred snake, "Sarki" which had for years deprived the people of water from a well, except on Fridays. In appreciation of this deed, the Queen of Daura married Bayajidda. Out of this union was born a son called Bawo. Later this Bawo-magari had seven children, who became the founders of the original Hausa states, called Hausa Bakwai.

**Figure 1 Cultural dressed Fulani celebrating Nigeria Independence**



### 1.3.1 Original Hausa States

The original Hausa, called Hausa Bakwai are believed to have been named after the founders and they are as follows:

- (a) Biram and Daura, said to be the earliest settlements;

- (b) Katsina and Zaria, founded by twin brothers respectively;
- (c) Kano and Rano, founded by another set of twin brothers, and
- (d) Gobir founded by the youngest of the seven brothers.

Although, as time wore on, these became independent, for mutual benefit as each of the founders assumed special duties as follows:

- (a) Gobir, the youngest, became the Sarkin Yaki, or war leader. As his state lay to the north; he assumed the responsibility of warding off attacks of the Tuareg.
- (b) Kano and Rano supervised the rich indigo industry.
- (c) Zaria became the Sarkin Bayi, responsible for obtaining slaves.
- (d) Daura and Kastina controlled trade and commerce.
- (e) However, as time went on, each became more and more independent, but they never completely broke off their ties of affinity.

### 1.3.2 Other Hausa States

The Hausa traditions records that another set of seven states emerged sometime after the first seven were founded. These new states were collectively known as the Banza Bakwai. They were; Kebbi, Zamfara, Nupe, Gwari, Yauri, Ilorin and Kwararafa (or Jukun).

Some historians hold that these new states were not pure Hausa, but were founded by the offspring of pure Hausa Bakwai kings and their concubines. But this theory has not been proved.

#### In-text Question

From where did the Hausa traditions say the Hausas originated?

#### Answer

The people of Hausaland came originally from Baghdad.

#### Self-Assessment Exercises 1

1. Enumerate at least four of the Hausa Bakwai of the Hausa States.
2. How wide spread is the Hausa Language?

### 1.4. The Fulani Expedition

The Fulani are said to have originated in the upper Senegal and were believed to have descended from the union between Tuculor women and Berber traders. By the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D the Fulani had firmly established

themselves in West Africa. The Fulani were among the first people to embrace Islam in West Africa. However, for centuries the Fulani were scattered throughout West Africa and belong to no identifiable kingdom.

By 14<sup>th</sup> century, Fulani scholars of Islam and pastoralists began to settle in Northern Nigeria. They helped in propagating Islam while discouraging the Hausa from idol worship. By early 19<sup>th</sup> century the Fulani in Northern Nigeria led by Usman Dan Fodio, an Islamic scholar launched a Holy War, Jihad on Hausa states with the purpose of converting the people to Islam and putting an end to paganism. Usman Dan Fodio's campaign received wide spread support from his kinsmen and even Hausa who were fed up with the corrupt leadership style and high handedness of their leaders.

### 1.4.2 The Fulani Expedition

By early 19<sup>th</sup> century the Fulani in Northern Nigeria led by Usman Dan Fodio, an Islamic scholar launched a Holy War, Jihad on Hausa states with the purpose of converting the people to Islam and putting an end to paganism. Usman Dan Fodio's campaign received wide spread support from his kinsmen and even Hausa who were fed up with the corrupt leadership style and high handedness of their leaders.

The Jihad dramatically altered the political equation of Hausa land as Fulani's who supported Usman Dan Fodio in his campaign took over the seat of powers across the land. Ever since, the entire Hausa land was brought under the rulership of the Fulani with Sokoto being the headquarter of the Islamic caliphate.

**Figure 2 Hausa/Fulani Male Costumes**





### 1.5 Summary

The unit has thrown light on the historical background of the emergence of the Hausa and the Fulani. And have further shown that much of what we know about the early history of the Hausa comes from the celebrated Kano Chronicle, and a few other chronicles relating to the Hausa states.

But although, as Sir Richard Palmer says in the Sudanese Memoirs, the Kano Chronicle offers precious evidence of states of the Hausa people that flourished in what is now Northern Nigeria in the late Middle Ages and long afterwards, it is important to note that the chronicle was written much later than the events it describes.



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## 1.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)

### Answers to SAEs 1

#### Answer 1

1. Daura, said to be the earliest settlements;
2. Katsina
3. Zaria
4. Kano

#### Answer 2

The term Hausa also refers to a language spoken indigenously by Savannah peoples across the present far North from Nigeria's Western boundary Eastward to Borno State and into much of the territory of central Nigeria.



## UNIT 2      **GROWTH AND ORGANISATION OF THE HAUSA AND THE FULANI KINGDOM**

### Unit Structure

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Learning Outcomes
- 2.3 Growth and Organisation of the Hausa and the Fulani Kingdom
  - 1.
  - 3.3.1 Growth and Organisation of the Hausa and the Fulani Kingdom
  - 3.3.2 Administration of Justice/Judicial Administration
- 2.4. 3.4. Economic and other affairs
  - 3.4.2 The Army
  - 3.4.2 Religious Affairs
- 2.5 Summary
- 2.6 References/Further Readings/Web Resources
- 2.7 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)



### **2.1 Introduction**

In this unit, attempt is made to present to you a general overview of the emergence of the growth and organisation of the Hausas and the Fulani. In this unit therefore, we are concerned with the emergence of the growth and organisation of the Hausas and the Fulani. In this study unit, therefore, we shall limit our discussions to the enteral overview of the emergence of the growth and organisation of the Hausas and the Fulani.



### **2.2 Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the contribution of some outstanding rulers of the Hausa and the Fulani Empire.
- analyse the nature of the traditional administration of Hausa and the Fulani Empire.
- demonstrate your knowledge of the main causes and course of the Jihad (Holy War).
- evaluate the Consequences of the Fulani Conquest of Hausaland



## 2.3 Growth and Organisation of the Hausa and the Fulani Kingdom

Each of the Hausa states were a city state which comprised the walled capital and its immediate surroundings, and the neighbouring district consisting of villages and hamlets. Some states grew stronger than the others. Among the leading states were Kano, Zaria and Kastina. By the eighteenth century Kastina had become not only a great centre of Islamic learning in Hausaland but also a great trade terminus. Visiting Hausaland in 1851, the German explorer, Heinrich Barth, recorded his impression as follows; Kastina during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries seems to have been the chief city of ---- Negroland and as well in commercial and political importance as other aspects. As could be expected, not all the fourteen states in Hausaland developed the same institutions. However, there were many which were common to most of the states.

### 2.3.1 Political Organisation/Political Administration

The Fulani introduced centralised system of government after conquering the Hausa land. This gave rise to the Hausa- Fulani traditional or pre-colonial system being known as a centralised government.

The caliphate was divided into emirates and each emirate was headed by an Emir. He had the responsibility of making laws, enforcing them and maintaining peace and order in his emirate. He was expected to administer the emirate in accordance with the provisions of the Islamic and sharia laws.

However, each emir was assisted in the administration of the emirate by a number of advisers. These were:

- Sarkin Fada:** - The spokesman of the Emir and organiser of palace workers
- Waziri:** - The Prime Minister of the Emirate
- Galadima:** - The Administrator of the capital city
- Madawaki-** The commander and Head of the Emirate Army
- Magaji:** - Government Treasurer in-charge of the government treasury
- Sarkin Dan Doka:** - Inspector General of Police Force Called Dan Doka
- Sarkin Ruwa:** - Minister in-charge of Water Resources
- Sarkin Pawa:** - Head of Chairman of Butchers at the Abattoirs
- Yari:** - Chief Superintendent of Prisons in the Emirate

From the start, each Hausa state grew around the original settlement or principal trading centre of the area. As time wore on, many neighbouring smaller settlements came under the control of the ruler in the principal city, which thus became the capital and chief market centre for the area.

Largely because of political and trading rivalries, each principal city was, generally, walled for protection against external attacks. Together with the surrounding communities over which it had influence, the principal city became the centre of an independent city state similar to those which existed in ancient Greece.

At the head of the city state was the Sarki, or king, who had under him many subordinate local rulers who were, in some cases, members of the royal family.

As noted above, there was no uniform system of government throughout Hausaland. But there were common characteristics. Under the over-all authority of the Sarki, the machinery of state was run by a number of important state officials. Typical of the officials in a Hausa state were the following;

The Galadima; he was often the heir but, in some states, he was always a eunuch; he was left in charge of the capital when the king was away from his seat of government.

The Sarkin Fada, who was the chief official of the royal household sat with the Sarki to hear grievances.

The Madawaki (in some places known as the Waziri); as Commander-in-Chief, he ranked next after the Sarki. In many ways his position was like that of the modern prime minister. He advised the king on many important state matters, including the appointment to important positions. He summoned councillors to meetings. He replied to the Sarki's address on ceremonial occasions.

The Magaji; he was in charge of the state treasury.

The Yari; he was in charge of prison affairs.

Other state officials were:

The Sarkin Dogari, who was in charge of the king's bodyguard, and  
The Sarkin Yan Doka, who headed the police, and kept in custody suspected criminals awaiting trial. He was also responsible for administering punishment to convicted persons. Although each city state was independent, and there never really existed in Hausaland what

today would be described as a federation, the city states developed certain ties which bound them together. This was found convenient for the purposes of collective protection against external enemies.

The chronicles record that many states had priest-kings. When from the late sixteenth century Islam was firmly established, the Sarki exercised great powers. But they could not become absolute rulers, because in most states, like Kano, from the time of Rimfa, the council of state could check the Sarki's official actions.

### **2.3.2 Administration of Justice/Judicial Administration**

The traditional judicial administration of Hausa-Fulani was based on the Islamic legal system called Sharia. Sharia courts were established throughout the Emirates and each was headed by a trained Sharia Court Judge called Alkali. The Emir, despite this provision, remained the head who had the final say in deciding critical judgments.

The chief justice of the Sharia courts was called Grand Khadi. Village heads settled minor disputes in their villages but more serious and criminal cases were referred to the Emir for final and adequate settlement.

As in modern times, justice was administered by a hierarchy of courts. The district head served as judge in minor cases. Appeals could be made to the superior courts of the king. Serious cases fall under the jurisdiction of the Sarki and his counsellors, advised by the chief Alkali. As the state came more and more under Islamic influence, the qadi (magistrate learned in the Islamic law) played an important role in the administration of justice.

### **2.4. Economic and other affairs**

Like other Sudanese kingdoms, the Hausa state benefited from the trans-Saharan trade, and trade with the southern kingdoms in the forest zone, notably the Yoruba and Benin states and other trading routes such as the following:

(a) There is evidence that they had trading links with Asante, Dagomba and Gonja, all in the present-day Republic of Ghana. In addition, the Hausa established prosperous trading links with Kanem- Bornu, with Mali and, later, with the Songhai Empire. The most important article of trade was salt, natron, kola nuts, hides and eunuchs. As the states developed, wealth was also derived from the sale of the products made from wood, metal and clay. There was also a brisk trade in slaves in Hausaland. Describing the crafts of the Hausa, Leo Africanus wrote: "The (Hausa) people are in general, very civilised. They have many

weavers and shoe-makers who make shoes like those that the Romans used to wear; and these they export to Timbuktu and Gao”

(b) As well as the profits of trade, the states derived revenue from the different taxes which were levied. What Leo Africanus said of the state of Guangara which later became part of Kastina was true of all other states. He wrote; “He {the king} draws great revenue from dealing in goods and from commercial taxes”.

The following were the principal taxes:

1. Zakat or Zakka was income tax collected for charities;
2. Jangali, or tax levied on livestock;
3. Kharaj, or land tax;
4. Jizyah (or gandu) was a capitation or poll tax levied on conquered states often paid in the form of slaves
5. Gaisua was tribute from vassal rulers.

In addition to these were special professional taxes.

(c)The revenue was used for social services and to maintain magnificent courts and other state institutions, including the army.

(d) The wealth of these states unfortunately attracted the envy of stronger neighbouring empires. Both Kastina and Kano fell into the hands of Bornu and Songhai for a period of time.

### **2.4.1 The Army**

The different states set up and maintained strong armies. Most of the rulers could import superior weapons through their contacts with the merchants from the north and the Middle East. The armies included both foot-soldiers and cavalry. Speaking about the state of Guangara which later became part of Kastina, Leo Africanus said that state was inhabited by a great number of people who are governed by the king with more than 7,000 infantries armed with bows, and 500 foreign cavalries on call. About the middle of the fifteenth century Hausa armies started using muskets which were acquired through their contacts with Kanem-Bornu.

#### **Self-Assessment Exercises 1**

- |  |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explain briefly the political structure of the Hausa States.</li> <li>2. What is the strength of the Army of the Hausa Kingdom.</li> </ol> |
|--|

### **2.4.2 Religious Affairs**

The Emir is the religious leader of his people, whose duty is to ensure that commandments of Allah are obeyed in his territory. This accounts

for the great authority which was wielded by the Emirs and which made them such suitable rulers even under the British protectorate.

The official religion was Islam, Quran was used as the holy book where all the teachings of religion were contained and Prophet Mohammed is the prophet and Messenger of Allah. The teachings that were contained in the Quran include the following:

A good Muslim must fight a Jihad at least once in his life time. If such a person dies in the process he would go to paradise. It is mandatory for all Muslims to perform hajj or pilgrimage to Mecca in the holy land at least once in the person's life time. Other Islamic injunctions include the following.

- i) A good Muslim must not marry more than four wives.
- ii) A good Muslim must abstain from drinking alcohol
- iii) A good Muslim must fast during Ramadan period.

When Islam was introduced to Hausaland, at first its influence was limited to the royal courts. Islamic teaching affected many aspects of the life of the states though the indigenous religion remained untouched in many parts.

As happened in other parts of the Western Sudan, Islam was introduced to Hausaland by zealous Muslim merchants. The Hausa themselves claim that Islam was introduced to them from Bornu by one Al-Maghili. Other traditions say that Al-Maghili came from Algeria. He had such a reputation that on request he wrote for the king of Kano the celebrated manual, the Obligations of Princes. It was not until the fourteenth century that organised Fulani missionaries from the empire of Mali started the work of conversion in Hausaland on a large scale. By the beginning of the fifteenth century the religion had taken a firm root, notably in the principal cities.

Islam did not spread to all parts of Hausaland at the same time. Some areas embraced the religion much earlier than others. Thus, according to the Kano Chronicle, one of the first Hausa rulers to embrace Islam was the king of the Kutumbawa dynasty, called Yaji (c. 1349-85)

As Islam became established, scholars from Sankore (Timbuctu) introduced Islamic learning to Hausaland. Among the great Sankore scholars who either visited or lived for a time in Kano and influenced the history of Hausaland were the following;

Al-Hajj Ahmad, who taught theology there towards the end of the fifteenth century; Makluf ibn Ali, a great lawyer and geographer, who

visited Kastina and Kano in about 1500; Muhammad ibn Ahmad, who on arriving in Hausaland in about 1520, established a great reputation as a qadi (district magistrate) in Kastina



## 2.5 Summary

The unit has thrown light on the general overview of the emergence of the growth and organisation of the Hausas and the Fulani. It also highlights the economic activities of the Hausa State. The Hausa state benefited from the trans Saharan trade, and trade with the southern kingdoms in the forest zone, notably the Yoruba and Benin states. There is evidence that they had trading links with Asante, Dagomba and Gonja, all in the present-day Republic of Ghana. In addition, the Hausa established prosperous trading links with Kanem- Bornu, with Mali and, later, with the Songhai Empire.



## 2.6 References/Further Readings/Web Resources

- Anyaele, J.U. (2003). *Comprehensive Government*. Lagos: A Johnson Publishers, Ltd.
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**2.7 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)****Answer 1**

The armies included both foot-soldiers and cavalry with 7,000 infantrymen armed with bows and 500 foreign cavalries on call.

**Answer 2**

The political structure of the Hausa state is that the caliphate was divided into emirates and each emirate was headed by an Emir. He had the responsibility of making laws, enforcing them and maintaining peace and order in his emirate. He was expected to administer the emirate in accordance with the provisions of the Islamic and sharia laws. However, each emir was assisted in the administration of the emirate by a number of advisers.



## UNIT 3 SOME OUTSTANDING HAUSA RULERS

### Unit Structure

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Learning Outcomes
- 3.3 Some outstanding Hausa Rulers
  - 3.3.1 Some outstanding Hausa Rulers
  - 3.3.2 Kotal Kanta of Kebbi (1510- 45)
  - 3.3.3 Queen Amina of Zaria
- 3.4 Summary
- 3.5 References/Further Readings/Web Resources
- 3.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)



### 3.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the contribution of some outstanding rulers of the Hausa and the Fulani Empire.
- analyse the nature of the traditional administration of Hausa and the Fulani Empire.
- demonstrate your knowledge of the main causes and course of the Jihad (Holy War).
- evaluate the Consequences of the Fulani Conquest of Hausaland



### 2.3 3.3 Some Outstanding Hausa Rulers

#### 3.3.1 Some Outstanding Hausa Rulers

The Hausa/Fulani Empire produced great rulers, that leave their imprint in the sand of history in various arts of statecraft. Here are some of such leaders with their track records.

#### Muhammad Rimfa of Kano (1463-99)

The Kano Chronicle paid the following tribute to this great ruler of Kano; “He can have no equal in might, from the time of the founding of Kano, until it shall end.... Surely there was no Sarki more powerful than Rimfa”

Rimfa’s achievements show that these words were not far from the truth, even if at the time of writing the author did not know what the future had in store for Kano.

1. Rimfa made Kano invulnerable, by extending and strengthening the city walls. He built a magnificent palace which was named after him, the Dakin Rimfa.
2. To promote large-scale commercial activities, he built one of the greatest markets of the time, the kurmi market.
3. Knowing the importance of having a strong army both for internal peace-keeping and for offensive and defensive duties, he introduced the Dawakin Zaggi, an army formation in which foot-soldiers fought side by side with the horse soldiers, from whom the former took over. It was largely because of this formation that Rimfa was able to defeat his opponent in the sixteenth century wars with Kastina.
4. In the field of administration, Rimfa introduced the Council of Nine, called the Tara-ta-Kano, corresponding to Bornu's Council of Twelve. The Council included one eunuch who was in charge of the treasury. Eunuchs were also in charge of the town and palace guards and controlled the royal household.
5. His reforms extended to religion. He successfully wiped out all elements of paganism in Kano. He had the sacred tree in the city cut down, and he built a minaret on the site. Furthermore, he started the public celebration of the annual festival, the Id-al-Fitr, which follows Ramadan.
6. To add a touch of splendour to the court, he started the use of ostrich feather fans called Figinni on ceremonial occasions.
7. For these and many other things, Rimfa is regarded as the greatest ruler in Hausaland prior to the Fulani Jihad.

### 3.3.2 Kotal Kanta of Kebbi (1510- 45)

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Kebbi was a vassal state of Askia the Great. In the second decade of the century this progressive state gained its independence from Songhai. This was the work of her great military leader, Kotal Kanta.

1. After Kanta had assisted Askia the Great to win Air, a quarrel broke out between them over the spoils. This resulted in a war (1515-16). Kanta inflicted a crushing defeat on Askia's men and gained his country's independence. He then developed Surname into an important capital.
2. Following this victory, Kanta launched a successful attack on Air, Gobir, Kastina, Kano, Daura and Zaria.
3. He strengthened his army to protect and police his expanding kingdom.
4. How did he manage to control his expanding kingdom? Following the example of other Sudanese rulers, Kanta allowed the vassal states a considerable degree of self-rule and local

autonomy, except for Zamfara and a couple of other states which proved too obstinate.

5. To offset the growing influence of the Fulani, Kanta refused to allow the Fulani immigrants to build houses in Kebbi. The Fulani resentment which this decision caused was later one of the reasons for the attack on Kebbi by the Fulani Jihadists.
6. The chronicles ranked Kanta among the greatest rulers in Hausaland as indeed, under Kanta there was a united Hausa empire. Even Muhammed Bello, Sultan of Sokoto, and son of Uthman Dan Fodio, who had very little regard for ancient Kebbi, wrote the following words about Kebbi under Kanta; “No other kingdom in the past history of these {Hausa} countries ever equalled it {Kebbi} in power”

Talking about the garrison town of Kebbi, Sultan Bello added;” Their ruins, though it is about a hundred years since their cities were broken, surpass any we have ever seen”. The credit for this was due to Kanta. He died at the ripe old age of eighty, after a successful reign lasting nearly forty years.

### **3.3.3 Queen Amina of Zaria**

Like Kebbi, Zaria rose to prominence in the Western Sudan in the sixteenth century. The state owed much of its development to its ablest ruler, Queen Amina, daughter of King Bakwa, the founder of the capital of Zaria.

Tradition tells us that Amina became famous for building walled camps which later developed into important townships. One need not attribute to her the introduction of walled towns in Hausaland.

But the fact that up to this day, ancient town walls in Hausaland are called *Ganuwar Amina*, meaning “Amina’s Walls”; would seem to indicate the importance of Amina’s work.

