

CHAPTER 8 CENTRALISED STATES I

Objectives

At the end of this chapter, students should be able to:

- identify the main stages of the state formation process in Kanem and Borno;
- describe the socio-political institutions of these states;
- explain the nature of the economy of Kanem and Borno especially its trade relations;
- describe the coming of Islam to Kanem and Borno;
- identify important rulers of Kanem and Borno and mention their main achievements;
- identify on the map the areas referred to as Hausa states;
- mention the main places through which Hausa states passed in their evolution to statehood;
- identify the major economic activities of Hausa states like Kano and Kastina;
- explain why wars were fought among different states in Hausaland;
- explain how Nupe state emerged
- describe the main economic activities of the Nupe people;
- explain how Nupe society was organized;
- explain the role of rivers ‘Niger’ and Benue on Nupe history and its relations with other society.

Introduction

This chapter will study the emergence, growth and development of some centralized states in Nigeria. These include Kanem and Bornu, Hausa states and Nupe up to 1800. The nature of their political economic and social system will be studied, as well as their relations with their neighbours.

8.1. Kanem Empire to 1800

The earlier inhabitants of Kanem: These are called Zaghawa whom were already in the region around 800A.D. It is by 1000AD that a centralized state emerged in Kanem in the region East of Lake Chad. It was formed from a number of small states around the North of the Kanem. The first ruler of the kingdom was Saif b. Yazan, who was the founder of Sefawa dynasty. He ruled for almost one thousand years. Islam was introduced in Kanem in 1080 and the ruler, Mai Umme Julme, was converted to Islam. This led to the spread of Islam in the kingdom. The rulers of Kanem were called Mais and had good relationship with states in North Africa, such as Fezzan, Taghaza, Egypt, etc. The Mais established the capital of Kanem at Njimi. The introduction of Islam strengthened the monarchy and political system of Kanem. The empire continued to consolidate and it developed into a large state.

Political system of the Kanuri empire

The political system of Kanem is as follows: The king or Mai was the head of government and had the highest authority in the kingdom. He was advised by 12 council members who advised him on state policy. The government was divided into provinces headed by provincial governors. Galadima and Yerima were the titles of the provincial governors who controlled the West and North. This is followed by the district heads called the Bulama who were appointed to the districts.

Also due to the expansion policy adopted by the rulers, they delegated officials who were military commanders to protect the kingdom from external aggression and expand the frontiers of the kingdom, the military official who are the sons of the Mai were called Maina. They became very powerful in Kanem. While military officials who are not descendants of the Mai are called Kegena. The Magira or Queen Mother and the senior wife of the Mai exercised influence in Kanem.

The Kanem Empire had great rulers such as:

- (i) Mai Dumama I (1097 – 1150)

He was the son and the person who succeeded Mai Umme Jilmu. He was courageous and a devout Muslim. Through his expansion policy he intended to expand the Kingdom but he was unable to do that.

- (ii) Mai Dunama Dibalami (1221 – 69)

He was a courageous ruler who extended the frontiers of the Kingdom from Niger to the Nile. He had 40,000 cavalry forces who engaged in the defence and expansion of the kingdom. His fame spread to North Africa and the Middle East. In 1252, he campaigned against Mabina, Kalkin and Afuno people. He maintained an embassy in Tunisia and established a hostel for Kanem students studying in Cairo.

The Kanem Empire started to show signs of decline during the reign of Dunama Dibalami.

Collapse of the Kanem Empire

The empire collapsed due to:

1. Dynastic struggle: There was a struggle for power from the provincial governors who were also members of the royal family. They organized revolts in their territories which led to the collapse of the kingdom. The struggles weakened the Empire.
2. The Kingdom collapsed as a result of the activities of the So and Bulala who were the enemies of the kingdom. The So, are a group east of Kanem who fought the Empire by taking advantage of its weakness. The attacks made the Sayfawa dynasty to move to Bornu.

Borno Empire

Umar Ibn Idris was forced to leave Kanem due to the So and Bulala attacks, the capital was transferred to Bornu which was blessed with pastoral activities. The Bornu empire also faced the

problem of struggles for power and it was only with the coming of power of great rulers that the Empire became stable.

Some of the rulers of Bornu Empire were:

(i) Mai Ali Ghaji (1472 – 1504)

He built a new capital at Ngazargamu. He reduced the power of the officials which was the cause for the power struggle. This helped in destabilizing the kingdom. He made Islam an important part of the states by commanding the observance of Islamic practices, such as prayer, reading of Qu’ran, etc. He maintained a standing army with which he made Hausa states, such as Kano and Kastina, to pay tribute to Bornu. In the East of the kingdom he defeated the Bulala and from the South he prevented the Kwararafa from attacking into the kingdom. Ali Ghaji also encouraged the Trans Saharan trade whereby horses were imported from North Africa while slaves were exported there from Borno.