The Kano Chronicle recorded the following about the queen; At this time, Zaria, under Queen Amina, conquered all the towns as far as Kwararafa and Nupe. Every town paid tribute to her. The Sarkin Nupe sent forty eunuchs and ten thousand kolas to her. She first had eunuchs and kolas in Hausaland. Her conquest extended over thirty-four years. In her time the whole of the products of the west were brought to Hausaland”.

This passage points to several of Amina’s achievements.

- (a) She was a successful conqueror who annexed several territories to her kingdom.
- (b) Her royal treasury was replenishing by the tributes paid by her vassal states.
- (c) During her reign trade from many parts of the Western Sudan was passing through Zaria.

Although much of what has been credited to Queen Amina may be legendary, the very fact that such legends exist would seem to indicate that she was a dynamic personality. In the words of Dr C. C. Ifemesia; “While make allowance for some exaggeration in the accounts (about Queen Amina), they nevertheless, serve to indicate the power and influence which Zaria, under Sarauniya (Queen) Amina, wielded in the late sixteenth century Northern Nigeria”.

The power of Zaria began to decline after the glorious reign of Queen Amina in the seventeenth century. This was as a result of the frequent invasions by the rulers of Kwararafa or Jukun. Indeed, the eighteenth century was a period of incessant inter-state warfare. This state of affairs weakened the Hausa states, and made it easier for the Fulani to conquest the territories in the first two decades of the nineteenth century.

### **In-text Question**

1. Assess the importance of the career of Muhammad Rimfa of Kano.

### **Answer**

Muhammad Rimfa is the greatest ruler of Kano in the pre-colonial era.

### **Self-Assessment Exercises 2**

1. What is the Queen Amina of Zaria famous for until date?
2. Discuss a brief feature of the judicial administration of the Hausa States



### **3.4 Summary**

The unit has thrown light on the achievements of some outstanding Hausa rulers in the development of their states. The above analyses show that some Hausa rulers had a great impact on the development of their state. Among these the most outstanding were Muhammad Rimfa of Kano, Kanta of Kebbi, and Queen Amina of Zaria.



### 3.5 References/Further Readings/Web Resources

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### 3.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)

#### Answer 1

Queen Amina became famous for building walled camps which later developed into important townships. One need to attribute to her the introduction of walled towns in Hausaland.

But the fact that up to this day, ancient town walls in Hausaland are called Ganuwar Amina, meaning “Amina’s Walls”; would seem to indicate the importance of Amina’s work.

#### Answer 2

The judicial administration of Hausa-Fulani was based on the Islamic legal system called Sharia. Sharia courts were established throughout the Emirates and each was headed by a trained Sharia Court Judge called Alkali. The Emir, despite this provision, remained the head who had the final say in deciding critical judgments.

The chief justice of the Sharia courts was called Grand Khadi. Village heads settled minor disputes in their villages but more serious and criminal cases were referred to the Emir for final and adequate settlement.

As in modern times, justice was administered by a hierarchy of courts. The district head served as judge in minor cases. Appeals could be made to the superior courts of the king

## UNIT 4 FULANI CONQUEST OF HAUSALAND

### Unit Structure

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Learning Outcomes
- 4.3 Fulani Conquest of Hausaland
  - 4.3.1 Fulani Conquest of Hausaland
  - 4.3.2 The (Jihad) Holy War
  - 4.3.3
- 4.4 Summary
- 4.5 References/Further Readings/Web Resources
- 4.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)



### 4.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the contribution of some outstanding rulers of the Hausa and the Fulani Empire.
- analyse the nature of the traditional administration of Hausa and the Fulani Empire.
- demonstrate your knowledge of the main causes and course of the Jihad (Holy War).
- evaluate the Consequences of the Fulani Conquest of Hausaland



### 4.3. Fulani Conquest of Hausaland

#### 4.3.1 Fulani Conquest of Hausaland

The Fulani conquest of Hausaland can best be understood by having a background knowledge of the most prominent figure of the historical feat.

#### 4.3.2 Uthman Dan Fodio

Uthman, son of Fodio, was born in 1754 in Hausa state of Gobir. After receiving rudimentary Islamic education in his native Gobir. Dan Fodio continued his education at Agades, under the celebrated scholar, Jibril ibn Umar.

Returning to his native land at the age of about twenty, Dan Fodio set himself the task of teaching the pure form of Islam. He settled at Degel

where he attracted many followers who joined him in his crusade for reviving the orthodox Islamic religion. Dan Fodio and his disciples launched an intensive campaign against various social evils, such as corruption in public life, economic injustice and adulterated Islamic practices.

A renowned scholar, Dan Fodio was engaged by the ruler of Gobir to educate his children, among whom it is believed, was the future ruler, Yunfa.

Dan Fodio became so popular as a result of his campaign against the pagan practices of the kings of Hausaland and the prevalent social and political injustices that the king of Gobir came to regard him as a dangerous man. The ruler, who was now Yunfa himself, realised that unless Dan Fodio was checked, he would cause dissension in the kingdom. Yunfa therefore withdrew all concessions granted to Dan Fodio by his father, and indeed organised a plot which nearly resulted in the assassination of Dan Fodio at Alkalawa, the capital of Gobir.

In the face of real danger to his life, and following the example of the Prophet Muhammad in A.D. 622, Dan Fodio and his disciples, including his father, his brother, Abdullah, and his son Muhammed Bello, fled from Degel to Gudu. This flight occurred on 21 February 1804, a date which, like the original Hijra of the Prophet, has since been observed in Northern Nigeria by Muslims with special reverence.

Gudu now became the centre of Dan Fodio's crusading activities. Thousands of followers flocked to him. A new era in Hausaland was in sight. Dan Fodio's disciples elected him Amir al-Muminin, meaning the "Commander of the Believer" and a holy war was declared on all pagans. This again copied the action taken by Muhammad at Medina, and was to lead to the creation of a new Muslim empire.

As Amir al-Muminin, meaning the "Commander of the Believer", Usman Dan fodio underscore the various leadership expositions for the effective rulership by stating some vices which destroy a state the empire. This was

clearly stated in **Bayan wujub al-Hijira ala 'I-Ibad:**

*One of the swiftest ways of destroying a state is to give preference to one particular tribe over another, or to show favour to one group of people over another and near those who should be kept away and keep away those who should be drawn near . . . Other [destructive] practices are arrogance and conceit which take away virtues.*

*These are six qualities, which cannot be tolerated in a ruler: lying, envy, breach of promise, sharpness of temper, miserliness and cowardice.*



*Another is the seclusion of the ruler from his subjects, because when the oppressor is sure that the oppressed person will not have access to the ruler, he becomes even more oppressive . . . O king, you have kept yourself secluded from your subjects, by means of chamberlains and doors and you have set up high mountains before them while God's door is open to petitioners; there is neither chamberlain nor door-keeper there. A state can endure with unbelief but it cannot endure with injustice. (El-Masari F.H. 1978:53).*

The above definitely form the cardinal principles of the rulers of the Hausa/Fulani kingdom.

#### **4.4.1 Muhammad Bello**

When Dan Fodio became certain of success, he divided the territory he had conquered in two, he allotted one part with its capital at Gwandu, to his brother Abdullah, and the other part to his son Bello who established his new capital at Sokoto, but the western province continues to recognise the Sultan of Sokoto as liege-lord. Dan Fodio retired to live a life of scholarship and asceticism. After Fodio's death, his son was proclaimed Amir al-Muminin, or leader of the faithful, and thus he became both the political and spiritual leader of the new empire.

Muhammad Bello's first task was to cope with an internal insurrection and to repel external attacks including:

- (a) Internally, he successfully subdued a rebellion led by the Hausa scholar, Abd al-Salam, and also put down risings in Kebbi and Zamfara.
- (b) Bello dealt swiftly with a threatened attack from the Tuareg in the north who gained the support of Gobir.
- (c) At about the same time, a force from Bornu under the leadership of Al-Kanemi attacked the caliphate from the east. Bello was able to repulse the Bornu forces.  
Having restored peace to the caliphate, Muhammad Bello next turned his attention to reforming many aspects of national life and statecraft.
- (a) To bring about unity, he merged all members of the caliphate, Hausa and Fulani alike, into one homogenous people. Every member of the community felt he belonged to the new empire and shared a common destiny with his fellow citizens. He gave equal opportunities in affairs of government to his kinsmen and the Hausa alike.
- (b) To strengthen his own position, he reduced the powers of the Fulani military chiefs. Indeed, to ensure the peaceful

- administration of the caliphate, in some areas he replaced these military leaders with learned Mallams as local rulers.
- (c) While remaining both the political and religious head of the caliphate, Muhammad Bello allowed a considerable degree of local autonomy and independence of action to the Emirs, the rulers of the constituent states of the empire. The emirs were to play an important role in Hausaland, especially during the period of the colonial rule in Northern Nigeria.
  - (d) Remembering the original objective of the jihad, Muhammad Bello set himself the task of reviving and encouraging Islamic learning. He himself took the lead in scholarship and produced many books of outstanding merit and of permanent value. His correspondence with Al-Kanemi of Bornu, for example, is regarded as a particularly valuable history of the jihad.
  - (e) Bello also saw the need to build frontier walled cities, Ribats, as a protective measure against possible external attacks.
  - (f) To ensure their loyalty, Muhammad Bello required the emirs of the caliphate to pay him annual tributes at the time of the Muslim festivals. Individual office holders also paid tribute or gave presents to the Sultan of Sokoto. It was one of the greatest tributes to Muhammad Bello that, although the payment of tributes was voluntary, the emirs in fact competed among themselves as to who could give most, this being regarded as evidence of their support and loyalty to the Amir al-Muminin.

Muhammad Bello died in 1837, having ruled successfully the new Sokoto caliphate for twenty years. Al Haji Sa'id, a Quranic official who served under Sultan Ali (1842-59), Muhammad Bello's son and successor, has paid his master's father the following tribute; The Hausa country flourished greatly under his [Bello's] rule. He spread respect for learning, and scholars came from different countries.

He was very solicitous for them welfare; whether they came from east, west, south or north. He spent much time in writing; every time he finished one of his works, he made it known to the public and had them read it, and then set himself to writing another volume. If anyone posed him a problem, he made it at once the subject of a publication. If he found out that such and such persons were in disagreement {with him} on a point, he at once composed a treatise on problem, supported himself by the fruits of his work, without asking for upkeep from the public purse...He was sympathetic to the people and full of care for them, calm, patient, indifferent to the wealth of other men. A skilful administrator, he watched over the work of the qadis, quashed their judgements if these had been given under the influence of passion, never allowing them to grow slack in their work. Ruddy of complexion, tall, bald of head, wearing long and tufted beads; such was his appearance.

#### **4.4.2 The (Jihad) Holy War**

Tension rose to such a pitch between Yunfa of Gobir and Dan Fodio that war became inevitable. Yunfa was the first to attack. His men followed Dan Fodio to Gudu but were repulsed. This initial success, like that of the Prophet Muhammad in Medina, convinced Fodio's men that Allah was on their side. Soon after this Dan Fodio produced two important manifestoes, these urged his followers to believe in the rightness of the cause of Allah, and to fight the animism, the non-orthodox Islamic practices and the social and economic injustices which had plagued Hausaland for far too long.

#### **4.5.1 Main Causes and course of the (Jihad) Holy War**

Many factors, some of which we have already noted in passing, combined to bring about the armed conflict between Dan Fodio and the rulers of the Hausa states, which was to result in the creation of a Fulani empire in Northern Nigeria. Some of these causes were religious, but others were political, economic and social.

(a) In the course of several centuries Islam in Hausaland had become corrupt. Animism and other pagan beliefs had deeply affected the conduct of Islam. The first aim of Dan Fodio's crusade was to bring about a lasting reform in religion and so, restore the pure form of Islam in Hausaland. Conflict with the rulers of the land was inevitable since they were not prepared to allow such far-reaching reforms in their kingdoms.

(b) Because of their education and their commercial abilities, many Fulani in Hausaland felt resentful at having to serve under oppressive Hausa rulers, most of whom were illiterate, irreligious, and corrupt. Dan Fodio's attempts to bring about real reforms obviously aroused the bitter hostility of the powerful and autocratic rulers of the Hausa states.

(c) The practice of enslaving Muslims and selling them into slavery was common among Hausa rulers. They were also enlisted into "pagan" armies which fought against fellow Muslims. Dan Fodio considered this to be against the precepts of Islam.

(d) For centuries the Fulani and many ordinary Hausa citizens had been subjected to the oppressive rule and crippling taxation imposed by the Hausa rulers. This was another cause of discontent which made many Hausa prepared to join the Fulani in the struggle against their rulers.

(e) It may also be mentioned that many followers of Dan Fodio were looking for an opportunity to gain body.

#### 4.5.2 Course of the war

After the initial success of the Jihadists in Gudu, Dan Fodio's men carried the offensive into Gobir. They had some success, but were unable to take the capital. After repeated attacks, however, Alkawala fell to the Fulani invaders in 1808, and the ruler Yunfa was killed. Having gained a stronghold in Gobir, Dan Fodio's generals embarked on a series of conquests in different directions.

(a) Enthusiasts from different Hausa states came to Dan Fodio to offer them support; they took flags as signs of the reformer's authority and started Jihads in their respective states. By 1809, the important Hausa states of Zaria, Kastina and Kano had all come under the control of the Fulani.

(b) The Fulani turned their attention to Bornu in the east, where they scored a temporary success. The Mai of Bornu appealed to a veteran soldier, Al-Kanemi, who succeeded in repulsing the Fulani.

(c) The Fulani swept southwards, and took Nupe and Adamawa.

(d) With the conquest of these southern states, the gates were now opened for a further southward thrust into Yorubaland. In 1817, the commander of the Oyo army, Kakanfo Afonja, who was local ruler of Ilorin, rebelled against his overlord, the Alafin of Oyo and invited the Fulani to come to his support. To the Fulani this was a most welcome invitation. Before long Afonja realised the mistake he had made. Having helped him to gain independence from the Alafin, the Fulani began to assert their authority in Ilorin. The Fulani scholar, Abdul Salami, Mallam Alimi's son, usurped the throne of Ilorin, and caliphate. Ilorin was to remain under the sphere of influence of Northern Nigeria until 1967, when the modern Republic of Nigeria was into twelve federal states, and

Ilorin regained its identity as the Kwara State, free from the influence of Sokoto.

(e) Determined on pushing their conquest coastwards until they could "dip the Quran in the sea" the Fulani forces marched down into the heart of the Yoruba Empire of Oyo, which at that time was weakened by internal strife, until they were halted and repulsed by Ibadan in 1840.

#### 4.6.1 Reasons for Rapid Success

Within a matter of two decades, as we have noted, the band of Fulani conquerors had annexed all the Hausa states, as well as Nupe, Adamawa, Ilorin and the western part of Bornu. Other reasons for the Success of the Othman Dan Fodio Jihad include:

(a) The state of affairs in the Hausa states was one factor. As we explained earlier, before the Jihad, the Fulani and many of the ordinary

Hausa elements in present-day Northern Nigeria had become discontented with their rulers. Thus, the followers of Dan Fodio, whether Fulani or Hausa, saw in the Jihad a golden opportunity to rid themselves of their unpopular rulers, and they therefore fought with great determination.

(b) While the Fulani were united in their dedication to a common cause, the Hausa states were, on the other hand, disunited and weakened by internecine wars. Thus, instead of presenting a united front against a common enemy, state after state had to face the ferocious invaders alone. Thus, when Gobir was attacked and Yunfa appealed to the other states for help, he received no response.

(c) The two manifestoes issued by Dan Fodio calling upon the “faithful” to fight a relentless war against all forms of “paganism” in order to revive the true worship of Islam also encouraged the flagbearers and their followers to fight with ruthless determination.

(d) In the case of Ilorin, the treachery of Afonja opened the way for Fulani infiltration of Yorubaland.

#### **4.6.2 Consequences of the Fulani Conquest of Hausaland**

The consequences of the Fulani conquest of the Hausa States in the first two decades of the nineteenth century were many and far-reaching and it include:

- (a) With the defeat of the Hausa States came the end of the Hausa dynasties. In their place emerged a powerful, united empire or caliphate, with its headquarters at Sokoto. The Sultan of Sokoto became not only the religious but also, the political head of the numerous emirates which constituted Northern Nigeria down to the dawn of Nigeria’s independence in 1960.
- (b) The unification of the Hausa states meant the end of the rivalry which had crippled their progress in the eighteenth century.
- (c) In atmosphere of peace which now prevailed throughout the caliphate, trade prospered, and the pure form of Islam spread. The standard of learning also increased.
- (d) The success of the jihad in Hausaland was infectious. Many admirers took inspiration from Dan Fodio and his son, Bello, and started reformist movements in their own countries, for example in Messina, Bornu, the empire of Samori Toure, etc.
- (e) The solidarity of the united Fulani emirates has persisted to this day. Even though today the territories have been carved up to form separate states within the federation of modern Nigeria, the Hausa States still share a common cultural and religious history.

(f) From the time of their successful invasion of Yorubaland the ascendancy of the Fulani was to be a major factor in Nigerian history.

This was so even though they failed in their ultimate ambition of moving down to the coast until, as they put it, they “dipped the Quran in the sea”. It was not by accident that, on attaining independence in 1960, the first Federal Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa came from the former Fulani Empire in Northern Nigeria.

### Self-Assessment Exercises 3

1. Give an account of the main consequences of the Fulani conquest of Hausaland.
2. Explain the contribution of Usman Dan Fodio and Muhammad Bello



### 4.7 Summary

The unit has thrown light on the general overview of the emergence of the growth and organisation of the Hausas and the Fulani. It also shows that the Hausa/Fulani states, each unit was a city state which comprised the walled capital and its immediate surroundings, and the neighbouring district consisting of villages and hamlets and some states grew stronger than the others and not all the fourteen states in Hausaland developed the same institutions.

The study further thrown light on the achievements of some outstanding Hausa rulers in the development of their states by also tracing the historical background of the Fulani conquest of Hausaland.

The unit, show that some Hausa rulers had a great impact on the development of their state. Among these the most outstanding were Muhammad Rimfa of Kano, Kanta of Kebbi, and Queen Amina of Zaria.

### Figure 3 Some Present-day Traditional Rulers of Northern Nigeria



#### 4.8 References/Further Reading

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1. [Visit youtube and watch Hausa Pre- colonial Administrative system](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmnC6xxhtsY)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmnC6xxhtsY>

Figure 1 Cultural dressed Fulani celebrating Nigeria Independence  
<https://www.alamy.com/hausafulani-men-display-their-traditional-costumes-during-the-national-festival-for-arts-and-culture-nafest-in-edo-state-nigeria-image3315>

Figure 2 Hausa/Fulani Male Costumes  
<https://www.alamy.com/hausafulani-men-display-their-traditional-costumes-during-the-national-festival-for-arts-and-culture-nafest-in-edo-state-nigeria-image3315>

Figure 3 Some Present-day Traditional Rulers of Northern Nigeria  
<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/235212-ethnic-agitation-weve-heard-loud-clear-osinbajo-tells-nigerians.html>



#### 4.8 Possible Answers to SAEs

These are the answers to the SAEs within the content. The answers are arranged in accordance with the way the SAEs appear in the content.

#### Answers to SAEs

##### Answer 1

The defeat of the Hausa States came the end of the Hausa dynasties. In their place emerged a powerful, united empire or caliphate, with its headquarters at Sokoto. The Sultan of Sokoto became not only the religious but also, the political head of the numerous emirates which constituted Northern Nigeria down to the dawn of Nigeria's independence in 1960. And also, the unification of the Hausa states meant the end of the rivalry which had crippled their progress in the eighteenth century.



**Answer 2**

Usman Dan Fodio became so popular as a result of his campaign against the pagan practices of the kings of Hausaland and the prevalent social and political injustices that the king of Gobir came to regard him as a dangerous man.

As a renowned scholar, he attracted many followers who joined him in his crusade for reviving the orthodox Islamic religion. Dan Fodio and his disciples launched an intensive campaign against various social evils, such as corruption in public life, economic injustice and adulterated Islamic practices.

**Muhammad Bello**

- (a) To bring about unity, he merged all members of the caliphate, Hausa and Fulani alike, into one homogenous people. Every member of the community felt he belonged to the new empire and shared a common destiny with his fellow citizens. He gave equal opportunities in affairs of government to his kinsmen and the Hausa alike.
- (b) To strengthen his own position, he reduced the powers of the Fulani military chiefs. Indeed, to ensure the peaceful administration of the caliphate, in some areas he replaced these military leaders with learned Mallams as local rulers.
- (c) While remaining both the political and religious head of the caliphate, Muhammad Bello allowed a considerable degree of local autonomy and independence of action to the Emirs, the rulers of the constituent states of the empire.

**MODULE 4**

Unit 1	The Origins of the Yoruba
Unit 2	Rise and Expansion of Oyo Empire
Unit 3	Government of Oyo Empire
Unit 4	Strength and Survival of Oyo Empire
Unit 5	Decline of Oyo Empire

**UNIT 1 THE ORIGINS OF THE YORUBA****Unit Structure**

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 The Origins of the Yoruba
  - 1.3.1 The Origins of the Yoruba
  - 1.3.2
- 1.4 Summary
- 1.5 References/Further Readings/Web Resources
- 1.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)

**1.1 Introduction**

In this unit, attempt is made to present to you a historical background and general overview of the origins of the Yoruba. We are also concerned with how the government of Oyo was administered as a great Empire for nearly four centuries through her effective form of government. This was made unique by a system of checks and balances. You will also read about the expeditions of the great ruler in the quest to conquer and expand the kingdom. Together the relationship of the kingdom with other neighbouring kingdoms.

**1.2 Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the origins of the Yoruba race.
- analyse the various expedition embark upon by some great Yoruba rulers towards their neighbours.
- demonstrate your knowledge of the various rulers of Oyo Kingdom.
- evaluate the performance of rulership of the earliest rulers and later rulers.



### 1.3 The Origins of the Yoruba

#### 1.3.1 The Origins of the Yoruba

The Yorubas form a large group united more by language than culture. The Yorubas trace their origin to Oduduwa who was the founder of the Yoruba kingdom. Oduduwa had seven sons who later founded the first seven kingdoms of the Yoruba land and these kingdoms were united under a central leader known as Alaafin of Oyo.

Hatred, jealousy, etc made the first seven kingdoms to split into fourteen new kingdoms and the central leadership now changed from the Alaafin of Oyo to Ooni of Ife who is the spiritual Head of the Yoruba. The king in Yoruba land Oyo is regarded as the political headquarters of the Yoruba and was the most developed kingdom in the Yoruba traditional society and its administration are accepted as a model or a representation of the Yoruba. is called Oba; the Yoruba kingdoms were headed by the Oba who must be a descendant of the Oduduwa.

Scholars have not yet been able to determine the true origins of the Yoruba. But the traditional stories are based upon two legendary accounts.

1. According to one legendary account, Oduduwa, the eldest son of Lamurudu, left Mecca, his ancestral home, as a result of his refusal to embrace Islam. With his followers, Oduduwa immigrated westwards into Africa, and finally halted in the present-day South West of Nigeria where he founded a settlement at Ile-Ife. In due course, as the population of Ile-Ife expanded, the sons or grandchildren of Oduduwa left the Yoruba cradle and founded for themselves and their followers the seven original states of the Yoruba. These were; Owu, Sabe, Popo, Ila, Ketu (now in Dahomey), Oyo and Benin. According to this legend, Oyo was founded by Oduduwa's youngest son, Oranmiyan. Probably the last foundation chronologically, Oyo was later to gain ascendancy over all the other Yoruba states.
2. Another legend, more mythical than the first, has it that Ile-Ife was the cradle of the creation of the world. At the dawn of time, we are told, the earth was covered with water. Then Olorun the supreme god sent his son Oduduwa down to the earth from the sky on a chain. (A chain preserved in Ile-Ife to this day is believed to be the celestial chain of the legend). Taking down with him a handful of earth, a cockerel and a palm nut, Oduduwa scattered the earth which formed the land where Ile-Ife was founded as a settlement. The cockerel dug a hole in which

Oduduwa sowed the palm nut; it sprung up into a large tree with many branches. The Yoruba traditions use this mythical story to explain the origins of the ruling families of an early Yoruba state.

### 1.3.2 Importance of the Legends

Although the above legends obviously have little historical accuracy, they do indicate one or two things about the very early history of the Yoruba.

- (a) Both legends point to Oduduwa as the founding father of the Yoruba people.
- (b) The legends also confirm the fact that Ile-Ife, in historical times, was the centre of dispersion of the later Yoruba kingdoms. This helps to explain why, to this day, all Yoruba people look to Ile-Ife as their original ancestral home. Indeed, the city and the Ooni of Ile-Ife as they occupy a special place in the political, social and the religious life of the Yoruba. All tradition rulers of the various Yoruba states had to be consecrated by the Ooni of Ile-Ife before they assumed office.  
In addition, it was regarded as sacrilegious for any Yoruba state to rise in arms against the state of Ile-Ife.
- (c) The legends seem to underline also the importance of the palm tree in the later economy of Yorubaland.
- (d) By describing one ancestor as the founder of both Oyo, for centuries the leading state of the Yoruba, and of Benin, the first legend attempted to teach posterity the close relations between the Yoruba and the Edo or Bini people.
- (e) It was historically true that, for a time, a large section of the southern Yoruba came under the imperial control of the Bini Empire. One can perhaps see in the first legend an attempt on the part of the Yoruba to stress the ancestral primacy of the Yoruba over their latter overlords.

#### In-text Question

How many Children did Oduduwa have?

#### Answer

Oduduwa had seven sons who later founded the first seven kingdoms of the Yoruba land and these kingdoms were united under a central leader known as Alaafin of Oyo.

#### Self-Assessment Exercises 1

1. What name is a king called in Yorubaland
2. Where is the political headquarters of the Yoruba kingdom?

**Figure 1 The Alafin of Oyo****Figure 2 The Oni of Ife**

#### 1.4 Summary

The unit has thrown light on the historical background and the general overview of the origins of the Yoruba. The above analyses show that according to legendary accounts, the Yoruba and the Edo or Bini in the Southern part of the present-day Federation of Nigeria were kinsmen. These legends confirm that both the Yoruba and the Bini were

descendants of Oranmiyan or Oranyan who was said to have founded the Yoruba state of Oyo and whose son, according to the legends, became first ruler of a new dynasty in the kingdom of Benin.



### **1.5 References/Further Reading**

- Anyaele, J.U. (2003). *Comprehensive Government*. Lagos: A Johnson Publishers, Ltd.
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## 1.6 Possible Answers to SAEs

These are the answers to the SAEs within the content. The answers are arranged in accordance with the way the SAEs appear in the content.

### Answers to SAEs 1

The King is called Oba and the Yoruba kingdoms were headed by the Oba who must be a descendant of the Oduduwa.

### Answer 2

Oyo is regarded as the political headquarters of the Yoruba and was the most developed kingdom in the Yoruba traditional society and its administration are accepted as a model or a representation of the Yoruba.

## UNIT 2 RISE AND EXPANSION OF OYO EMPIRE

### Unit Structure

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Learning Outcomes
- 2.3 Rise and Expansion of Oyo Empire
  - 2.3.1 Rise and Expansion of Oyo Empire
  - 2.3.2 Oranmiyan
- 2.4
  - 2.4.1 Less Successful Rulers
  - 2.4.2 Southwards Expansion
- 2.5 Summary
- 2.6 References/Further Readings/Web Resources
- 2.7 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)



### 2.1 Introduction

In this unit, attempt is made to present to you a historical background and general overview of the origins of the Yoruba. We are also concerned with how the government of Oyo was administered as a great Empire for nearly four centuries through her effective form of government. This was made unique by a system of checks and balances.

You will also read about the expeditions of the great ruler in the quest to conquer and expand the kingdom. Together the relationship of the kingdom with other neighbouring kingdoms.



### 2.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the origins of the Yoruba race.
- Analyse the various expedition embark upon by some great Yoruba rulers towards their neighbours.
- Demonstrate your knowledge of the various rulers of Oyo Kingdom.
- Evaluate the performance of rulership of the earliest rulers and later rulers.





## **2.3 Rise and Expansion of Oyo Empire**

### **2.3.1 Rise and Expansion of Oyo Empire**

As we noted, the Yoruba legends attribute the founding of Old Oyo to Oranmiyan, the youngest son of Oduduwa. As time went on, this Yoruba settlement grew and became the political headquarters of all Yorubaland and the metropolitan seat of one of the greatest West African empires. Ile-Ife remained the spiritual headquarters of the Yoruba, wherever they were, drew spiritual guidance and inspiration.

#### **A. Date of Foundation**

#### **B.**

Historians are not agreed as to when Old Oyo began to emerge as a state. But it is generally accepted that Oranmiyan's first settlement must have begun about the beginning of the fifteenth century or perhaps even earlier, if one accepts the view that Ile-Ife was founded in about the eleventh century A.D.

#### **B. Early Rulers**

In reading about the achievements attributed by legend to the early rulers, one is aware of the important work done by these men in founding the great empire of Oyo. Among the founding fathers the following have been immortalised in the myths and traditional history of the Yoruba.

### **2.3.2 Oranmiyan**

According to the legends, the founding father Oranmiyan must have possessed magical powers. He was said to have possessed both a warlike spirit and indomitable courage and to have set the small settlement of Oyo on the road to expansion.

#### **Ajaka**

Oranmiyan was succeeded by his son, Ajaka, who occupied the Oyo throne twice before his death, with an intervening period during which he was deposed. Learning his lesson from the failure of his first term of office, Ajaka's second period of rule saw him as a great conqueror. He succeeded in annexing some neighbouring territories.

## **Sango**

The legends ascribe more magical feats to sango than to any of the other early rulers. A great warrior, Sango is said to have possessed the power of breathing fire and smoke from his nostrils and of controlling thunder and lightning.

- (a) These legends seem to underline his great fighting spirit and courage and the extraordinary control he had over his kingdom and the tributary states he annexed.
- (b) So great must have been his achievements that the Yoruba later deified him in the form of a ram as the god of thunder and war. He was also held in so much reverence that, in words of two modern historians, G.T. Stride and C. Ifeka, “Throughout subsequent Yoruba history the dispatch of the symbols of Sango was sufficient to impose peace on quarrelling Yoruba states”

## **Kori**

Among the achievements of this ruler was the founding of the town of Ede as a frontier post; this town was to play an important role in both the offensive and defensive wars of Oyo.

### **2.4.1 Less Successful Rulers**

A number of other rulers who made varying contributions to the expansion of the empire ascended the Oyo throne after Kori

- (a) One of these was Onigbogi, in whose weak reign Old Oyo was sacked by her northern neighbours, the people of Nupe.
- (b) During the reign of his grandchild, Egonoju, the seat of government of Old Oyo had to be shifted to Oyo Igboho.
- (c) Later, under Abipa, Old Oyo reverted to its former position as capital of the kingdom.

## **Southwards Expansion**

From the time of Abipa onwards, Oyo’s expansion was directed southwards until the Bini halted them between 1578 and 1608. Oyo then directed her attention to states within present-day Dahomey.

1. By the end of the seventeenth century, many of these non-Yoruba states had been annexed as tributary states of Oyo, which had therefore become an empire.

Oyo derived several advantages from her annexation of the Dahomean states.

Two of these were of special importance.

- (a) Oyo had direct access to coastal ports like Porto Novo (Ajase Ipo) and Whydah where her traders could trade directly with the European merchants.
  - (b) Oyo derived worth of revenue per annum in the form of tributes from the Dahomean states it had conquered.
3. Oyo reached the peak of its power about the middle of the eighteenth century. From then on, both internal and external reasons, combined to bring about the decline and fall of the empire.



## 2.7 Summary

The unit has thrown light on the general overview of how the rise and expansion of Oyo took place. The above analyses showed how the early rulers contributed to the rise and expansion of Oyo.



## 2.8 References/Further Readings/Web Resources

- Anyaele, J.U. (2003). *Comprehensive Government*. Lagos: A Johnson Publishers, Ltd.
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## UNIT 3 GOVERNMENT OF OYO EMPIRE

### Unit Structure

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Learning Outcomes
- 3.3. Government of Oyo Empire
  - 3.3.1 Political administration
  - 3.3.2 The Alafin
- 3.4 3.4.1 Oyo Mesi
  - 3.5.1 The Ogboni
- 3.5 3.5.1 Constitutional Checks
  - 3.5.2 The Eso
- 3.6 3.6.1 Judicial Administration
  - 3.6.2 Official Religion
- 3.7 Summary
- 3.8 References/Further Readings/Web Resources
- 3.9 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)



### 3.1 Introduction

In this unit, attempt is made to present to you a historical background and general overview of the origins of the Yoruba. We are also concerned with how the government of Oyo was administered as a great Empire for nearly four centuries through her effective form of government. This was made unique by a system of checks and balances.

You will also read about the expeditions of the great ruler in the quest to conquer and expand the kingdom. Together the relationship of the kingdom with other neighbouring kingdoms.



### 3.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the origins of the Yoruba race.
- analyse the various expedition embark upon by some great Yoruba rulers towards their neighbours.
- demonstrate your knowledge of the various rulers of Oyo kingdom.
- evaluate the performance of rulership of the earliest rulers and later rulers.



### 3.3 Government of Oyo Empire

#### 3.3.1 Political Administration

The government and traditional administration of the of Oyo Empire was based on a unique pattern. The political head of every Yoruba kingdom is Oba but that of the Oyo and Ife kingdoms are called “Alaafin” and “Ooni” respectively.

The Alaafin as the political head of the Oyo kingdom is assisted by his son called Aremo, who is not allowed to succeed him immediately he dies. Oyemesi is the seven king makers headed by the Bashorun. The Oyemesi is stronger than the Alaafin and can overrule any decision made by the Alaafin which is not acceptable to it.

The other officials apart from the Aremo include:

1. Ilari: - He is the permanent adviser to the Oba
2. Bashorun: - He is the Chief Minister or Prime Minister of the Kingdom.
3. Baale”- He is the village Head of the administration of the villages
4. Kakanfo: - he is the commander of the kingdom Armed Forces.

The chiefs or Obas and the baale are not appointed by the Alaafin even though they receive his blessings. There are certain limitations or checks and balances to the power of the Alaafin. The limitations include:

- i. If Alaafin disagrees with Oyemesi and Ilari, the only option open to him is to commit suicide
- ii. Oyemesi could authorise the Bashorun to send empty calabash to Alaafin symbolizing rejection by the people. Alaafin is not to commit suicide if this happens.
- iii. Disloyal army commander could revolt  
The executive council members also formed the legislature. Laws made were executed by the Oba and his council of advisers.

The system of government in the traditional Yoruba society was a loose monarchical arrangement and highly democratic with the following structure:

#### 3.3.2 The Alafin

At the head of the empire was the Alafin or the king. He ruled the metropolitan territories of the empire directly, assisted by a host of

officials and institutional bodies such as those which will be described below. The Alafin ruled the provinces and the tributary states indirectly through local rulers or Oba who were often assisted by the local chief priests of the great god Sango. Many of the provincial rulers were successful generals, appointed by the king. In these provincial states considerable autonomy and freedom of action were allowed to the local rulers whose activities, however, were watched and reported upon by imperial officers, called Ilari, and wives of the Alafin posted out for this purpose.

1. Succession to the Oyo throne stayed within the different branches of the direct lineage of Oranmiyan, founder of Oyo. Often the selection of a new candidate was done on the basis of rotation from the different branches. But, by custom, the eldest son of the king (who occupied the important office of Aremo) was never permitted to succeed his father. Indeed, he had to die at his father's death. This apparently curious and callous custom must have been instituted as a safeguard against an over-ambitious and impatient immediate heir intriguing to hasten the removal or death of the monarch, and to ensure that the eldest prince would protect the life and interests of his father.
2. Also, in order to give a new Alafin complete freedom in choosing fresh court officials, all the personal court officials of the deceased Alafia and a member of the Oyo Mesi had to accompany their master to the world.

This was insisted upon by custom for three main reasons, namely;

- (a) So that the deceased ruler should have faithful officials with him in the next world where, according to the Yoruba belief, the king continued his reign;
  - (b) To remove officials who, because of their great loyalty to the former Alafin, or even plot against him;
  - (c) To give the new Alafin the opportunity of bringing new blood into the corps of court officials, he could then be sure of their loyalty and help if he wished to introduce new policies.
3. The new candidate for the Oyo throne was selected from the royal lineage by a council of seven elders, called the Oyo Mesi. He was consecrated and initiated into his office by the Ooni of Ile-Ife, in his position as the ancestral and spiritual head of all the Yoruba. The consecration and initiation were marked by elaborate ceremonies.
  4. Installed as ruler of the Oyo Empire, the Alafin was regarded by his subjects as divine and a companion of the gods. In theory, at least, he was omnipotent in both administrative and judicial matters of the realm. The people looked up to the Alafin as father

and protector both in the metropolitan and in the provincial states of the Oyo Empire.

5. But a bad or tyrannical Alafin could be force to take his own life, as described below.

### 3.4.1 The Oyo Mesi

Consisting of seven king-making aristocratic members, the Oyo Mesi was the supreme council of state. The members were the heads of the seven sections of the city of Old Oyo. Not being appointed by the king the Oyo Mesi enjoyed great freedom of discussion and action at the royal court. Together with the Alafia the Oyo Mesi held judicial authority in the capital, and appointed the army leaders. Representing public opinion, they were not only king-makers but also acted as watchdogs on the actions and conduct of the Alafia.

1. At the head of this august council was the Bashorun, who held a key position in the affairs of state. Some writers have compared his position with that of the modern prime minister. Some Bashorun became very powerful indeed; Bashorun Gaha actually, usurped the supreme power of the Alafin from about 1754 to 1774.
2. At the election of a new Alafin, the Oyo Mesi as the king-makers consulted the great oracle at Ife, before announcing the name of the candidate the gods were believed to approve.
3. As leader of the Oyo Mesi the Bashorun generally controlled the fate of the reigning Alafin. Annually, by religious divination, the Bashorun and other members of the Oyo Mesi determined whether or not the Alafin still enjoyed the confidence of the gods and, by implication, of the people.
4. By custom, the Alafin could not be deposed. But when he ceased to enjoy the confidence of the gods and of the people, he was compelled to take his own life. The procedure was as follows. Acting as head of the Oyo Mesi and on behalf of the greater body, the Ogboni (a secret society), the Bashorun presented the unwanted Alafin with an empty calabash (apparently meant to symbolise a poisonous concoction) or parrot's eggs, symbol of death. He then solemnly pronounced the ruler's rejection in the following words; "The gods reject you; the people reject you; the earth rejects you" Upon hearing this, the Alafin had to commit suicide by taking poison.

### 3.4.2 The Ogboni

This was a much larger body than the Oyo Mesi. Headed by the Oluwo, chief priest of Ife, seat of the great oracle of Yorubaland, and including

members of the Oyo Mesi, the Ogboni was a secret society composed of a hundred aged men renowned for their wisdom and political and religious standing.

1. The society was dedicated to the worship of the earth and wielded considerable power in the affairs of state.
2. The members of the Ogboni represented the general will of the people. As such, important decisions of the Oyo Mesi, especially those affecting the rejection of an “unwanted” Alafin could be carried out only with the approval of the Ogboni. This tradition was an effective check on the possibly arbitrary decisions of the Oyo Mesi.

### **3.5.1 The Eso**

Distinguished army officers also had an important role in the constitution of the Oyo empire. These military chiefs, seventy in number, formed the Eso which was headed by the Commander-in-Chief of the imperial army, called the Are-Ona-Kakanfo. It was customary for these veteran military chiefs to be posted as governors in the provinces and other tributary states. The Are-Ona-Kakanfo was generally placed in charge of a frontier post of strategic importance, to keep a watch on external enemies.

Custom did not allow the Kakanfo to enter the capital city of Oyo.

1. Powerful members of the Eso in the provinces could become virtually independent of the Alafin. Indeed, some of them did succeed in breaking the territories away from the empire. A notable example was the Are-Ona-Kakanfo of Ilorin, Afonja, who as we noted above, with the assistance of the Fulani, seceded from Oyo in 1817.
2. Being non-hereditary but appointed as a result of military prowess and controlling the imperial armed forces, members of the Eso had considerable influence on the conduct of the Alafin, the Oyo Mesi, and of the Ogboni. However, in as much as they owed their appointment to the Alafin, their powers were normally limited.

### **3.5.2 Constitutional Checks**

The Alafin, the Oyo Mesi, the Ogboni and the Eso each serve to strengthen the stability of the imperial structure. Each in turn served as a check on the other.



1. The Alafin could not afford to become tyrannical, as his future could be decided by the Oyo Mesi, acting according to the wishes of the other bodies and the will of the gods.
2. The Oyo Mesi could not act arbitrarily, since some of their most important decisions required the approval of the Ogboni, who represented the will of the people. Also, the removal of the Alafin invariably meant the death of one of their own members; and it could be any of them.
3. Another constitutional safeguard was that the Alafin had a special representative who had great influence in the Ogboni. Furthermore, the Oluwo prevented any arbitrary attempts by the Bashorun to reject an Alafin.
4. The powers of the Ogboni were equally limited, in that they were controlled by public opinion and the general will of the people.
5. On the other hand, although the members of the Eso controlled the imperial army, they owed their appointments to the Alafin acting with the Oyo Mesi and held their posts at the pleasure of the Ogboni. Being generally of humble birth and often being eunuchs, they had very little political ambition.
6. The other groups could not act arbitrarily against the Eso who controlled the armed forces, and could therefore overthrow them by force if badly treated.
7. The long life and stability of the Oyo Empire rested on this pattern of checks and balances. This system appears to have been unique in the history of pre-colonial Africa.

### **3.6.1 Judicial Administration**

The Alaafin was the final court. Certain offences were regarded as serious offences, these include – murder, burglary, land case, witchcraft, profaning the deities and homicide. This kind of offences that attract capital punishment is usually tried in the Oba's palace or court. Minor offences such as family quarrels, exchange of abusive words, owing of debt were hand from the family level to the level where the parties involved were satisfied with the justice they have obtained. This does not go beyond the Oba's court.