(ii) Mai Idris Alooma (1571 – 1603)

He engaged in the consolidation of the kingdom by expanding and unifying it. He was said to have imported fire arms and Turkish musketeers for Bornu army, which enabled it to defend its frontiers against external aggression. He conquered the So people of Kano Tuaregs of Air and the Agadez in the North. He was remembered for the unification of the Empire of Bornu and other achievements.

The government of Bornu was similar to that of Kanem Empire.

Economy of the Bornu Empire

Trade was an important economic activity in the area, potash was gotten from Lake Chad and was taken to Kano, while textiles and leather goods were imported from Kano to Bornu. Salt was exported from Bilma and in exchange grain was taken there. Trade relations were important between North Africa and Bornu. Firearms and horses were imported from North Africa while slaves, especially eunuchs, who served in the place were taken to North Africa. Similarly, taxes were an important source of revenue to the state. Taxes were imposed on the peasant in cash or in kind. This was payment made with grains or livestock and in cowry currency. The taxes were collected by the provincial governors who in turn paid to central government.

The Hausa States

The Hausa states were bordered by Kanuri to the East and Songhai to the West. The Hausa-speaking people are found states like; Kastina, Kano, Daura, Zaria, Kano, Gobir, Biram, Zamfara, Kebbi, Sokoto. Tradition has it that Hausa states were founded by descendants of Abu Yazid who settled in Daura. However, Abdullahi Smith has shown that Hausa states emerged from small settlements of states due to changes in economic growth such as agriculture and trade.

The Hausa people were traditional religion worshippers until the introduction of Islam in the 14th century in Kano during Sarki Yaji (1349 – 1385). From Kano, Islam spread to other Hausa

states. However, Islam continued to be mixed with traditional religion until after the Jihad of Usman Dan Fodio in 1804 which led to the purification of Islam in Hausaland. The Hausa states were independent of one another, some of the Hausa states will be discussed.

Kano

Settlement of Kano started around Dala hill, because people used the place for security purposes against attack. The first king of Kano was Bagauda who lived around 1000AD. City walls were built for the protection of the kingdom against external attack.

During the reigns of Sarki Yaji (1349 – 1385), Muslim scholars from Mali introduced Islam to Kano from where Islam spread to other areas. Sarki Kanajeji was said to have gone back to pagan practices. He brought Zaria under the control of Kano. He introduced warfare tactics in Kano from North Africa.

Muhammad Rumfa (1463 – 93) was a great ruler who made Islam a state religion and made observance of prayer and fasting obligatory on the people. He invited Muslim scholars and also built a mosque. He was known for dividing the kingdom for administrative convenience. He also built city walls to prevent the city from external attack.

The system of government in Kano was centralized, which means that the Sarki was the head of government. He was assisted by a council of ministers and territorial heads. Also, the territorial heads who administered territories and collected taxes on behalf of the king, this is followed by the distinct heads. Muhammad Rumfa offered titles to eunuchs to prevent a power struggle similar to what happened in the Kanem Empire. There was the head of treasury called Ma'aji, the Yari or head of prison, Sarkin Dogarai Head of king's bodyguards, Sarkin 'Yan Doka Head of the local police. These were officials who assisted in the maintaining of law and order.

The economy of Kano was based on taxation of peasants, which was collected by the territorial chiefs and district heads and industrial production of textiles materials Goods such as cotton goods, leather goods and tie and die were important in Kano. Textiles and leather goods were taken to Borno from where horses were brought back. Kano also engaged in trade with other North African states, it exported slaves and leather goods, and at the same time, imported salt.

Katsina

Kastina kingdom is said to be founded in the 15th century by Korau, Al-Maghili of Egypt introduced Islam into the area. Scholars from Sankore University visited Kastina. It became an intellectual centre in the Sudan, whereby scholars and students from North Africa and Timbuktu went to Kastina for Educational purpose.

The Sarki was the head of government and like Kano eh was assisted by Council of Ministers such as the Galadima, Kaura, Marusa. The kingdom was divided into different territories headed by territorial heads, the territorial were further divided into districts. The territorial and district heads

were responsible for the collection of taxes which they took to the central government. They also recruited warriors during war time.

The Sarki maintained a standing army consisting of horsemen and foot soldiers who protected the state against external aggression. For instance, Kastina had been at war with Kano until 1650 in the 1512, 1554 the Askias fought that rulers of the Katsina. Also, Katsina had been at war with Gobir for a long time. At one time, Katsina was under the control of Borno and it paid tribute to her.

The economy of Katsina was based on agricultural production of food crops, such as corn, maize, cassava, and cash crops, such as groundnut and cotton. Industrial production was also important. Industries such as textiles production, of leather goods and dyeing were important in the areas. They were used locally while the excess was traded with other states. Textiles and leather goods were exported to Bornu while potash and horses were imported. Katsina benefited due to its participation in Trans Saharan trade. It was located around the trade route to North Africa, that is from Tripoli to Agadez. Taxes were an important source of revenue to the state.