The age – grade usually referred to as the “Elegbe” has the responsibility of implementing the decisions reached in the Oba's court. For instance, if anybody is to be executed or imprisoned it is their duty to carry out the instruction or order to the last letter.

### **3.6.2 Official Religion**

The Yoruba official religion was the traditional religion. The Oba was to perform sacrifice from time to time or as the need arises. The essence

of the sacrifice is to appease the Oduduwa the founder, ancestors and deities. He usually performs the sacrifice through some priests. The performance of this sacrifice is very important because it is the source of the Oba's power, legitimacy, respect and the basis of unity, solidarity and the progress of the Yoruba people. For instance, if the Oba fails to fulfill these religious obligations the deities, ancestors and the Oduduwa might be angry and will cause pestilence, epidemics, drought, famine and calamities among the Yoruba people.

Therefore, to prevent the gods from becoming angry, the Oba usually performs these sacrifices. Kwara as one of the Yoruba kingdoms and some parts of Oyo were conquered by the Jihadist of Usman Dan Fodio and converted from the traditional religion to Islam.

In this study, therefore, we shall limit our discussions to the general overview of how the government of Oyo was administered as a great Empire for nearly four centuries through her effective form of government, this was made unique by a system of checks and balances.

### Self-Assessment Exercises 2

1. Mention some of the early great rulers of the Yoruba kingdom
2. Mention some of the Officials that make decision in the Yoruba Kingdom together with the Alafin.



### 4.5 Summary

The unit has thrown light on the general overview of how the government of Oyo was administered as a great Empire for nearly four centuries through her effective form of government, this was made unique by a system of checks and balances. This type of government operated in Oyo was among the factors which maintained Oyo as a great empire for nearly four centuries; this was made unique by a system of checks and balances.



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#### **4.7 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)**

##### **Answer 1**

Some of the early rulers of Yoruba Kingdom are Oranmiyan, Ajaka and the great warrior, Sango.

##### **Answer 2**

Some of the officials that make decisions in the kingdom apart from the Alafin are Oyemesi, the Aremo, Ilari, Bashorun, Baale and Kakanfo.

## UNIT 4 STRENGTH AND SURVIVAL OF OYO EMPIRE

### Unit Structure

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Learning Outcomes
- 4.3. Strength and Survival of Oyo empire
  - 4.3.1 Strength and Survival of Oyo empire
  - 4.3.2 Location of Oyo
- 4.4 4.4.1 Organisation
  - 4.4.2 Wealth of the Empire
  - 4.4.3 Ethnic Affinity
- 4.5 Summary
- 4.6 References/Further Readings/Web Resources
- 4.7 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)



### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, attempt is made to present to you a general overview of how the strength and survival of Oyo took place. In this unit therefore, we are concerned with a general overview of how the strength and survival of Oyo took place.



### 4.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the strength and survival of Oyo empire.
- analyse the logic behind the location of the capital of Oyo kingdom.
- demonstrate your knowledge of the various rulers of Oyo kingdom.
- evaluate the performance of rulership of the earliest rulers and later rulers.



### 4.3 Strength and Survival of Oyo Empire

**4.3.1** Oyo emerged as a small state about the beginning of the fifteenth century. It reached its peak as a vast empire about the middle of the eighteenth century. The empire did not totally collapse until the middle of the nineteenth century. Thus, of all the empires that flourished in

West Africa, Oyo lasted longest; it was one of the best organised constitutionally; and it had the finest works of art. The reasons for its power and survival may be summarised as follows.

#### **4.3.2 Location of Oyo**

The location of the capital of Oyo was in itself an advantage. Old Oyo was situated beyond the tropical forest zone, and this geographical position was helpful for the following reasons.

1. The flat nature of the territory helped to make the conquest of neighbouring lands easier especially when using cavalry, in the use of which the Oyo army excelled. The cavalry was less useful further south in the forest zone.
2. It also meant that communication between states within metropolitan Oyo was easy.
3. The fertile land of the area meant that food supplies were good; the ruling classes could therefore devote their attention not only to further conquests but also, to the administration of the empire.
4. As we shall see below, Oyo was also a focal point for trade with merchants from all directions; the Western Sudan, Kanem-Bornu, and from the south.

#### **4.4.1 Organisation**

Another helpful factor was the organisation of the empire. The details of this have been discussed in the preceding section.

In summary, those aspects of the governmental structure of Oyo which made for strength were the following.

1. In metropolitan Oyo political stability was brought about by a system of checks and balances by which neither the Alafin nor the other organs of government could assert too much power.
2. The degree of autonomy which the local rulers of the provinces and tributary states were allowed meant that there was little reason for rebellion. So long as they maintained their allegiance and paid their tributes they were, for all practical purposes, independent.
3. Military strength helped to sustain the empire for several centuries. Oyo always had at its disposal dependable armed forces consisting of infantry and cavalry and led by warriors of exceptional valour and ability. According to tradition, no army officer was permitted to return home defeated; he must kill himself. No wonder they fought with great determination.

#### 4.4.2 Wealth of the Empire

It may also be added that Oyo had the financial resources to maintain its empire. Its wealth came from many resources.

1. It possessed valuable natural resources in the form of minerals and products of the forest.
2. It regularly received tributes from the vassal states. As mentioned, elsewhere, at one time the Dahomean states were paying annually over in tribute.
3. Because of its location, Oyo became an important trading centre, attracting merchants from all directions.
  - a) From the north, came traders from the Western Sudan.
  - b) In the exchange of goods from the south, such as kola nuts Oyo played the role of middleman. Later, when the slave was at its height, Oyo middlemen reaped enormous profits.
  - c) Their wars enabled them to capture thousands of men whom they sold to the white traders in exchange for Europeans goods.
  - d). Goods from Kanem-Bornu also came to the Oyo markets.
    1. Oyo also profited from selling the product of the industrial skills of her people.
      - a) The abundance of iron ore and the skill of the people in iron working meant the empire could produce efficient farming implements and military weapons, which were not only used locally but were also sold to external traders.
      - b) Revenue was also gained from the products of skilled craftsmanship in weaving and dyeing, in carving and pottery. These works of art attracted traders from both the Western Sudan and from the forest zone in the south. Oyo's markets became great centres for trade in leather, salt, slaves, horses, kola nuts, ivory and cloth.

#### 4.4.3 Ethnic Affinity

Ethnic affinity among the Yoruba states of the empire also helped Oyo to survive as the centre of a great empire. After Oyo had established its ascendancy, all the other Yoruba states were proud to be associated with the kingdom with which they shared a common origin, culture, language and heritage.



#### 4.5 Summary

The unit has thrown light on the general overview of how the strength and survival of Oyo took place. The above analyses showed that Oyo emerged as a small state about the beginning of the fifteenth century. It reached its peak as a vast empire about the middle of the eighteenth century. The empire did not totally collapse until the middle of the nineteenth century.

Thus, of all the empires that flourished in West Africa, Oyo lasted longest; it was one of the best organised constitutionally; and it had the finest works of art.



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## UNIT 5 DECLINE OF OYO EMPIRE

### Unit Structure

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Learning Outcomes
- 5.3. Decline of Oyo Empire
  - 5.3.1 Internal Causes
  - 5.3.2 External Causes
- 5.4 Summary
- 5.5 References/Further Readings/Web Resources
- 5.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)



### 5.1 Introduction

In this unit, attempt is made to present to you a general overview of how the decline of Oyo occurred. In this unit therefore, we are concerned with a general overview of how the decline of Oyo occurred.



### 5.2 Learning Outcomes

- by the end of this unit, you will be able to:
- discuss the origins of the Yoruba race.
- analyse the various expedition embark upon by some great Yoruba rulers towards their neighbours.
- demonstrate your knowledge of the various rulers of Oyo kingdom.
- evaluate the performance of rulership of the earliest rulers and later rulers.



### 5.3 Decline of Oyo Empire

#### Decline of Oyo Empire

A number of forces combined, from the second part of the eighteenth century, to bring about the decline of the Oyo Empire. The following is a summary of these causes which may be grouped under two main heads, internal and external.



### 5.3.1 Internal Causes

Under this heading historians generally classify four classes.

#### 1. Extent of the empire

The map shows the extent of the empire when at its peak in the middle of the eighteenth century. By this time, as one historian put it, “the Old Oyo Empire had become overstretched” In the days when transportation and communication were not so easy, it required highly efficient administrative machinery to keep control over all parts of the empire. But from the second half of the eighteenth century this became particularly difficult largely because of the other forces at work described below.

#### 2. Weakness of the central government

Taking advantage of weak rulers, Gaha, an ambitious and selfish Bashorun assumed power in the state. However, an able Alafin, Abiodun, was able to oust Gaha, wipe out the entire family of the Bashorun and restore the authority of the monarch. The last strong Alafin of Oyo, Abiodun died in 1789. After his death the central government of Oyo became much weaker.

His successor, Awole, acting against the time-honoured custom ordered his army to attack Apomu, an Ife town in the Yoruba cradle. All the leading personalities including the Bashorun and the Kakanfo, the Commander-in-Chief of the army, refused the orders of the Alafin. These great men made life intolerable for him until he committed suicide in 1796. His unconstitutional action had disastrous consequences on the subsequent history of Oyo.

a). Awole had lost the support of all the leading men in the imperial machinery of government.

b). Ile-Ife, the spiritual headquarters and mother state of the Yoruba states, refused to consecrate the Alaafin's of Oyo.

Because of this state of affairs, strong chiefs in metropolitan Oyo began to assert their independence, since they could not remain subjects of an Alafin who was not consecrated by the Ooni of Ile-Ile. Examples of these chiefs were Afonja, the Kakanfo and governor of the Northern Province, Ilorin, the Baale of Gbogun, and the Onikoyi of Ikoyi.

#### 3. Weakened military strength

The empire would perhaps have survived but for the fact that, towards the close of the eighteenth century, the army too was losing its strength.

The once invincible Oyo army suffered several defeats at the hands of the rebellious Egba (1775-80), the Borgu (1783), and the Nupe (1791). Because of her defeat by her northern neighbours, Oyo could no longer procure a regular supply of horses to reinforce the cavalry which had been the mainstay of the imperial forces.

#### **4. Economic decline**

The trade which had been so important to Oyo began to decline steadily. The wars which characterised the latter part of Oyo's history also seriously dislocated the industry and economic life of the empire.

#### **5. Yoruba civil wars**

In the nineteenth century several states of Yorubaland waged wars against one another. These wars not only weakened but actually caused the complete disintegration of the empire. The Ijaiye wars of 1860 to 1865, which involved most of the leading Yoruba states, were disastrous for Yorubaland as were another series of wars lasting from 1877 to 1893, in which all the leading states joined forces against Ibadan.

##### **5.3.2 External Causes**

Long before these civil wars, Oyo had become dangerously weak. The empire was in no condition to cope with two external attacks, one came from the Fulani invaders from the north and the other from the British imperialists from the coast.

#### **The Fulani invasion**

In 1817, Afonja, the Kakanfo and governor of the Yoruba northern state of Ilorin quarrelled with the Alafin. In order to gain his total independence from the Alafin, Afonja asked the Fulani for help. The Fulani had conquered all the Hausa states to the north.

- a). Having helped him to gain his goal, the Fulani killed him in 1831, and made Ilorin into an emirate under Sokoto Caliphate.
- b). Now in complete control of Ilorin, which had been the northern outpost of the Oyo Empire, the Fulani attacked Oyo itself in 1837, and destroyed the imperial capital. The Yoruba then founded a new capital at Ago-Oja, about 160 kilometres to the south, which became present-day Oyo.
- c). The Yoruba forces did not give up completely. Under the

leadership of Ibadan, they were able to stop the Fulani from pushing further south when they defeated the invaders at Oshogbo in 1840.

- d). The destruction of the city of Old Oyo meant that the empire was doomed.
  - 1). Trade with the north became completely dislocated.
  - 2). Thousands of refugees fled southwards and founded new towns like Abeokuta and Ibadan. Refugees helped the rapid growth of other towns like, Modakeke, Ogbomosho and Oshogbo.
  - 3). These new cities started civil wars as each fought for ascendancy over its neighbours.
  - 4). Several other dismembered Yoruba states resorted to civil wars.

Notable examples were the Owu and Ife wars of 1821 to 1825, and the Ijaiye war of 1860 to 1865 caused by the defection of the Kakanfo Kurunmi, the founder of Ijaye.

- a). The provincial vassal states were not slow to take advantage of the situation to gain their independence. Thus from 1821 Dahomey took the offensive against the Yoruba people, taking important Yoruba towns like Oka-Odan (1844), Otta (1848), and other towns in the Egbeda district between 1851 and 1864.

### **The British thrust**

The last straw which broke the back of Oyo was British imperialism. While trying to stop the slave trade and to introduce legitimate trade, the British bombarded Lagos in 1851 and annexed it as a colony in 1861. By the end of the nineteenth century the British had extended their sphere of influence over all Yorubaland. The Yoruba and other ethnic groups in what became known as Nigeria served under the British flag until 1960, when the people re-asserted their national sovereignty.

### **IN TEXT – QUESTION**

Mention some of the sources of wealth of the empire of Oyo?

### **ANSWER**

1. Valuable natural resources in the form of minerals and products of the forest.
2. It regularly received tributes from the vassal states.

### **Self-Assessment Exercises 3**

- |   |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Account for the long survival of Oyo as an empire.</li> <li>2. Write a brief account of the forces which brought about the collapse of the Oyo Empire.</li> </ol> |
|---|



#### 4.7 Summary

The above analyses showed how Oyo emerged as a small state about the beginning of the fifteenth century. It reached its peak as a vast empire about the middle of the eighteenth century. The government of Oyo was administered as a great Empire for nearly four centuries through her effective form of government, this was made unique by a system of checks and balances.

The empire did not totally collapse until the middle of the nineteenth century. Thus, of all the empires that flourished in West Africa, Oyo lasted longest; it was one of the best organised constitutionally; and it had the finest works of art.

The unit has thrown light on the general overview of how the strength and survival of Oyo took place together the decline of that took place within the empire.

The Yoruba civilisation also produced examples of art and culture unsurpassed by any other empire in West Africa. Yoruba works of art such as the celebrated Ife bronze heads made by the Cire Perdue method, leather work, and terra-cotta pieces, are all today highly treasured not only in Ile-Ife but also in most important museums in the world and a number of forces combined (Internal and External), from the second part of the eighteenth century, brought about the collapse of the Oyo empire.



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1. Visit youtube and watch Yoruba and Igbo pre- colonial administrative system  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dtiD5E7QUgs>  
 Figure 1 The Alafin of Oyo  
<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/08/i-remain-king-head-of-yoruba-nation-yoruba-monarchs-divided-over-alaafins-remarks/> August 31, 2021
- Figure 2**  
**Ooni of Ife: New Yoruba king crowned in Nigeria** 7 December 2015  
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-35034294>



#### **4.9 Possible Answers to SAEs**

These are the answers to the SAEs within the content. The answers are arranged in accordance with the way the SAEs appear in the content.

##### **Answers to SAEs 1**

The following account for the long survival of Oyo as an empire: -  
Location of Oyo empire, its organisation and the wealth of the empire.

##### **Answer 2**

There were two major factors, internal and external. The internal factors include the weakness of the Oyo government. And the external include the British invasion of the kingdom.

**MODULE 5**

Unit 1	The Origins of the Benin Kingdom
Unit 2	The Rise of the Benin Kingdom
Unit 3	The Cultural Heritage of the Benin Kingdom

**UNIT 1 THE ORIGINS OF THE BENIN KINGDOM****Unit Structure**

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 The Origins of the Benin Kingdom
  - 1.3.1 Legends of Origin
  - 1.3.2 The Rise of the Benin kingdom
- 1.4 Summary
- 1.5 References/Further Readings/Web Resources
- 1.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)

**1.1 Introduction**

In this unit, attempt is made to present to you an historical background and a general overview of how the origins of the Benin emerged. You will realise that the Benin Empire reached the peak of its power in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and lasted as an important kingdom up to 1897 when, in a weakened state, it came under British rule. At the height of its glory as an empire Benin stretched from the Niger, in the east, to the west across the present Lagos state down to Badagry. The empire enclosed a large territory of Yorubaland including Ijebu. The foundations of the empire were firmly laid by the early Obas or kings of the Benin kingdom.

You will further learn about the craftsmanship displayed in the Benin kingdom which appears to surpass that of most other ancient African kingdoms. The wealth of Benin and the decline of Benin kingdom will also be treated in details.

**1.2 Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the evolution of the Benin kingdom.
- analyse the significance of the legends in Benin kingdom.

- demonstrate your knowledge of the cultural heritage of Benin kingdom.
- evaluate the achievements of its early rulers of Benin Kingdom.



## 13 The Origins of the Benin Kingdom

### 1.3.1 Legends of Origin

As with other ancient states of West Africa, very little is known for certain about the early history of the Edo-speaking people who founded the Benin Kingdom. But the Bini legends and traditions firmly assert that they were the first people to emerge as an organised people in Southern Nigeria. The legends concerning their origin are clothed in mythical stories. The following are some of these legends.

#### 1. The heavenly prince

- (a) One popular legend says that the original founder of Benin was the youngest son of Osanobua, the supreme god. Descending from heaven and helped by a mythical bird, the heavenly prince was able to dry up the flood which covered the whole country. The land became fertile and the founder and his people were able to engage in crop cultivation, and to expand their kingdom. One sees in this legend a similarity to the Yoruba mythical story of Olorun, the supreme god who sent down his son Oduduwa from heaven, to found Ile-Ife.
- (b) The Bini traditions maintain that about fifteen rulers of the Ogino dynasty followed the legendary founder. There then arose a dispute over the succession. This crisis resulted in a period of interregnum, during which Benin became virtually a republic, with two successive administrators, Evian and Ogionwo.

### 1.3.2 The Legend of Oranmiyan or Orayan

According to another legend, the founders of Benin emigrated from the “East” (Possibly Egypt). After wandering through central Africa, they, with the Yoruba, their kinsmen settled in Ile-Ife for many years. A section of Ile-Ife settlers moved southwards towards the coast and halted in Igodomigodo, original name of Edoland.

One of the leaders, Igodo, became first ruler of the Ogiso dynasty which lasted for about a thousand years. Under the rulers of the Ogiso dynasty, the Edo people developed their country both politically and economically. They also developed advanced forms of arts and crafts.



(a) When there was a dispute over the succession, after the people had banished Awodo, the last Ogiso ruler, they suspended kingship and introduced a form of republican system of government. The first administrator elected to preside over the affairs of the state was Evian. He was banished because of his misrule. The next was Ogiamwe who wanted to restore hereditary kingship.

(b) Vehemently opposing this move, the people sent to Oduduwa in Ile-Ife to send them a candidate to rule them. Oranmiyan was sent with a number of courtiers. Realising that the kingdom would prosper only under a true native of the land, Oranmiyan returned to Ile-Ife, after he had fathered a son by a local princess. On leaving the place, because of the troubles he had encountered while in Benin, he referred to the territory as “a land of vexation”; Ile Ibinu, which later became corrupted into Bini or Benin.

(c) The son of Oranmiyan was Eweka 1 who started a new dynasty in Benin.

### **Significance of the legends**

Whatever the historical accuracy of these legends, one can learn a few important points from them.

- (a) Some scholars maintain that the first legend must have been encouraged by the Bini; in order to re-inforce their claim that they had a more ancient origin than the Yoruba since according to the mythical story they were well-established before Oduduwa founded Ile-Ife.
- (b) On the other hand, although the narrative of the second legend would seem to point to the same conclusion as the first legend, many historians interpret the coming of Oranmiyan to Edoland as indicating a possible invasion and annexation of the land by the Yoruba. The Yoruba use this legend to demonstrate their ancestral superiority over the Bini.

### **IN TEXT – QUESTION**

Mention the legend that founded the Benin kingdom.

### **ANSWER**

The legend that founded the Benin was the youngest son of Osanobua, the supreme god.

## Self-Assessment Exercises 1

1.Explain how the origins of Benin Kingdom using the legends.



### 1.4 Summary

The unit has thrown light on the historical background and a general overview of how the origins of the Benin emerged. It further showed that with other ancient states of West Africa, very little is known for certain about the early history of the Edo-speaking people who founded the Benin Kingdom. But the Bini legends and traditions firmly assert that they were the first people to emerge as an organised people in the present-day Southern part of Nigeria. The legends concerning their origin are clothed in mythical stories and present you with the opinions of these legends about the origins of Benin.



### 1.5 References/Further Readings/Web Resources

- Anyaele, J.U. (2003). *Comprehensive Government*. Lagos: A Johnson Publishers, Ltd.
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## 1.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)

### Answers to SAEs 1

According to another legend, the founders of Benin emigrated from the “East” (Possibly Egypt). After wandering through central Africa, they, with the Yoruba, their kinsmen settled in Ile-Ife for many years. A section of Ile-Ife settlers moved southwards towards the coast and halted in Igodomingodo, original name of Edoland.

## UNIT 2 THE RISE OF THE BENIN KINGDOM

### Unit Structure

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Learning Outcomes
- 2.3 The Rise of the Benin Kingdom
  - 2.3.1 Early Kings of Benin
  - 2.3.2 Subsequent Rulers of Benin
  - 2.3.3 Government of Benin Kingdom
- 2.4 Summary
- 2.5 References/Further Readings/Web Resources
- 2.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s) within the content



### 2.1 Introduction

In this unit, attempt is made to present to you a general overview of how the rise of Benin took place. In this unit therefore, we are concerned with a general overview of how the rise of Benin took place. At the height of its glory as an empire Benin stretched from the Niger, in the east, to the west across the present Lagos state down to Badagry. The empire enclosed a large territory of Yorubaland including Ijebu.



### 2.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the evolution of the Benin Kingdom.
- Analyse the Significance of the legends in Benin Kingdom.
- Demonstrate your knowledge of the cultural heritage of Benin Kingdom.
- Evaluate the achievements of its early rulers of Benin Kingdom.



### 2.3 The Rise of the Benin Kingdom

### 2.3.1 Early Kings of Benin

Until it came under British rule at the close of the nineteenth century, Benin had survived as an independent kingdom for about five centuries. The kingdom owed much to the achievements of its early rulers, among who were the following:

#### 1. Eweka 1

As with his two successors, historians have not been able to date his reign with any certainty. But he must have reigned in legendary accounts, related above, Oranmiyan's son Eweka 1, became the first ruler of a new Benin dynasty which replaced the earlier one, the Ogiso. He is said to have had a very long and eventful reign.

(a) Among the many achievements attributed in the oral traditions to Eweka 1 was the creation of Uzama-Nihinron. Like the Yoruba Oyo Mesi, the Uzama consisted of seven councillors of state and king-makers. The Uzama was, however, not as all-powerful as the Yoruba Oyo Mesi.

(b) To strength the position of the king, Eweka 1 started the tradition of appointing his sons and other favoured persons as local rulers in the districts of the kingdoms.

#### 2. Ewedo

A grandson of Eweka 1, whose work he successfully carried on, Ewedo succeeded his father Ehennihew, about whose career very little is remembered in the Benin traditions.

(a) He ascended the throne after a period of succession disputes out of which he emerged victorious over a rival group led by Ogiawwe, son of the administrator of that time who had ruled during the earlier period of interregnum.

(b) Having established himself firmly on the throne, Ewedo set about strengthening the kingdom.

(1) First, realising the importance of religion as a unifying force in the kingdom, Ewedo appointed a high priest through whom he influenced the religious beliefs of his people. They looked upon the Oba as a demi-god whose person and position was revered. Because of his promotion of religion, later historians referred to him as "the Idolator"

(2) Next, he introduced new political and legal institutions, designed to strengthen his position as a supreme ruler. He appointed a large number of officials; on whose loyalty he could rely. The king's prestige was further increased by the building of a new palace in the very heart of the city.

- (3) Oguola Ewedo the Idolator, was succeeded by his son, Oguola, who is credited in the Benin traditions with two main achievements;
- (a) The building of the magnificent city walls, many kilometres long, which protected greater Benin from external attacks;
  - (b) The introduction of the celebrated brass-makers who enriched Benin sculpture and decorated the royal courts and the city with beautiful plaques, depicting and commemorating the great events of the early history of Benin.

### **3.Ewuare the Great (1440-73)**

Following the murder of Oguola, another succession dispute disrupted the ordered life in Benin. However, Ogun Ewuare emerged as the rightful heir and was enthroned in about 1440. He assumed the title “Ewuare” meaning “the troubles are over”, or it is cool” Much more is known about Ewuare than about his predecessors. This was perhaps because it was in his reign that Benin first came into contact with the Portuguese, who have left records of their visits to Benin. The first Portuguese adventurer, Ruy de Sequeira, visited the city in 1472.

- (a) According to oral tradition Ewuare constructed good roads in Benin-city; chief among these were the famous streets known as Akpakpava and Utantan.
  - (b) A great magician, physician, traveller and warrior, he conquered and annexed to his growing kingdom more territories than any of his predecessors had. According to the oral traditions, he is said to have conquered over 200 towns and villages including places in Yoruba and Igbo lands.
  - (c) He reduced the powers of the over-ambitious palace chiefs who had often opposed the policies of the Obas.
  - (d) Perhaps the greatest achievements were the political and social reforms which he introduced in both the metropolitan kingdom of Benin and in the conquered states. The main innovation of the reforms was the creation of a strong centralised government.
- (1) When Ewuare assumed power, the relationship between the Oba, the Uzama or councillors of state, and other palace chiefs were not well-defined. As a result, the subordinate chiefs and the Uzama had assumed excessive powers which tended to handicap the authority of the Oba.
  - (2) To offset the powers of the palace chiefs, Ewuare created another group of chiefs, the town chiefs. The most senior of these royally appointed town chiefs became the Commander-in-Chief of the imperial army. To strengthen his own position even more against the palace chiefs, Ewuare created a state council; the town chiefs were given an important voice on this council. Being appointed

by the Oba, the town chiefs had to be loyal to the king, and helped him to pass important decisions of state.

- (e) Like Ewedo, Ewuare encouraged the beliefs of the people and in return the people regarded him with veneration, another factor which helped to strengthen his position as head of a centralised government.

#### **4. Ozolua (1481-1504)**

Benefiting from the reforms and achievements of his immediate predecessor, Ozolua extended Benin's sphere of influence westwards to the Yoruba coastal states. These territorial acquisitions were to be consolidated by his grandson Orhogbua (1550-78). Another significant event in Ozolua's reign was the second visit to Benin of the Portuguese, this time led by Afonso d'Aveiro who visited Benin in 1485-6. He introduced guns and coconuts into Benin. This contact was important because it initiated trade between Benin and European merchants.

One Bini prince, the chief of Gwatto, went with d'Aveiro to Lisbon. On his return he set up a trading enterprise as agent of the Portuguese merchants. Soon Portuguese trade with Benin increased in volume dealing not only in ordinary goods but also in the export of slaves to the New World.

#### **5. Esigie (1504-50)**

Esigie is believed to have had the longest reign of all the early Obas of Benin since he ruled for nearly half a century. He is recorded by the Portuguese as a man of great learning and an astrologist. Several important achievements were attributed to him including the following:

- (a) Before his time a man's status in Benin society depended on birth. Instead, Esigie placed more emphasis on the individual's achievements rather than on the mere accident of birth. This approach inspired men of talent to work for the empire.
- (b) Esigie also promoted trade with the Portuguese. In exchange for Portuguese imported goods, the Bini exported ivory, pepper, Bini cloth, leopard skin, and slaves. The commercial port of Gwatto played an important part in this trade.
- (c) At the Oba's request, through his ambassador to Portugal the Ohen-Okun of Gwatto, the king of Portugal sent out Roman Catholic missionaries to preach Christianity in Benin. But in Esigie's reign the Christian faith did not spread beyond palace circles.

- (d) Orhogbua (1550-78) From the oral traditions and the written records, it would seem that Benin reached the peak of its expansion in the reign of Orhogbua.
- (i) Among the achievements attributed to his reign was Benin's effective occupation of Lagos Island which became known as Eko, meaning the "king camp". Indeed, according to the local tradition of Lagos, the town's first Oba, the Elko of Oko, is said to have been a son of Orhogbua 1.
- (ii) Educated at one of the Portuguese colonial schools, and himself a Christian of the Roman Catholic faith, Orhogbua encouraged missionary work in his empire.
- (iii) In his reign the first group of English merchants under Captain Wyndham visited Benin, in 1553, the same year as they had visited the coast of modern Ghana. This important visit was to open the way for future trading links with the British.

### 2.3.2 Subsequent Rulers of Benin

From the end of Orhogbua's reign, Benin began to decline. However, by the beginning of the eighteenth century the constitution was more stable because of reforms which were designed to prevent succession disputes. From that time until the present, generally only the eldest son could succeed to the throne as Oba of Benin.

### 2.3.3 Government of Benin

In the preceding section we have outlined how, stage by stage, the Obas of Benin succeeded in concentrating power, at least as far as the government of the metropolitan area was concerned. On the other hand, in the provinces local rulers were virtually left to run their own affairs undisturbed as long as they expressed their allegiance to the Oba through the regular payment of tributes; these were generally in the form of crops or other goods.

There were three groups of officials in the Oba's household:

- (a) The Iwabe, who were charged with the custody and care of the royal regalia;
- (b) The Iweguare, who served as the Oba's personal attendants;
- (c) The Ibiwe, who supervised the harem.

In addition to these domestic officers, there were three title holders who played key roles in the administration of the state. These were the Iyashere, the Ebohon and the Ologboshere. These office-holders corresponded to the present-day prime minister, the minister of external



affairs, and the Commander-in-Chief respectively.

In metropolitan Benin, the king presided over the machinery of government. Certainly, from the time of Ewuare the Great, whose reign ended in 1473, all real power in the state was in the hands of the Oba. As we noted earlier, there were several important groups who assisted him in the government of the empire. These were the seven-member Uzama, the state council, the palace chiefs and the body of town chiefs.

- (a) While the palace chiefs inherited their position, the town chiefs were all appointed directly by the Oba.
- (b) Ewuare strengthened the position of the town chiefs on the State Council, so that with their support he could be sure his policies would be approved.
- (c) This is not to say that the Uzama and the palace chiefs were not important. Indeed, they worked hard to protect the interests of the people whom they represented at the royal court.

The government of the conquered states was generally left in the hands of the local kings. They left their own laws and observed their own traditions. Occasionally officials were sent round to see that royal edicts were followed. But as long as the local rulers kept the peace within the empire and contributed their tributes, the Oba of Benin left them undisturbed. It was only where local rulers showed signs of disloyalty and rebellion that the Oba of Benin found it necessary to impose a ruler and provide a garrison to enforce the people's loyalty. This happened, for example, in the island of Lagos in the time of Orhogbua, in the second half of the sixteenth century.

Figure 1. the paramount ruler of Bini Kingdom at his palace



### In-text Question

**Question**

Mention some of the great early rulers of the Benin kingdom.

**Answer 1**

The early great rulers of the Benin kingdom include: Eweka 1, Ewedo, Ewuare the Great (1440-73) and Ozolua (1481-1504).

**Self-Assessment Exercises 2**

1. Give a brief account of the officials in the palace of the Oba of Benin Kingdom

**2.4 Summary**

The unit has thrown light on the historical background and a general overview of how the rise of Benin took place. The above analyses showed that the Benin Empire reached the peak of its power in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and lasted as an important kingdom up to 1897 when, in a weakened state, it came under British rule. At the height of its glory as an empire Benin stretched from the Niger, in the east, to the west across the present Lagos state down to Badagry. The empire enclosed a large territory of Yorubaland including Ijebu. The foundations of the empire were firmly laid by the early Obas or kings of the Benin kingdom.

**2.5 References/Further Readings/Web Resources**

- Anyaele, J.U. (2003). *Comprehensive Government*. Lagos: A Johnson Publishers, Ltd.
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## 2.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)

### Answer 1

T

here were three groups of officials in the Oba's household:

- (a) The Iwebo, who were charged with the custody and care of the royal regalia;
- (b) The Iweguare, who served as the Oba's personal attendants;
- (c) The Ibiwe, who supervised the harem.

## UNIT 3 THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE BENIN KINGDOM

### Unit Structure

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Learning Outcomes
- 3.3 The Cultural Heritage of the Benin Kingdom
  - 3.3.1 The Cultural Heritage of the Benin Kingdom
  - 3.3.2 Decline of Benin Kingdom
- 3.4 Summary
- 3.5 References/Further Readings/Web Resources
- 3.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s) within the content



### 3.1 Introduction

In this unit, attempt is made to present to you a general overview of the cultural heritage of Benin, the wealth of Benin and the decline of Benin in details.



### 3.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the cultural heritage of Benin kingdom
- Analyse the Significance of the legends in Benin Kingdom.
- Demonstrate your knowledge of the cultural heritage of Benin Kingdom.
- Evaluate the achievements of its early rulers of Benin Kingdom.



### 3.3 The Cultural Heritage of Benin Kingdom

#### 3.3.1 The Cultural Heritage of Benin Kingdom

The early Portuguese, who came into contact with Benin, have left records emphasising the very high degree of civilisation which the Benin Empire had reached prior to their arrival. The many works of arts in wood, ivory, bronze and terra-cotta preserved in both local and overseas museums confirm these records.

1. Before the arrival of the white people, the kingdom was well established with order and peace prevailing. The capital itself was a well-laid-out city with broad streets and well-kept quarters, and enclosed with high walls.

2. The craftsmanship displayed in Benin appears to surpass that of most other ancient African kingdoms. Some scholars maintain that the pieces of art were the creation of the Yoruba. This, to say the least, is very debatable. Recent archaeological finds in Benin include works in copper and its alloys and forged and engraved tin bronzes which experts have dated back to at least the thirteenth century A.D, that is, before the legendary episode of Oranmiyan's stay in Benin.

(a) What is likely, from the archaeological findings so far available, was that the Bini learned the art of bronze casting from the Ife artists. But once having acquired this art, Benin became a cultural centre in its own right.

(b) As in the bronzes of Ife the bronze casting was done by the *Cire Perdue* (a French expression meaning "lost wax") method. The object to be cast is first made in wax which is easy to mould into the required shape. For some objects, like bronze heads, a core of inner clay was first made and then covered with a thin layer of clay. The model was heated until the wax melted away; hence the expression "lost wax". Molten metal was then poured into the space left by the wax. After a time, the bronze or metal cooled and became solidified. The clay was then broken off leaving the metal in the desired shape. These figures were famous for their naturalism, though many were in a more stylistic form, not representing any actual person or animal. These pieces of art were mainly representations of heads, models of animals and other human figures.

(c) According to the descriptions of the Portuguese, these works of art were used to decorate the royal palace and other important state buildings. They depict Bini chiefs in a variety of occupations and leisure activities. As such, they depict much of the history and social life of the Bini at the height of their greatness.

3. The different craftsmen formed themselves into guilds, and enjoyed royal patronage.

**Figure 2. Bronze arts Work of the Bini Kingdom**



### **3.3.2 Wealth of Benin Kingdom**

1. From some of the objects which archaeologists have unearthed in Benin historians believe that, long before the advent of the Europeans, the Bini were involved in trading with merchants in the hinterland and beyond. They had thus established trading links with the people of the Western Sudan. Their own craft products were exchanged for imported goods. The revenue from trade was thus a great source of wealth.
2. Another source of wealth was the products of agriculture and fishing in the many rivers of the Niger delta area.
3. When it became an empire, Benin gained a considerable amount of its revenue from tributes received from subject states which were largely paid in kind.
4. With the advent of the Portuguese other opportunities of trade opened up. The Bini became middlemen and profited greatly from the large-scale trade which developed with the Europeans; this was dominated by the trade in slaves.

### **3.3.3 Decline of Benin Kingdom**

Benin reached its peak at the end of the sixteenth century. Thereafter it began to decline. The following were some of the more important reasons for this.

1. The frequency of succession disputes was a constant source of weakness in Benin. More often than not, on the death of an Oba, there emerged a number of different claimants for the throne. Even though from the eighteenth century it became customary to appoint the first son of the deceased Oba as the new ruler, there were still times when intrigues caused disunity.
2. After Orhogbua the administration proved to be too weak, even under strong kings, the provincial rulers were allowed too much autonomy.
3. With the growth of overseas trade, from the seventeenth century onwards, it was found that the ports of Benin were not reliable, for example, the mouth of the Gwatto river tended to silt up. The traders therefore began to use the iGATE river Warri instead, and this move was obviously against Benin's interests.
4. From the seventeenth century onwards, Oyo's political ascendancy had a harmful effect on Benin, part of which, in fact, as we have seen was annexed by the Alafin of Oyo.
5. Despite these weakening factors the kingdoms of Benin remained important down to the end of the nineteenth century when it came under the British colonial sphere of influence.

### Self-Assessment Exercises 3

1. Mention some of the Sources of wealth of the Benin Kingdom
2. What is the most fundamental factor that led to the decline of the Benin kingdom?



### 3.4 Summary

The above analyses show that according to legendary accounts, the Yoruba and the Edo or Bini in the Southern part of the present-day Federation of Nigeria were kinsmen. These legends confirm that both the Yoruba and the Bini were descendants of Oranmiyan or Oranyan who was said to have founded the Yoruba state of Oyo and whose son, according to the legends, became first ruler of a new dynasty in the kingdom of Benin.

The unit also thrown light on the historical background and a general overview of how the origins of the Benin emerged. The Bini legends and traditions firmly assert that they were the first people to emerge as an organised people in the present-day southern part of Nigeria. Though the legends concerning their origin are clothed in mythical stories and present you with the opinions of these legends about the origins of Benin.

Benin, now capital of the Edo State of Nigeria, has been a city of great importance since at least the beginning of the fifteenth century. It became the centre of a great kingdom and, later, of a large empire which stretched from the Lower Niger in the east, to the frontiers of modern Dahomey in the west, and far inland taking in much of Yorubaland.

The people of the kingdom, called Bini, spoke the Edo language. Some historians hold the view that Benin owed its rise to power to its early contact with the Portuguese. This view is not however supported by the records of the Portuguese themselves who, on their first arrival in Benin, spoke of the kingdom's high degree of civilisation; these records clearly show that the Europeans were extremely impressed with the size of the empire and the effective traditional system of government of the kingdom.



### 3.5 References/Further Reading

Anyaele, J.U. (2003). *Comprehensive Government*. Lagos: A Johnson Publishers, Ltd.

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Figure 1. the paramount ruler of Bini Kingdom at his palace  
<https://olaijoartsworld.wordpress.com/2017/06/12/african-heritages-edo-and-benin-kingdom-people-history-and-culture/>

Figure 2. Bronze arts Work of the Bini Kingdom  
<https://olaijoartsworld.wordpress.com/2017/06/12/african-heritages-edo-and-benin-kingdom-people-history-and-culture/>





## **5.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)**

These are the answers to the SAEs within the content. The answers are arranged in accordance with the way the SAEs appear in the content.

### **Answer 1**

The Bini people are known as great merchants and traders, whose trading have taken them to various part of the Bini and Yoruba kingdom. Another source of wealth was the products of agriculture and fishing in the many rivers of the Niger delta area.

### **Answer 2**

The frequency of succession disputes was a constant source of weakness in Benin. More often than not, on the death of an Oba, there emerged a number of different claimants for the throne.

**MODULE 6**

Unit1	The Origin of the Igbo
Unit 2	Igbo System of Government

**UNIT 1 THE ORIGIN OF THE IGBO****Unit Structure**

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 The Early History of the Igbos.
  - 1.3.1 The Early History of the Igbos.
  - 1.3.2 Igbo Groups
- 1.4 Summary
- 1.5 References/Further Readings/Web Resources
- 1.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)

**1.1 Introduction**

In this unit, attempt is made to present to you the historical background and the general overview of the origins of Igbo. In this unit therefore, we are concerned with a general overview of the origins of Igbo, the various Igbo groups and the nature and dynamics of the Igbo traditional system administration.

**1.2 Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the nature of the Igbo traditional system of government.
- Analyse the various sources of wealth in Igbo land.
- Demonstrate your knowledge of the early history of the Igbos’.
- Evaluate the different social groups of the Igbos.

**1.3 The Early History of Igbos**

The early history of the Igbos is similar to that of other nationalities, the history is based on contending sources. What is more certain is that the Igbos, generally had no kings or chiefs. They operated a democratic system of government. The executive, legislative and judicial powers were vested in the Oha-na-eze, the council of elders; the Ofo title

holders; the family; the Ozo title holders; the Age – Grades, the Umuada, and the “Ala” or the Earth’s goddess represented by a Chief Priest.

### 1.3.1 The Early History of Igbos

The Igbos are republican by nature. They maintained a decentralised and a cephalous society. Igbo society was democratic and egalitarian. In Nigeria, the Igbos generally occupies the former Eastern region and a part of the former Mid-Western region. The Igbo unlike the Yoruba and the Hausa – Fulani, had a complex and complicated system of administration in pre-colonial era. The Igbo generally had no kings or chiefs. They operated a democratic system of government. The executive, legislative and judicial powers were vested in the Oha-na-eze, the council of elders; the Ofo title holders; the family; the Ozo title holders; the Age – Grades, the Umuada, and the “Ala” or the Earth’s goddess represented by a Chief Priest.

The Igbo generally followed what is called a segmentary pattern of political and social organisation. In place of the large units which formed kingdoms in another place, Ibo society was based on small units. Because of this pattern the Igbo and some of their southern neighbours never develop great empires or kingdoms. This may be one reason why much less is known about the early history of the Igbo than about other West African peoples.

1. Oral tradition of a section of the Igbo alleges that their ancestors originated in the north; possibly, as some historians maintain, in Egypt. The traditions are, however, silent as to the precise location of their original homes.
2. Coming to historic time the Igbo traditions maintain the awka and orlu were the earliest settlement which the Igbo made in present –day Nigeria. It is believed that they emerged in this area as an important people about the beginning of the fourteenth century or perhaps even earlier.
  - (a) As the population increased, the Igbo moved out in different directions from the original areas of settlement. Towards the south, they moved as far as the Niger Delta where they success in expelling the Ibibio who had to find homes.
  - (b) This southward move was of great significance for the history of the Igbo. The southern Igbo gained possession of the celebrated ibini shrine of the Igbo. It also becomes the symbol of unity of the Igbo people, despite the segmentary system of Ibo political organisation. Later similar shrines were installed in many parts of Igboland. Notable among these were the Agballa at Akwa the Igweke oracle of Umunora, and the Amadioha oracle at ozuzu.