Relations between Hausa States

Relations between the Hausa states involved economic relations involving exchange of goods such as textile goods, leather and livestock. There was also warfare between the states which was due to the desire of expanding their kingdoms. For example, Kano and Katsina had been at war for long period because they wanted to expand their territories and have control over the trade routes to North Africa and Agadez.

Nupe Kingdom

The Nupe-speaking people are found around Niger and Kaduna area. The kingdom's seat of power was located at Muregi, located at the junction between rivers Niger and Kaduna.

The political organization of Nupe was based on village organization. The villages came together to form a sub-group of the Nupe called Beni-Nupe. They lived in small villages and later came together to form a group. The Beni villages were: Nupeko, Esa, Towagi, Bida, Egbe, Yesa, Doko, Ewu, Tafia. The villages of Beni were administered independently but they later came together to form a single unit in order to protect themselves from external attacks. Tradition has it that Tsoede founded the Nupe kingdom by uniting the independent villages. He united the Beni unit as well as the people of Kyedye who lived in the riverine areas. Tsoede was said to have raised a strong army which enabled him carryout the unification. He expanded the frontiers of the kingdom to Yagba, Bunu, Kakanda to the South. The rulers of Nuper were know as Etsu.

Nupe was at the peak of it's military power in the 16th and 17th centuries. Tsoede introduced smithing activities, boat making and bronze technology. Tsoede is believed to have reigned in the 16th century. Islam was introduced into the area around 1750 and was embraced by Etsu Jibril. Also, a Muslim scholar called Mallam Dendo settled at Nupe during the reign of Etsu Mu'azu.

Economy of the Nupe Kingdom

The economy was based on industrial production such as production of bronze, heads, glass materials and clothes. These goods were traded in the markets and also taken to states of Hausa land. Millet, corn, sheep and goat were brought from Hausa land to the area. The trade served as a means of income to the people and the state.

Agricultural production was also important in the area. Yam and fish were produced for internal consumption and for exports.

Taxes are imposed on the people by the state. The state generated revenue on the taxes paid by the peasants.

Summary

- Kingdom of Kanem emerged in 1000 AD East of Lake Chad. The kingdom developed a centralized system of government headed by the Mais.
- Some of the rulers of Kanem were Mai Dunama I (1097 – 1150) and Mai Dunama Dibalami II (1221 – 1259).
- The Kanem empire extended from Niger to Nile. The empire had strong military with which it engaged in defence and conquest of other areas.
- In the 15th century, due to attack by Bulala and So groups, the capital was moved to Bornu and that was the beginning of the Bornu Empire.
- Great rulers of Bornu Empire were: Mai Ali Ghaji (1472-1504) and Mai Idris Alooma (1571 – 1603).
- The Hausa states were independent of one another. The Hausa states include: Kano, Katsina, Zazzau, Daura, Gobir, Biram.
- The Hausa states were practicing traditional religion until the introduction of Islam in the 15th century.
- The Hausa states relations was based on exchange of goods between them, as well as warfare to expand their frontiers.
- Nupe kingdom emerged from bringing together separate village units.
- Tseode was the founder of Nupe kingdom and maintained an army with which he defended the kingdom.
- The economy of Nupe kingdom was based on production of crafts such as clothes, glass, beads and food production of yam and fish.

Revision Questions

Objectives

1. The Kanem Empire was founded in the area East of _____.
A. River Niger

- B. River Benue
C. River Kaduna
D. Lake Chad
2. A centralized system of government developed in Kanem headed by the _____.
A. Ezes
B. Sarkis
C. Etsus
D. Mais
3. Kanem was relocated to _____ due to external attack.
A. Katsina
B. Kano
C. Bornu
D. Nupe
4. Mai Ali Ghaji established a new capital for Bornu at _____.
A. Ngazargamu
B. Kanem
C. Chad
D. Agadez
5. The following are Hausa states except _____.
A. Kwararafa
B. Katsina
C. Kano
D. Daura
6. Relations between Hausa states was based on economy and _____.
A. warfare
B. trade
C. commerce
D. production
7. Islam was introduced in Kano during the reign of _____.
A. Sarki Yaji
B. Sarki Rumfa
C. Sarki Korau
D. Sarki Kanajeji
8. Tsoede was the founder of _____.
A. Kanem empire
B. Bornu empire
C. Nupe kingdom
C. Kano kingdom

9. The Nupe kingdom was founded in _____.
- A. Niger-Kaduna area
 - B. Niger-Benue area
 - C. Sokoto area
 - D. Kaduna river
10. The title of the rulers of the Nupe kingdom is _____.
- A. Sarki
 - B. Oba
 - C. Etsu
 - D. Eze

Essay Questions

- 1. Discuss the nature of political organization of Kanem.
- 2. Examine the origin of Kanem.
- 3. Discuss the achievement of Ali Ghaji.
- 4. Discuss the nature of economy of Kano.
- 5. Examine the nature of political organization of Nupe Kingdom.