### 1.3.2 Igbo Groups

At the height of their development, in about the sixteenth century, the Igbo population spread over a vast territory, extending far beyond the frontiers of the present-day East century state.

As the Igbo settlements increase, so the people become separated into five principals' groups". different distinct also developed. The five principal group of the Igbo were the following:

1. The Onitsha Ang Nri Awka Igbo; they lived in the north of Igbo land.
2. The owerri Igbo, who lived in the south; the Western Igbo lived on the west bank of the Niger; they are now part of the mid –west sate of Nigeria; to the east were the cross river lbo. In the north-eastern territories were the Ogoja Igbo.

As the Igbo spread and became established in different localities, the groups different from one another not only in language and religious practices, but also in customs and methods of government. As one historian has explained some of these differences have been in response to very natural condition and problems in the locality. Thus, it was to be expected that the Nri Awka Igbo faced by strong northern neighbours would develop centralised government, strong enough to face external forces, whereas the southern groups such as the cross River Igbo facing on fears of this type, developed small unit governments.

In this study, therefore, we shall limit our discussions to the historical background and the general overview of the origins of Igbo. In this unit therefore, we are concerned with a general overview of the origins of Igbo.

#### Self-Assessment Exercises 1

- |  |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explain the village administration in the history of the Igbo.</li> <li>2. Explain the 'the Age-grade in the history of the Igbo.</li> </ol> |
|--|

Figure 1. Some Igbo Monarchs



Figure 2. Some Igbo Monarchs after a Meeting



#### 1.4 Summary

The unit has thrown light on the historical background and the general overview of the origins of Ibo. In this unit therefore, we are concerned with a general overview of the origins of Ibo.



### 1.5 References/Further Readings/Web Resources

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## 1.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)

These are the answers to the SAEs within the content. The answers are arranged in accordance with the way the SAEs appear in the content.

### Answers to SAEs 1

#### Answer 1

Village Administration: - A village is seen as inhabited by a group of related families. Each family head held the Ofo title and all of them put together formed the council of elder. The council governed the village and also involved in the administration of the villages.

#### Answer 2

The age – grade are people of the same age group that perform the following functions:

- i. Perform the public duties such as: - clearing the paths, construction of roads, and markets etc.
- ii. They served as army for the defence of the villages against external enemy.
- iii. They acted as the police force for the maintenance of law and order.

## UNIT 2 IGBO SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT

### Unit Structure

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Learning Outcomes
- 2.3 Igbo System of Government
  - 2.3.1 Igbo System of Government
  - 2.3.2 Ama-ala, or Council of Elders
- 2.4 2.4.1 Official Religion
  - 2.4.2 Ama-ala, or Council of Elders
- 2.5 2.5.1 Oracles and Shrines in Igbo land
  - 2.5.1 Sources of Wealth in the Iboland
- 2.6 Summary
- 2.7 References/Further Readings/Web Resources
- 2.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)



### 2.1 Introduction

In this unit, attempt is made to present to you the historical background and the general overview of how the Ibo system of government was administer. In this unit therefore, we are concerned with the general overview of how the Ibo system of government was administer.



### 2.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the nature of the Igbo traditional system of government.
- Analyse the various sources of wealth in Igbo land.
- Demonstrate your knowledge of the early history of the Igbos’.
- Evaluate the different social groups of the Igbos.



### 2.3 The Early History of Igbos

#### 2.3.1 Political Administration

The structural organisation of Igbo political system was based on the following: -



1. Village Administration: - A village is seen as inhabited by a group of related families. Each family head held the Ofo title and all of them put together formed the council of elder. The council governed the village.
2. The Age – Grade: - The age – grade are people of the same age group; they perform the following functions:
  - i. Perform the public duties such as: - clearing the paths, construction of roads, and markets etc.
  - ii. They were involved in the administration of the villages
  - iii. They served as army for the defence of the villages against external enemy.
  - iv. They acted as the police force for the maintenance of law and order.
  - v. They helped in the implementation of policies made by the council of elders.
  - vi. They assisted in checking abuse of powers by the paramount rulers and the council of elders.
  - vii. They also perform ceremonial and cultural functions during important ceremonies in the village or communities. The affairs of the village are discussed from time to time by family head. The villagers make laws for themselves and even the age-grades can enact a law which the elders would accept. Succession to leadership position was not hereditary in Igbo political system.

The political system was of a Republican on. Decisions were reached by consensus, different institutions played different important roles in the administration and powers were shared by them.

Wealthy and influential men in the community or village are given the Ozo title holders. This title makes the holder to be recognised in the society and could then preside over meetings about issues affecting the community with elders.

### **2.3.2 Judicial Administration**

Minor disputes were settled by the family while major disputes were handled by the council of elders or “Amala”. The final adjudication of cases was done by the deities. The age – grades settled cases that are minor among themselves. The earth goddess (Ala) plays a great role in judicial functions, for example, offences such as homicide, murder and birth of abnormal children are crimes against Ala.

The chief takes part in judicial settlement; the whole village may constitute itself into a court for the purpose of settling disputes. The native doctor called Dibia could also settle disputes amongst people.

### 2.4.1 Official Religion

The official religion practiced in pre-colonial Igbo land was the traditional religion. They had chief priests who performed sacrifice from time to time to appease the gods. The Igbos have great respect for the deities and the departed ancestors. The chief priests were the link between the people and the deities, as well as the departed ancestors. The Igbos believe in re-incarnation. Profaning of deities was a very serious offence among the Igbos. The religious lives of the Igbos were surrounded by mysticisms and superstitions.

Many writers have given the impression that, in the pre-colonial days, all the different groups of the Igbo had the same pattern of government, namely that of the city state and village units or group government. This, indeed, was not the case. The truth was that some groups of the Ibo, especially those in the Awka area, had kingship institutions similar to those which existed in other large west African states and in other part of based of the village" political units.

1. The best example of Igbo segmentary political unit appears to have existed in the territories of owerri, Aba, orlu and okigwi. The pattern was as follows:

- (a) The smallest unit in the segmentary political system was the extended family with a common lineage.
- (b) Server extended families formed a word
- (c) Many wards constituted a "village „generally with a market, around which the words were grouped:
  1. As a village became large, a division occasionally took place: two or more communities emerged out of this split.
  2. On the other hand, the merging of two or more small lineage into a larger and stronger unit was not uncommon.
  3. All the lineages in a village community were believed to trace their origin to one common ancestor.
  4. The government of a village community was controlled by two institutions. One was the general assembly of the citizens, the other, a restricted body, body was the council of Elder called the Ama-ala as well as being heads of the exercised families of the community, most of the member of the council of Elder exercised priestly function. General one of the elders acted as the „father „Of the group.

### 2.4.2 Ama-ala, or Council of Elders

(1) The Ama-ala thus consisted of heads of the extended families in a village community. But to safeguard democracy, any adult male could

sit on the council. In routine matters, the council was composed of the heads of the extended families; but when an individual felt that his interests demand his own presence, he had the right to attend the session of the Council of Elders handling his case.

- (2) Every adult could attend the village assembly which was summoned by the town crier on the direction of the elders.
  - (i) Each individual was entitled to a hearing at the assembly. Decisions were based on the unanimous vote of the members present at the assembly.
  - (ii) When the elders refused to call the assembly, the commoners could force their will on the elders who, to maintain their dignity, could not ignore the wishes of the people. In this way the ordinary citizens had their rights guaranteed against arbitrary rule of the Council of Elders. How was justice administered? In early Igbo society there were no formally constituted courts of justice in the modern sense. In common with nearly all other communities their courts were ad hoc ones.

Generally, serious cases came before the assembly of the citizens and the Council of Elders. Minor quarrels between individuals were often settled privately, or before a small group of elders in the ward. Where one party still felt aggrieved, he could always appeal to the Ama-ala, or Council of Elders. In cases where a formal hearing was necessary, both parties put forward their cases. They then withdrew and returned to hear the judgement after the adjudicators had examined each side's case. More often than not, however, the settlement of disputes was achieved by arbitration rather than through formal court procedure. Blame was then apportioned.

Despite the segmentary institutions of the Igbo, there existed links which brought several groups together as one people. One of these links was marriage. Normally an Igbo married outside his village group. This was the practice since members of the village lineage, as we noted above, were descendants of a common ancestor. Inter-village trade was another link which brought people of different communities together. Perhaps the most important link was the oracles which brought all the Igbo together to common shrines.

### **2.5.1 Oracles and Shrines in Igbo land**

There were many shrines in Igbo land which the people frequented to consult, to settle a dispute, or to ask for special favours through the intermediary of the oracles. Four of these oracles became famous throughout Igbo land for their supposed "powers" and "gift of

prediction” and for their impartiality when disputes were brought before them. These were the following;

- i) The Agballa oracle at Awka;
- ii) The Iwaki Ala oracle at Umunora;
- iii) The Amadioha oracle at Ozuzu;

The most celebrated of them was the Ibini Okabe oracle (referred to by Europeans as “Long Juju”) at Arochukwu. The name means “the voice of God”. It was so called because it was held to be the most powerful of the oracles. Because it was situated in the land of the Aro, the people of that territory had considerable influence in Igbo land. It also gave them an advantage when trading with their neighbours.

In addition to this segmentary political system, some Igbo other than the Owerri instituted what were called “age-sets” whose membership cut across ward boundaries. Each age-group in society had the responsibility for special community services. In this way the different age-groups maintained the tradition of solidarity among the different lineages.

In certain areas the young age-group or youth were given an effective voice in the council of Ama-ala. Among some of the Igbo any freeborn male could buy a title which enhanced his status and also initiated him into such title societies as the Ozo, Ama, and the Ekpe.

As we noted earlier it is not entirely true that kingship was unknown in Igbo land. Indeed, the Igbo near the Niger (e.g., those of Onitsha) and those of Nri and Awka had kings chosen from royal lineages, who had all the centralised powers which were enjoyed by monarchs in other West African kingdoms.

It is important and worth stressing that, even in the territories where centralised kingship was unknown, there was no lack of effective government. In a sense the segmentary system offered a form of true democracy unknown elsewhere. The only danger was that the system was open to unhealthy inter-village rivalry which often retarded progress and made a united front against external forces difficult. But the inborn ingenuity of the Igbo as a people was able to overcome these dangers and to prevent them being a real threat to their security.

### **2.5.2 Sources of Wealth in the Igbo land**

Most parts of Igbo land were within the forest zone. For this and other reasons the Igbo did not come into direct contact with the coastal European merchants until the nineteenth century; this also happened with the other forest states of West Africa. they did not benefit therefore

from the wealth which the West African coastal peoples gained from trading directly with the white men. Nevertheless, they had their own sources of wealth.

1. A forest-dwelling people, the Igbo grew enough food to feed themselves. This enabled them to produce luxury goods for sale.
2. Being a gifted and industrious people, the Igbo developed certain crafts to a very high standard quite early in their history. They also developed industries such as cloth-making (e.g. the Akwete cloth), salt manufacture, pottery, etc. Their smiths produced agricultural implements and weapons. The sale of these products brought in useful revenue.
3. Although they had no direct contact with the white traders on the coast, many of the slaves which the Europeans exported from the delta came from or through Igbo land. This was another source of income.
4. The Aro in particular became prosperous merchants who helped the economy of the Igbo as a whole. The celebrated oracles also attracted revenue from thousands of people who assembled at the shrines.
5. With their distinctive democratic segmentary pattern of government, and being by disposition industrious, the Igbo emerged as enterprising people both during the colonial era and in independent Nigeria.

### **Intext-Question**

Mention some of oracles of the Igbo kingdom

### **Answer**

The oracles include the following: -

- i) The Agballa oracle at Awka;
- ii) The Iwaki Ala oracle at Umunora;
- iii) The Amadioha oracle at Ozuzu;

### **Self-Assessment Exercises 2**

1. Give an account of the sources of wealth of the Igbo up to about 1800.
2. Explain the nature Oracles and Shrines in the history of the Igbo.



## 2.6 Summary

The unit has thrown light on the historical background and the general overview of the origins of Igbo. In this unit therefore, we are concerned with a general overview of the origins of Igbo. The Igbo by and large shared common political and social institutions and had similar cultures with some of their surrounding neighbours.

In Igbo land, the Oracles and Shrines are frequented by the people to consult, to settle a dispute, or to ask for special favours through the intermediary of the oracles. These oracles and shrines are fundamental to the traditional administration in Igbo land up to date.



## 2.7 References/Further Readings/Web Resources

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Figure 1. Some Igbo Monarchs

<https://samphina.com.ng/role-traditional-rulers-maintaining-peace-harmony-nigeria/>

Figure 2. Some Igbo Monarchs after a Meeting

<https://www.nairaland.com/950035/king-making-igbo-lands>

**King Making in Igbo Lands** by **Andre Uweh(m)**: 1:52pm On May 29, 2012



## 2.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)

These are the answers to the SAEs within the content. The answers are arranged in accordance with the way the SAEs appear in the content.

### Answers to SAEs

#### Answer 1

As forest-dwelling people, the Igbo grew enough food to feed themselves. This enabled them to produce luxury goods for sale.

Being a gifted and industrious people, the Igbo developed certain crafts to a very high standard quite early in their history. They also developed industries such as cloth-making (e.g. the Akwete cloth), salt manufacture, pottery, etc. Their smiths produced agricultural implements and weapons. The sale of these products brought in useful revenue.

#### Answer 2

There were many shrines in Igbo land which the people frequented to consult, to settle a dispute, or to ask for special favours through the intermediary of the oracles. The oracles include the following: -

- i) The Agballa oracle at Awka;
- ii) The Iwaki Ala oracle at Umunora;
- iii) The Amadioha oracle at Ozuzu;



## MODULE 7

Unit 1 Origin of the Niger Delta

Unit 2 The Peoples of Southern Nigeria

### UNIT 1 ORIGIN OF THE NIGER DELTA

#### Unit Structure

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 People of the Niger Delta
  - 1.3.1 Important People of the Niger Delta
  - 1.3.2 Organisation of the Niger Delta States
  - 1.3.3 Wealth of the Niger Delta States
- 1.4 Summary
- 1.5 References/Further Readings/Web Resources
- 1.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)



#### 1.1 Introduction

In this unit, attempt is made to present to you the historical background and the general overview of the origins of the Niger Delta. In this unit therefore, we are concerned with a general overview of the origins of the people of the Niger Delta. This unit also focuses on the last three (3) major ethnic groups of the Niger Delta (present- day Southern Nigeria). These are the Itsekiri, the Urhobo and the Ijaw.



#### 1.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss what differentiates the its Ekiri, Urhobo and Ijaw though they are the Niger delta area.
- analyse the historical evolution of the people of southern Nigeria.
- demonstrate that you can identify the peoples of southern Nigeria
- evaluate the socio-political organisation of the of people southern Nigeria.



### 1.3 Important Peoples of Niger Delta

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria comprises of communities that are located between the coast of the River Niger and the Atlantic Ocean. The area is occupied in the present day by the Itsekiri, Ijaws, Kalabari, Efik and Urhobo. Long before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the area was one of the major sources of African slaves to the Americas and Europe. (Imbua, 2012: v) Many of the Niger Delta traders, especially the Chiefs, developed formidable trading empires with the hinterland communities from where the slaves were taken. It is believed that most communities of the delta started from a central region called the Central Delta where farming was possible and predominant. Fishing was possible there too but was a secondary occupation engaged in by men only. As time went by, there were constraints on the environment as a result of increase in the population and its consequent effects which forced the movement of parts of the villages to the water-logged areas in the Eastern part of the delta where fishing and salt mining were the immediate possible occupations that could support survival. (Alagoas, 1971:269-271) It was the exchange of the fishes and salt of the Eastern delta people with the farm produce of the Central delta communities that started the importance of the Niger Delta as a global trading region. That minimal internal trade gradually developed into inter-national trade when traders of the two delta regions launched outside to engage in a “Long Distance Trade” with other communities within the coastline areas and their hinterland neighbours. (Ibid: 273) It was that early inter-national trade of the Niger Delta peoples that led to the development of trading states or city-states in the region. Alagoas maintained that the overseas trade of the Niger Delta peoples was an extension of their experiences in the international trade which he called “Long Distance Trade”. This the background to our study of the people of the Niger Delta.

#### 1.3.1 Important Peoples of Niger Delta

To the west of the delta were the Itsekiri and the Sobo; in the central territory were the ijaw; and to the east on the coast were the Ibibio; the Efik of Old Calabar had their homes in the eastern delta.

##### **The Itsekiri**

The origins of these people are not certain. Some traditional accounts maintain that the founding fathers came from Yorubaland; other accounts trace their origin to the Benin kingdom. The latter view seems to be stronger than the first.

(a) According to the second traditional account, the son of a Bini called Ginuwa made a settlement near Warri towards the end of the fifteenth century. Later the king's palace was removed to the site of modern Warri and this new settlement became the capital of an important delta kingdom.

(b) Early in the sixteenth century, the people came into contact with the Portuguese. European trade began to influence the history of the Itsekiri. The records also give an account of Portuguese Christian missionary activities in this territory in the late sixteenth century.

### **The Ijaw**

The Ijaw formed three important city states. These were Nembe (Brass), Kalabari and Bonny.

(a) According to a Nembe born historian, E. J. Alagoa, Nembe emerged from three waves of immigration.

(1) The earliest was the foundation made by three men, namely Obolo, Olodia, and Onyo who were believed to have hailed from Benin.

(2) The second immigration is believed to have been led by Ogidiga, probably a descendant of Ginuwa, founder of the Itsekiri kingdom of Warri.

(3) The third group of immigrants established the coastal ports of Twon and Akassa.

(b) Among the important rulers of the Nembe were the following;

(1) Kala-Ekule (1450-1500). He established a system of government in his kingdom. Ekule was succeeded by a number of rulers about who very little is remembered in the oral traditions of the people.

(2) The last ruler of this dynasty was Basua who did much to carry on the work of his great ancestor, Kala-Ekule. After Basua's death in about 1700, civil war broke out because of a succession dispute between two of his sons, Mingi and Ogbodo. The outcome of the war was indecisive, and the state was split in two and ruled by the two rivals. Because Mingi was tyrannical, many of his followers transferred their support to his brother, a peace-loving and kind ruler.

### **The Kalabari**

The capital of the Kalabari was Elem Kalabari which emerged from two waves of immigration; one of Ijaw stock and the other of Ibibio stock. The two great early rulers of the people were Owerri Daba and King Amakiri; the latter established valuable trading contacts but his reign

was characterised by a series of wars and disasters. He did, however, set up a permanent system of administration.

### **The Efik**

The first Efik settlement was made in about the seven-tenth century, by a section of the Ibibio people at the estuary of the Cross river. As a result of civil war, a section moved from Creek Town and settled in present-day Old Town. Because it had a better anchorage, Old Town in due course assumed more importance than the original settlement. Other settlements were later made, the inhabitants being attracted by European trade.

### **Self-Assessment Exercises 1**

1. Give an account of the origin of the peoples of Niger Delta
2. Explain the culture of the peoples of Niger Delta.

### **1.3.2 Organisation of the Delta States**

While the Itsekiri, founders of the Warri kingdom, developed their own separate institutions similar to those of their neighbours, the Edo or Bini, the eastern groups of the delta people had many institutions in common. Like the Igbo, the Kalabari, the Efik and the Ijaw tended to organise themselves politically into small “village” units; state affairs were managed through the system of “houses”. Secret societies also played an important role in these communities, especially in Old Calabar, where control of the government was in the hands of the members of the secret societies rather than in those of the lineage groups.

1. The delta state of the Itsekiri had a centralised kingship pattern of government, similar to those of their neighbours, the Bini and the Yoruba. Their system of government through hereditary monarchs was therefore similar to that of many other West African countries.
2. The people of the central and eastern delta area, however, developed institutions based on “houses”
  - (a) The “house” system corresponds, more or less, to the “ward” and “village” system of government of the Igbo.
  - (1) Originally, the term “house” applied to the members of an extended family, and later to a “ward” in a village community. Like the system in most parts of Igbo land, government in this segmentary system was in the hands of the elders of a house.
  - (2) In time, the concept of the house changed in certain areas. With increasing involvement in the overseas slave trade and later legitimate trade, the house system previously organised on the

basis of lineage groups, was replaced by what was called the “canoe house” system. In this system people who did not descend from the same lineage (princes, freemen, and even slaves) combined to form a corporation for the purposes of trading.

- (a) In this new organisation of the house system political office ceased to be the prerogative of people of a particular lineage group. Ascent to a high position in society now depended on merit or wealth rather than birth.
  - (b) Any man of wealth could start a canoe house, provided he could maintain a fleet of canoes and men for trading.
3. The canoe house system in Ijaw territory started long before it became common in Efikland.
- (b) One important result of the new canoe house system, as we noted above, was that social status which had previously been determined by birth and class now became increasingly dependent on the wealth and the size of the fleet and the number of men a head of a house could command. Since it was no longer determined by the sheer accident of birth, social status now became highly competitive.
  - (c) The chief of a canoe house wielded much power. Indeed, he had power of life and death over members of his house. He had also to be a man of outstanding ability, since the house’s success in business depended almost entirely on his qualities.
- (1) In most parts of the delta, several canoe houses joined to form city states. Notable among these city states were Nembe, Kalabari, Bonny and Old Calabar.
  - (2) Each city state had a capital and satellite villages and a trading region in the hinterland.
  - (3) As trade increased, there emerged among the various canoe houses one chief who assumed the role of king. Important examples of such kings were Amakiri of Kalabari and Pepple of Bonny.
  - (4) Though in many respects only Primus Inter Pares, the canoe house king, because of his increased wealth and prestige, came to be the middleman with whom the European merchants negotiated.

Secret societies also played an important part in the political organisation of the delta states.

- (a) One of these societies was the Ekine in Nembe and Kalabari.
  - (1) Membership cut across house divisions, so that the secret societies promoted the integration of the different houses into a city state.
  - (2) The elderly members of the Ekine were the executive which took the decisions to be carried out by the youngest members.

(b) Another secret society was the Ekpe in old Calabar. Government of the city state was in the hands of members of the society ranked hierarchically; at the top came the king, his deputy and the senior members, who were councillors, legislators and judges, and below them came the lower members who policed the city state.

### 1.3.3 Wealth of the Niger Delta

Because of the geography of the delta with its hundreds of creeks and rivers, it was natural that the most important occupation of the delta people should be fishing and salt making. Their coastal position also helped them to benefit from trade with the Europeans.

1. The delta people sent their catch of fish and salt inland to sell to the Igbo. This brought in a useful amount of revenue.
2. Another source of wealth was trade with the European merchants on the coast. In addition to the trade, they themselves conducted in slaves and other commodities, the delta people served as middlemen between the European merchants and the inland people.
3. The canoe houses also brought wealth to their states through the carrying trade. These canoe men conveyed goods as far inland as Onitsha, Idah and Lokoja.
4. How did they conduct trade with the European merchants? The system used has been described as “trust trade”. The European merchants gave goods to the middlemen. The middlemen sold them and used the income (in the form of a copper bar currency) to purchase slaves. These slaves were brought to the Europeans. The difference between the original advance and the value of the slaves were paid to the middlemen. In addition, some of the middlemen received commission for their services.
5. When the slave trade was abolished, the people continued to make profits from legitimate trade with the European merchants and from their carrying trade.

#### Self-Assessment Exercises 2

1. Write a brief account of the government of the Niger Delta states before the twentieth century.
2. Write a brief account of the social organisation of the Niger Delta states before the twentieth century.



## 1.4 Summary

This unit dealt also with some people of Niger Delta (present-day - Southern Nigeria) Specifically in Pre-colonial times. The Itsekiri, the Urhobo, the Ijaw have been the main focus. It should be clear to you by now that the Itsekiri, the Urhobo and the Ijaw people are located in the Niger Delta region. You should also remember that although the Itsekiri, the Urhobo and the Ijaw people have many things in common, they do have notable differences as well. It is also obvious that there is a kind of socio-cultural shift from what happened to the traditional Itsekiri, the Urhobo and the Ijaw to what we witness today.

The unit has thrown light on the historical background and the general overview of the origins of the Niger Delta. In this unit, you learned about the three last major ethnic groups of the Niger Delta that is, the Itsekiri, the Urhobo and the Ijaw.



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Figure1 Monarchs of Ijaw Land

<https://dailytrust.com/amp/the-story-of-rivers-two-revered-traditional-stools-265349>





## 1.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)

These are the answers to the SAEs within the content. The answers are arranged in accordance with the way the SAEs appear in the content.

### Answer 1

The Delta state tended to organise themselves politically into small “village” units; state affairs were managed through the system of “houses”. Secret societies also played an important role in these communities, especially in Old Calabar, where control of the government was in the hands of the members of the secret societies rather than in those of the lineage groups.

### Answer 2

The delta people sent their catch of fish and salt inland to sell to the Igbo. This brought in a useful amount of revenue.

Another source of wealth was trade with the European merchants on the coast. In addition to the trade, they themselves conducted in slaves and other commodities, the delta people served as middlemen between the European merchants and the inland people.

The canoe houses also brought wealth to their states through the carrying trade. These canoe men conveyed goods as far inland as Onitsha, Idah and Lokoja.

## UNIT 2 THE PEOPLES OF SOUTHERN NIGERIA

### Unit Structure

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Learning Outcomes
- 2.3 The Peoples of Southern Nigeria
  - 2.3.1 Origin of the Itsekiri People
  - 2.3.2 Socio-Political Organisation of the Itsekiri
- 2.4 2.4.1 Socio-Political Organisation of the Urhobo People
  - 2.4.2 Origin of the Ijaw People
  - 2.4.3 Socio-Political Organisation of the Ijaw People
- 2.5 Summary
- 2.6 References/Further Readings/Web Resources
- 2.7 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)



### 2.1 Introduction

In this unit, attempt is made to present to you the historical background and the general overview of the origins of the Niger Delta. In this unit therefore, we are concerned with a general overview of the origins of the people of the Niger Delta. This unit also focuses on the last three (3) major ethnic groups of the Niger Delta (present- day Southern Nigeria). These are the Itsekiri, the Urhobo and the Ijaw.



### 2.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

Discuss what differentiates the Itsekiri, Urhobo and Ijaw though they are the Niger Delta area.

Analyse the historical evolution of the people of Southern Nigeria.

Demonstrate that you can identify the peoples of southern Nigeria

Evaluate the socio-political Organisation of the of people southern Nigeria.



### 2.3 The Peoples of Southern Nigeria

This unit is the prolongation of the preceding one. Remember we are still discussing the people of the present-day Southern Nigeria. This present unit focuses on the last three (3) major ethnic groups of the

Niger Delta (present- day Southern Nigeria). These are: the Itsekiri, the Urhobo and the Ijaw.

### **2.3.1 The Itsekiri**

1.Origin of the Itsekiri People- Iginuwa is known as the man through whom the kingdom of Itsekiri is said to have been established. History tells us that Iginuwa was the son and heir apparent of Oba Olua of Benin in about 1473.You should remember that unlike the Yoruba, Bini and Igbo peoples, the Itsekiri do not have many versions of their origin. According to the Itsekiri tradition, Iginuwa at a time wrongly advised his father on a particular issue. The advice was so disastrous that Iginuwa became very unpopular to the extent that his people vowed never to let him succeed his father.

When his father, Oba Olua, noticed the seriousness of the anger of his people against his son, he decided to arrange a kingdom outside Benin for him. This was according to him, the best way to avoid problems in his kingdom. According to the tradition, Iginuwa was then sent with some chiefs and servants to an area by the sea to establish a kingdom of his own. On his arrival, Iginuwa met with some Ijaws who took him along with his followers by canoe to an Island where they finally settled. To most of the Itsekiri, this settlement is known as Itsekiri Kingdom till today.

### **2.3.2. The Socio-Political Organisation of the Itsekiri People**

The Kingdom Iginuwa founded was made up and is still made up of the Itsekiri, Ijaw and a good number of other elements. Ode Itsekiri is the capital. Other settlements such as the Formaros, Escravos and Benin Rivers surround the capital. The socio-political organisation of the Itsekiri people was very close to that of Benin Kingdom. The Palace and titles for instance were modelled after that of Benin Kingdom. But in the Itsekiri case, the Kingdom was ruled rather by the Olu. He alone presided over a council known as Ojoye which was made up of seven nobles or title holders. The Olu combined in himself spiritual and temporal powers.

### **2.4.1 The Socio-Political Organisation of the Urhobo People**

Just like the Itsekiri, the Urhobo people are found in the Niger Delta region. However, unlike the Itsekiri, the Urhobo are fragmented and live in different places in the Niger Delta area. This may be the reason why the Urhobo people, unlike the Itsekiri and Benin, have never established a single Kingdom. Socio-politically speaking, each Urhobo Village had its own traditional institution headed by a ruler (Ovie). Just

like the Itsekiri, the socio-political organisation of the Urhobo people was modelled after that of Benin Kingdom. The Ovie for instance, had a court made of prominent individuals and titleholders.

Moreover, just like in Igboland, the adult male members of the Urhobo society were divided into age sets corresponding with youth, middle age and elders. Of course, each of the age sets performed specific duties in the societies.

Figure1 Monarchs of Ijaw Land



#### 2.4.2 Origin of the Ijaw People

As one of the major ethnic groups in the Niger Delta region, the Ijaw people share almost the same stories of origin with their Itsekiri and Urhobo counterparts. That is to say there is no clear-cut demarcation on the history of the origin of the Ijaw from that of the Itsekiri and Urhobo.

#### 2.4.3 The Socio-Political Organisation of the Ijaw People

Socio-politically speaking, the traditional Ijaw did not develop any centralised system of government. For some scholars, this might be so because the Ijaw were scattered in small fishing settlements in the creeks of the river Niger. The “House System” characterised Ijaw societies. Ijaw people were traders especially fishermen. The traditional major Ijaw states were Bonny, Kalabari, Ibrik, Opobo and Brass-Nembe.

#### Self-Assessment Exercises 2

1. How did the people of the Niger Delta obtain their wealth?
2. Explain the socio-political organisation of the Ijaw people



## 2.5 Summary

This unit dealt also with the Niger Delta (present-day - Southern Nigeria) Specifically in Pre-colonial times. The This unit focuses on the last three (3) major ethnic groups of the Niger Delta (present- day Southern Nigeria). These are the Itsekiri, the Urhobo and the Ijaw. This is in terms of their socio-economic organisation. The unit has thrown light on the historical background and the general overview of the origins of the Niger Delta. In this unit, you learned about the three last major ethnic groups of the Niger Delta that is, the Itsekiri, the Urhobo and the Ijaw.



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Figure1 Monarchs of Ijaw Land

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## 2.7 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)

These are the answers to the SAEs within the content. The answers are arranged in accordance with the way the SAEs appear in the content.

### Answers to SAEs

#### Answer 1

The source of wealth was trade with the European merchants on the coast. In addition to the trade, they themselves conducted in slaves and other commodities, the delta people served as middlemen between the European merchants and the inland people.

Their canoe houses also brought wealth to their states through the carrying trade. These canoe men conveyed goods as far inland as Onitsha, Idah and Lokoja.

#### Answer 2

The traditional Ijaw did not develop any centralised system of government. For some scholars, this might be so because the Ijaw were scattered in small fishing settlements in the creeks of the river Niger. The “House System” characterised Ijaw societies

**MODULE 8**

Unit 1	Some People of the North Central Nigeria
Unit 2	The Igala Nation
Unit 3	The Nupe Nation
Unit 4	The Tiv People

**UNIT 1 SOME PEOPLE OF THE NORTH CENTRAL NIGERIA****Unit Structure**

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 Some People of the North Central Nigeria
  - 1.3.1 The Ebira people
  - 1.3.2 Economic and Political Organisations of Ebiraland
- 1.7 Summary
- 1.8 References/Further Readings/Web Resources
- 1.9 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)

**1.1 Introduction**

This unit is on the Ebira of the North Central region of Nigeria during the pre-colonial era. Ebira, also spelt Igbira or Igbirra and even Ebara, is an ethno-linguistic group of Nigeria. Majority of the Anebira's are from Kogi State. Other groups of Anebira can be found in the Edo State (Ebira - Etuno), Abaji (Ebira - Koto), Nasarawa State (Ebira - Toto). Presently, the Ebira, are the people of Okene, Okehi, Adavi and Ajaokuta local government areas of Kogi State. The unit attempt to discuss their socio- political and economic organisation with their historical evolution of time. The role of some prominent rulers was also highlighted.

**1.2 Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss what different root distribution of Ebira people of the north central region of Nigeria.
- analyse the unique historical evolution of the Ebira people of north central region of Nigeria.
- demonstrate that you can identify the ebira people in various parts of north central region of Nigeria



- Evaluate the socio-political Organisation of the Ebira people of North Central region of Nigeria.



### 1.3 Some People of the North Central Nigeria

#### 1.3.1 The Ebira People

Ebira, also spelt Igbira or Igbirra and even Ebara, is an ethno-linguistic group of Nigeria. Majority of the Anebira's are from Kogi State. Other groups of Anebira can be found in the Edo State (Ebira - Etuno), Abaji (Ebira - Koto), Nasarawa State (Ebira - Toto). Presently, the Ebira, are the people of Okene, Okehi, Adavi and Ajaokuta local government areas of Kogi State. The word "Ebira" refers to the people themselves, then language and their geographical location. Such as Ebira Okene, Ebira Igu in Kogi and Koton Karfi local government areas of Kogi state; Ebira Toto and Umaisha of Nassarawa (Toto) local government area of Nassarawa state; Ebira Mozum of Bassa local government area of Kogi state; and Ebira Etuno of Igarra District of Ako-Edo local government area of Edo state. Other Ebira are to be found in Abaji in the Federal Capital Territory and Agatu in Benue state.

**Figure 1 the Palace of The Royal Father of Ebiraland**



According to Okene, (2000) Greenberg's classification of African languages, Ebira belongs to the Kwa group of the Niger-Congo family, which also comprises the Nupe, Gbari and Gade (Greenberg, 1966). Recent in-depth research indicates that the Ebira have been part and parcel of what is now generally known as Central Nigeria since 4000 BC (Ohiare 1988). Thus, Ebira history is tied to that of their neighbors,

the Jukun and the Igala. Oral history claims that they originally came from the east and entered Nigeria between the Mandarra highlands and Lake Chad sometime during the last millennium. It is believed that Igala broke away from Jukun, and Ebira broke away from Igala.

These studies derive Ebira language from the Nupoid group (also called Niger-Kaduna), of languages including Nupe, Gwari and Gade. The Nupoid, according to historical jurists took off from a protolanguage described as the Benue-Congo from which other I language groups which included the Platoid group also evolved (Benth Stark 1992, Williamson 1967).

The Ebira zone is also prominent in the prehistoric civilization of the Iron Age generally characterised by the Central Nigeria as epitomised by Nok Culture. Even recently the iron-working site of Ife-Ijumu (Kogi State) has been dated to 260 B.C. Thus, it could be deduced that the Ebira as a group existed for a long time in locations within Central Nigeria not far from where they are located presently (Ohiare 1988, Williamson 1967, Beneth 1972). The Ebira Okene occupy the hilly stretch of land southwest of the Niger-Benue confluence area and share boundaries with the Yoruba -speaking people of Akoko, Owe and Ijumu to the west; the various Akoko-Edo people to the south and south west; the Hausa, Nupe and Ebira groups at Lokoja to the north; and the river Niger to the east. It is based on the above that, it is stated the Ebira consists of two smaller groups: the Northern and the Southern groups. The Southern group claims to have broken away from the main group around 1850 during the time of the Fulani-led holy wars. Northern Ebira traditionally had a highly centralized government that recognized a chief who inherited his power in a patrilineal fashion. The supreme Ebira chief was divine and resided at Panda. The Southern Ebira group was somewhat less centralized than their northern counterpart. Their governing system acknowledges local leaders for each of five founding families, but does not recognize a supreme chief.

According to Okene (2000), the features influenced the pattern of the people's technical know-how as it relates to the production of crafts like pottery, dyeing and blacksmithing and of the people instruments of production or destruction such as hoes, cutlasses and spears and bows and arrows. The Ebira were famous in Central Nigeria for the production of these crafts (Barth 1990:510-515; Jones 1969:38).

The Ebira are known for their cultural festivals such as "Echane" an annual masquerade festival dedicated to women, "Eche or i", a new yam festival, and "Eknechi" a night masquerade festival which marks the end of the Ebira calendar year and the beginning of a new one.

The throne of the paramount ruler of Ebiraland known as the Ohinoyi of Ebira land is located in Okene, a hilly and rocky terrain which served as a fortress for the Ebira people against enemies' incursion especially in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Ebira are predominantly Muslims and well verse in agriculture and crafts such as pottery, dyeing and blacksmithing.

### Self-Assessment Exercises 1

1. How are the different Ebira people referred to base on the Language and geographical location.?
2. What are the Ebriras known for apart from farming?

**Figure 2 Cultural troupe of Ebira land**



### 1.3.2 Economic and Political Organisations of Ebira Land

The nature of the physical environment influenced not only the land tenure system but also agriculture practices which in fact were the main determinant of the people's economy. Agricultural production was geared towards both domestic consumption and exchange.

Almost every household, which was the basic unit of production, was involved in farming. Over time the people, through production efficiency, division of labour and specialization, took advantage of both internal and external economies of scale. By early 19th century, realising its potentialities, the Okengwe district specialised in the production of beniseed which it traded and exchanged with the groundnuts in the production of which Adavi clan -groups and communities in the immediate north of the land had also become specialised (Okene 1995:79-84).

Apart from fishing and hunting, which complemented farming, the Ebira economy also to some extent depended on local industries and Colonial Conquest and Resistance craft production like palm oil, animal husbandry, iron technology and blacksmithing, textiles dyeing, wood carving and basket, mat and raffia weaving. Because of its unique nature, the textiles industry requires a brief discussion. Cotton, the main raw material of the industry, is a crop of antiquity with the Ebira. The Ebira had migrated with the crop and with the knowledge of its production to their present location, the soil of which was fortunately very favourable for its commercial cultivation. An exclusively female preserve, the distinct technique employed by the Ebira textiles producers was vertically mounted single loom system, locally called *Oguntoro*.

According to Brown, Ralph Willis, Picton and Mack, (Brown 1970:60; Willis 1972:51; Picton & Mack 1979:17,77,80,82) the Ebira cloth weaving had undergone series of styles, patterning and specialization that made it excellent and one of the best in the Western Sudan before the advent of the British rule. In the same vein, Henry Barth noted in 1851 that Ebira Woven cloth favourably rivalled those of other areas in terms of pattern, colour, decoration and texture. Barth did observe the superiority of the Ebira Woven cloth compare to other regions in the Kurmi International Market, Kano when he visited the city during the same period (Barth 1990:511).

The basis of political organisations of the Ebira started from the family. As the smallest unit, the family consisted of the father, wives, children and grandchildren. The unit lives in a specially designed Ohuoje (compound), while the Ovovu (outer compound), was the exclusive use of other people under the custody of the family. The oldest surviving male was the head of the family. He personified the cultural, clannish and economic heritages as the representative of the ancestors in the family.

Several families who believed they were patrilineal related by blood formed the next political unit of lineage, awara. The head was the oldest surviving male of the lineage. Though, his decision was not final as he had to consult with the heads of the families that made up the lineage, the chief had prerogative power over the economic activities of the lineage. The lineage land and relics were vested on him and the sylvan produce of the lineage were gathered in his palace annually for distribution to the various member families based on the ancestral law of age grade. Several lineages have survived to the present. These include Etumi, Avi, Adovosi, Egiria nd Ogagu.

The clan was the next political unit of the Ebira, the clan was the main and most sensitive of all the political units. Each clan had both a prefix in its name of either *Ozi-* (i.e., children of) or *Ani-* (i.e., the people of)

and a totemic symbol indicating either a sacred object or an animal attached to their clan's name. For example, Eziehimosoko, a clan in Okengwe district had an additional eulogy of eziede, "children of crayfish", attached to their clan's name. In the past, a clan name and a totemic eulogy served as identification marks for the various migrational groups or parties. The head of each of the clans, many of which have also survived to the present, was the oldest surviving male. His power was nominal, as he administered through consultation.

The largest socio-political unit among the Ebira was the clan-group locally called Ekura, about six of such clan-groups survive to the present. They are Okengwe, Okehi, Adavi, Eika, Ihima, and Eganyi. Though each was self-autonomous, they however related on issues of common concern. The head of each was priest-chief, Ohinoyi-ete. Each group was made up of several clans believed they had distant patrilineal blood tie. For instance, the Okengwe group comprised of Akuta, Ehimosoko, Avi, Esusu, Ogu, Asuwe, Omoye, Omavi, Eire and Adobe. The chief-priest consulted the heads of the clans on any serious matter affecting the group. In addition, he administered justice in conjunction with his deputy, Ohireba, and the council of elders of the group.

Despite the obvious limitation to his authority, the priest-chief was the highest spiritual and socio-political head of the clan-group. He was believed to have a daily communication with the ancestors. He ministered to, and indeed mustered the earth shrine to solicit for fertility, adequate rainfall and good harvest. He exercised sanctions and ensure control, discipline, and compliance with the societal norms and rules. He was vested with the interpretation of the ancient ancestral laws through divination, sacrifices and indeed long experience. Through these, the six priest-chiefs in close cooperation, consultation and communion with one another were able to administer justice and maintain the society of Ebira in relative social harmony up till the eve of the British invasion in 1903.



#### **1.4 Summary**

The unit has thrown light on the historical background and the general overview of the origins of the Ebiras. The Ebiras by and large also shared common political and social institutions and had similar cultures with some of their surrounding neighbours. They are also an agrarian community that engage in a lot farming and compliment it hunting and fishing. The largest socio-political unit among the Ebira was the clan-group locally called Ekura, about six of such clan-groups survive to the present. They are Okengwe, Okehi, Adavi, Eika, Ihima, and Eganyi. Though each was self-autonomous, they however related on issues of

common concern. The head of each was priest-chief, Ohinoyi-ete. Each group was made up of several clans believed they had distant patrilineal blood tie.



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## 10.0 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)

These are the answers to the SAEs within the content. The answers are arranged in accordance with the way the SAEs appear in the content.

### Answers to SAEs 1

1. They are refer based on the language and their geographical location as Ebira Okene, Ebira Igu in Kogi and Koton Karfi local government areas of Kogi state; Ebira Toto and Umaisha of Nassarawa (Toto) local government area of Nassarawa state; Ebira Mozum of Bassa local government area of Kogi state; and Ebira Etuno of Igarra District of Ako-Edo local government area of Edo state.
2. Apart from framing, the Ebiras are known for their mastery of crafts in form of pottery, dyeing of cloths `and blacksmithing of iron ore. which they travel far and wide to sell. They are also known for cultural The Ebira are known for their cultural festivals such as “Echane” an annual masquerade festival dedicated to women, “Eche Or i”, a new yam festival, and “Eknechi” a night masquerade festival which marks the end of the Ebira calendar year and the beginning of a new one.

## UNIT 2 THE IGALA NATION

### Unit Structure

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Learning Outcomes
- 2.3 Some People of the North Central Nigeria
  - 2.3.1 The Igala Nation
  - 2.3.2 Igala People
  - 2.3.3 Igala Traditional Administrative System
- 2.4 Summary
- 2.5 References/Further Readings/Web Resources
- 2.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)



### 2.1 Introduction

This unit is on the Igala People of the North Central region of Nigeria during the pre-colonial era. Some scholars contented that “Igala” refers to the triad of the language, the ethnic group and the territory located on the eastern flank of the confluence of the rivers Niger and Benue in Kogi State of Nigeria. Igala people are immediate neighbours to the Bassa-Kgomo, Bassa-Nge, Idoma, Igbo, Ebira, Kakanda, Asemia and the Nupe. The unit attempt to discuss their socio- political and economic organisation with their historical evolution of time. The role of some prominent rulers was also highlighted.



### 2.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss what differentiates the Igala and Nupe of the North Central region of Nigeria.
- Analyse the unique historical evolution of the Igala people of North Central region of Nigeria.
- Demonstrate that you can identify the Igala people of North Central region of Nigeria
- Evaluate the socio-political Organisation of the Igala people of North Central region of Nigeria.





## 2.3 Some People of the North Central Nigeria

### 2.3.1 Igala Nation

Egbunu (2009:7) contended that, “Igala” refers to the triad of the language, the ethnic group and the territory located on the eastern flank of the confluence of the rivers Niger and Benue in Kogi State of Nigeria. Igala people are immediate neighbours to the Bassa-Kgomo, Bassa-Nge, Idoma, Igbo, Ebira, Kakanda, Asemia and the Nupe. Traditionally, as highlighted by Ogagu (1981:168) in Onochie (2007) Igala folks are identified to have some longstanding kinship with the Jukun, Yoruba and the Benin kingdoms. Obviously, they are an amalgam of the various ethnic configurations in Nigeria including the Hausa/Fulani and other ethnic groups earlier mentioned which have been somehow assimilated into the Igala mainstream.

On this note, Akinkugbe (1976) highlighted that the Igala language is closely related to the Yoruba and Itsekiri languages. The languages of the two ethnic groups bear such a close similarity that researchers such as Forde (1951) and Westermann and Bryan (1952) considered Igala language as a parlance of Yoruba. Also, Igala is neither a dialect of Yoruba nor a language resulting from the fusion of Yoruba and Idoma as viewed by (Silverstein, 1973), but rather Igala shares a “common ancestor” with Yoruba as submitted by Akinkugbe (1976 and 1968). In her words;

*“... this common ancestor was neither Yoruba nor Igala but what we have labelled here as Proto-Yoruba-Itsekiri-Igala (PYIG). The evidence suggests further that presumably, Igala separated from the group before the split of Yoruba into the present-day Yoruba dialects considering the extent of linguistic divergence found between Igala on one hand, and the rest of Yoruba on the other”. Lexicostatistic evidence as well as evidence of sound shifts and lexical innovations is support or corroboration of this claim.*

The Igala territory by the early 18<sup>th</sup> century covered, in the eastern boundary, from Nsukka through some part of Onitsha, down to Okpanam a few miles from Asaba in Delta state. In the northern flank, Panda, Igu (present day Koton Karifi), Kakanda as far as the Bussa rapids in Niger State were under Attah’s control. Some other Igala imperial outpost spanned from Agatu to the Idoma territory of Etteh. According to oral tradition, Ebira ancestry is linked with Igala. Ohimnagedu (most likely prince Ohiemi Ngedu) established the first Ebira chiefdom at Panda and was given the royal staff by Attah. Igala

provided leadership and pattern of kingship system. Majority of the Anebira are of Igala descent. Other groups of Anebira can be found in Edo State (Ebira - Etuno), Abaji (Ebira - Koto), Nasarawa State (Ebira - Toto).

In contemporary approximation, Igala kingdom at its summit in the 1830s covered the entire present day Kogi state, parts of Niger state, Nasarawa, Benue, Enugu, Anambra, Delta and Edo states. The Igala kingdom too large for any unifying central control, bedevilled by irreconcilable internal rifts, weakened by loss of the economic power, eventually fell to the canons of the British colonial empire in early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Figure 1 the Attah of Igala**



### 2.3.2 Igala Traditional Administrative System

Usman (2015:28) observed that although the modern nation state is commonly the most developed form of the state of society, monarchy, a (simple) form of centralized social order in medieval times, has preceded it. The Igala nation in Nigeria is not an exemption. The Igala's are ruled by a commanding figure called the "Ata". The word "Ata" means 'Father' and the full title of the ruler is 'Ata Igala', meaning, the Father of Igala people. Another Igala word for King is Onu/Abaji. In the submission of Boston (1968), although "Ata" means "father", female rulership is recognized and Igala has had a female ruler (Bealeton) in the past.

Among the most revered Atas in Igala kingdom are Ata Ayegba Oma Idoko and Ata Ameh Oboni (Ugbakolo). Oral tradition given by Paul Odi stated that, Ata Ayegba Oma Idoko sacrificed his (five) most

beloved daughters Inikpi, Omo“doko, Ogado and Omagaliga...to ensure that the Igalas win wars against the dominance from foreign powers like the Benin and the Jukun Kingdoms. Offering oneself for humanitarian services is not unconnected to the attitude of supreme patriotism for the people displayed by the daughters of Ata Ayegba Oma Idoko.

### Self-Assessment Exercises 2

1. What did the Igalas sacrifice in order to win wars against foreign powers?
2. What is the commanding figure among the Igalas?

**Figure 2 Masks Masquerade of Igala Land**



### 2.3.3 Economy of Igala Nation

According to Yima (nd), the colonial economy of Nigeria was an essentially agricultural and solid minerals economy (before the discovery of petroleum which has turned the country into a monolithic economy). Produce like groundnuts, cocoa, palm oil and kernels, beniseed and livestock, including hides and skins were the principal cash agro-products. There were also food agro-products like cassava, yams, rice, maize, corn and others. The solid minerals of tin, columbite and coal also nourished the export-oriented Nigerian economy.



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## 2.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)

These are the answers to the SAEs within the content. The answers are arranged in accordance with the way the SAEs appear in the content.

### Answers to SAEs 1

1. Ata Ayegba Oma Idoko sacrificed his (five) most beloved daughters to ensure that the Igalas win wars against the dominance from foreign powers like the Benin and the Jukun Kingdoms.
2. The Igala's are ruled by a commanding figure called the "Ata". The word "Ata" means 'Father' and the full title of the ruler is 'Ata Igala', meaning, the Father of Igala people. Who is also the King. Among the most revered Atas in Igala kingdom are Ata Ayegba Oma Idoko and Ata Ameh Oboni (Ugbakolo).

## UNIT 3 THE NUPE PEOPLE

### Unit Structure

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Learning Outcomes
- 3.3 Some People of the North Central Nigeria
  - The Nupe People
    - 3.3.1 The Nupe People
    - 3.3.2 The formation of Nupe kingdom
- 3.4 Summary
- 3.5 References/Further Readings/Web Resources
- 3.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)



### 3.1 Introduction

This unit is on the Nupe People of the North Central region of Nigeria during the pre-colonial era. Some scholars stated that the Nupe people are called different names by various tribes in Nigeria. For example, the Yoruba refer to them as Takpa, the Hausas call them Nufawa (Plural) or Banufe (Singular). Gwaris refer to them as Anupeyi. The Nupe people refer to themselves as Nupecizi (Plural) and Nupeci (Singular). The Nupe comprises other related ethnic groups or sub-tribes namely; Beni, Benu, Kusopa, Dibo, Gana-Gana, Kakanda, Basa, Cekpan, Kede, and Kupa. The unit attempt to discuss their socio- political and economic organisation with their historical evolution of time. The role of some prominent rulers was also highlighted.



### 3.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss what differentiates the Ebira, Igala Nupe and Tiv people though they are from the north central region of Nigeria.
- analyse the unique historical evolution of the people of north central region of Nigeria.
- demonstrate that you can identify the peoples of north central region of Nigeria
- evaluate the socio-political organisation of the people of north central region of Nigeria.



### 3.3 Some People of the North Central Nigeria

#### 3.3.1 The Nupe people

The Nupe people are called different names by various tribes in Nigeria. For example, the Yoruba refer to them as Takpa, the Hausas call them Nufawa (Plural) or Banufe (Singular). Gwaris refer to them as Anupeyi. The Nupe people refer to themselves as Nupecizi (Plural) and Nupeci (Singular). The Nupe comprises other related ethnic groups or sub-tribes namely; Beni, Benu, Kusopa, Dibo, Gana-Gana, Kakanda, Basa, Cekpan, Kede, and Kupa.

Long before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Nupe people had historical links with the Hausas of Katsina, Kano and Borno people, who pioneered the establishment of some of their towns such as Abaji, Eggan, Kutigi and Enagi. In terms of culture, the Nupe borrowed substantially from their neighbours across the river Niger such as Yoruba, Igala, Gwari and Borgu. It is pertinent to state, that the Nupe did not only borrow culture from her neighbours but also donated some aspect of her culture to them. For instance, while they borrowed the kingship system of Igala land, they in turn introduced the Egugu masquerade in Yoruba land. It was also from Nupe land that Islam spread to the neighbouring Yoruba towns like Offa and Ibolu communities. By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the existing political structure in Nupe land was altered due to the outbreak of the Fulani Jihad. The Nupe indigenous rulers were dislodged from their offices by Fulani Jihadists who took over their positions.

**Figure 1 the Nupe Drummers**



#### 3.3.2 The formation of Nupe kingdom

The Nupe kingdom was founded by Tsoede, alias Edegi who was born in 1465. The early Nupe history recognised Tsoede and his fundamental

contributions to the building of Nupe dynasty. Tsoedewas the son of a Nupe mother and an Igala father who was raised at the Igala court in Idah but later returned to his natal home in Nupe land. He returned with magical and symbolic regalia bequeathed to him by his father, the Igala king. On his return to his maternal home, he gained control over the vast area of Nupe land and extended his kingdom by conquering the lands of neighbours as well. The people conquered were the Yoruba in the south and the Kamberiand Kamukuin the north. He founded Nupekoas his administrative capital and from there asserted his political might and authority in the entire Nupe kingdom. Tsoedepassed away in 1591 in one of his military expansionist missions, north of the Nupe kingdom. Hence, Nadelrefers to Tsoedeas the culture hero and mythical founder of the Nupe kingdom. The Nupe people have been recognised for their tremendous achievements in the history of the black race, according to valuable information from the work of the renowned anthropologist, Professor S.F. Nadel, the author of the *Black Byzantine*, who spent over 20 years in Nupe Land and spoke Nupe fluently in those hectic years of anthropological research. His adopted Nupe name was Ndakotsu Nasara (Etsu's grandfather, the white man).

The Nupe people have historical links with the Hausas of Katsina, Kano and Borno people. This is evident with few examples. Both the towns of Abaji and Eggan have traditions which confirm that they were founded by men from Katsina. Bokanewas first settled by a man from Kano (Hausa: Bakanoi.e. a Kano man) while Kutigi and Enagi became the homes of settlers from Borno whose origin gave the whole region its name, Benu. They are said to be specifically from Kukawa.

### **Self-Assessment Exercises 2**

- |   |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How are the Nupe people called by other people and themselves?</li> <li>2. What is the occupation among the Nupe people?</li> </ol> |
|---|

### **3.3.3 Nupe Occupations**

Nupe land is made up of an agrarian population, where the economy and social life revolve round agriculture. The people are active farmers. Major crops grown are rice, sorghum, sugar cane, millet, melon, vegetables, yam, homestead livestock management and fishing. Food processing is entirely done by women. Also, marketing of farm produce is in the hands of women.



### Figure Benin Bronzes depicting Nupe warriors



Benin bronzes depicting prehistoric Nupe warriors in those days when Benin was a Nupe kingdom.

### Nupe Kingship Structure

It is good to understand the evolution of leadership structure in Bida, the undisputed headquarters of Nupe people in Nigeria. The traditional inhabitants of the ancient city (Banin Bida) were known as Beni. These were very powerful people with mystical powers (now overtaken by Islam). The original house of Etsu-Yisawas the palace of the leadership where the Etsu came from before the conquest of Nupe land by the Fulani rulers (Goyizhi) in 1804, who displaced the Bida Nupe leadership structure in early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The Fulani leader-Mallam Dendo (Manko) who became the new leader of this empire started it all. His son, Usman Zaki, became the first Etsu Nupe in 1832. There are three houses in Bida where Etsu Nupe rotate. These are:

- (a) Usman Zaki House
- (b) Masaba House
- (c) Umaru Majigi House



### 3.4 Summary

The unit has thrown light on the historical background and the general overview of the origins of Nupe people of the present day North Central Nigeria. The Nupe, long before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Nupe people had historical links with the Hausas of Katsina, Kano and Borno people, who pioneered the establishment of some of their towns such as Abaji, Eggan, Kutigi and Enagi. In this unit the major occupation of the Nupe people with their political, social and cultural institutions.



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### **3.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)**

These are the answers to the SAEs within the content. The answers are arranged in accordance with the way the SAEs appear in the content.

#### **Answers to SAEs 1**

The Nupe people are called different names by various tribes in Nigeria. For example, the Yoruba refer to them as Takpa, the Hausas call them Nufawa (Plural) or Banufe (Singular). Gwaris refer to them as Anupeyi. The Nupe people refer to themselves as Nupecizi (Plural) and Nupeci (Singular).

#### **Answers to SAEs 2**

Nupe land is made up of an agrarian population, where the economy and social life revolve round agriculture. The people are active farmers. Major crops grown are rice, sorghum, sugar cane, millet, melon, vegetables, yam, homestead livestock management and fishing. Food processing is entirely done by women. Also, marketing of farm produce is in the hands of women.

## UNIT 4 TIV PEOPLE

### Unit Structure

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Learning Outcomes
- 4.3 Some People of the North Central Nigeria
  - 4.3.1 The Tiv People
  - 3.3.2 The Tiv People
  - 3.3.3 The formation of Nupe kingdom
- 4.4 Summary
- 4.5 References/Further Readings/Web Resources
- 4.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)



### 4.1 Introduction

This unit is on the Tiv people of the North Central region of Nigeria during the pre-colonial era. And the historical traditions on Tivland are all in agreement that the man called “Tiv” was the Patriarch of the Tiv people of Central Nigeria. The unit attempt to discuss their socio-political and economic organisation with their historical evolution of time. While the role of some prominent rulers was also highlighted.



### 4.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss what different root distribution Tiv people of the North Central region of Nigeria.
- analyse the unique historical evolution of the Tiv people of North Central region of Nigeria.
- demonstrate that you can identify the Tiv peoples in various parts of North Central region of Nigeria
- evaluate the socio-political Organisation of the Tiv people of North Central region of Nigeria.



### 4.3 Some People of the North Central Nigeria

#### 4.3.1 Tiv People

It is equally very difficult to trace the origin of the Tiv people in general; this is because no one appears to be quite sure of how or when they came to be where they are today.

Historical traditions in Tivland are all in agreement that the man called “Tiv” was the Patriarch of the Tiv people of Central Nigeria. However, there arose a strong question of who was the father of the Tiv. Thus, some allusions amongst Tiv contemporary historians motivate a suggestion that Awang is the father of Tiv. This can also be seen in the reference made to „Tauranga“ by the Tiv people. This is the basis for the argument that Tiv had a father called Awang (Makar, 1975, 1994).

Ipusu and Ichongo (Tiv sons) greatly multiplied and became a tribal nation. Oral traditions of the Tiv people claim that the descendants of Ipusu are referred to as Ipusu-akem, while those of Ichongo are referred to as Ichongo -akem. As mentioned above, the Tiv family multiplied and became a tribal nation with a homogenous language (called the Tiv language), without dialect, spoken and understood by all Tiv sons and daughters the world over (Gbor, 1974; Makar, 1975, 1994; Gundu, 1999; Aboh, 2005; Dzurgba, 2007; Ndera, 2013) the Tiv began their migration from Congo. This meant that they had to cross River Congo which was almost an impossible task. Thus, a mysterious snake called Ikyalem (green snake) formed a bridge across the river Congo to help all the members of The Tiv family cross the river. To date, the Tiv do not kill the Ikyalem, and forbid anyone in carrying out the act in Tivland (Aboh, 2005).

Therefore, the Tiv people migrated from Swem, crossing the Bamenda highlands in Cameroon, through the Nwange group of hills about 16km south of Ikyurav-ya where they encountered some hostile groups of people known as Ugee, Undir and Ulive amongst others. These tribes forced the Tiv to leave the area in three groups. The first group consists of Kparev and Ukum, who migrated northwest of Nwange to occupy the Ngokugh hill, presently found amongst the Shangev -ya clan in Kwande Local Government Area (see Akiga, 1933; Bohannan and Bohannan, 1954; Gbor, 1974; Makar, 1975; and Orkar, 1979. Others include Folorunsho, 1998; Gundu, 1999; Ogundele, 2006; Ndera, 2009; Chia, 2014; and Nomishan, 2014).

The second group is made up of Tongov, Ikyurav, Nongov and Turan, who migrated to the hills of Barakuv, Wo -Mondo and Ityough-Ikegh,

found amongst the present Nyiev and Nanev clans. The last group consists of Masev, Ihyarev, Ugondo and Shitire, who moved to the plains around Ibinda hill, located in the present-day Ikyurav-ya, about 10miles southwest of Jato-aka in Turan (Makar, 1975, 1994).

### Self-Assessment Exercises 2

1. What is the major occupation among the Tiv people?
2. How is the compound of the Tiv organised?

**Figure 1 Tiv traditional rulers at an occasion.**



#### 4.3.2 The organisation of the Tiv

In the past Tiv compounds comprised of two or more households belonging to a single extended family as evident in the arrangement of compounds in settlement clusters on the hill-tops. Thus, the oldest man in the compound took leadership responsibility on all the households within the compound. All the households clustered around one big Ate (reception hut) which served as a resting or meeting place for all members of the compound and a receiving point for all visitors. (Bohannan & Bohannan, 1953; Ndera, 2013).

In the same way, the oldest woman in the compound took leadership responsibility for all women and kitchen matters. Though this has largely been modified in the present Tivland, seen that contemporary Tiv people live in smaller house units which comprise most of the immediate family members (both in towns and villages), the ancient culture of allocating the leadership responsibility to the oldest member of the family is still found amongst the Tiv people. Thus, most settlements in Tivland are located close to riverine or swampy areas to cope with the water needs of the people as pipe-borne water systems are absent in most areas (Ndera, 2013).

Thus, Ipusu and Ichongo have since expanded into a large tribal nation, occupying 14 Local Government Areas in Benue State. More so, as stated earlier, the Tiv sons and daughters are also found in large numbers in other States such as Taraba, Nasarawa, Plateau, Cross River and the Federal Capital Territory (F.C.T) Abuja, with others living in Cameroon Republic.



**Figure 2 Tiv Traditional dancer**



#### **4.4 Summary**

The unit has thrown light on the historical background and the general overview of the origins of Tiv people of the present day North Central Nigeria. In this unit therefore, we are concerned about the various exposition on their origin and some of their common political, social and cultural institutions.



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#### 4.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise(s)

##### Answers to SAEs 1

1. The Tiv people like most of the people in the North Central region of Nigeria, that are an agrarian population, where the economy and social life revolve round agriculture. The Tiv people are also active farmers. The Major crops grown are rice, sorghum, sugar cane, millet, melon, vegetables, yam, homestead livestock management and fishing both by men and women.
2. In the past Tiv compounds comprised of two or more households belonging to a single extended family as evident in the arrangement of compounds in settlement clusters on the hill-tops. And, the oldest man in the compound took leadership responsibility on all the households within the compound. All the households clustered around one big Ate (reception hut) which served as a resting or meeting place for all members of the compound and a receiving point for all visitors.