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# EVOLUTION OF STATE AND SOCIETY IN PRE-COLONIAL NIGERIA 1500- 1800

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# INTRODUCTION

- Nigeria's geopolitical space has the most diverse cultural and language groups and one of the most diverse ecological zones in Africa.
- It is the most populous state in Africa, home to more than 16 percent of all populations in Africa. Its diverse peoples, more than two hundred ethno-linguistic groups, were brought together under the umbrella of a modern state.
- Since Nigeria is a creation of colonial rule, this course systematically analyses pre-colonial Nigeria, which means the regions and peoples who lived within and adjacent to what later became the boundaries of modern Nigeria.

# Introduction

- The mode of socio-political organization and economic traditions played significant roles in the ways precolonial historical experiences manifested in different parts of the Niger area.
- Understanding the different socio-political formations in which individuals, families and communities lived their lives is therefore, germane to grappling with the dynamics of intergroup relations, gender, social hierarchies, ideologies, worldviews and economic pursuits.

- Broad consensus exists in support of such factors as food production, migration, iron technology, trade, environment, or ecology as playing strong roles in the processes of state formation.
- These similarities are due to intergroup relations, regional interactions and similarities in economic and environmental conditions.
- In the big states, the control of regional markets and trade routes boosted the economy, enabled greater political centralisation and financed ambitious projects. “

# Evolution of State and Society in Yorubaland

- Introduction: Focus here will be the Political, economic and military, factors brought about the evolution of Yorubaland.
- But before delving into it, there is the need to underline the myth of origin.
- Ile-Ife, Ibadan and Oyo will serve as case studies here.

# Origin of Yoruba Nation

- The origin of the Yoruba nation is involved in obscurity-Oral traditions, especially from historians, passed from one generation to another with several distortions.
- The Lamurudu legend-But there is a twist to this account. On the face of this tradition, the Yorubas are certainly not of the Arabian family, and could not have come from Mecca — that is to say that the Mecca origin could not be found in the records of Arabian writers of any kings of Mecca; an event of such importance could hardly have passed unnoticed by their historians.
- But then it may be taken for granted that all such accounts and traditions have in them some basis in actual facts, nor is the subject under review exempted from the general rule, and this will become apparent on a closer study of the accounts.

- That the Yorubas came originally from the East there cannot be the slightest doubt, as their habits, manners and customs, etc., all go to prove it.
- To them the East is Mecca and Mecca is the East.
- Everything that comes from the East, to them, comes from Mecca, and hence it is natural to represent themselves as having hailed originally from that city.

- According to the Sultan of Sokoto:
- To him, "Yarba is an extensive province containing rivers, forests, sands and mountains, as also a great many wonderful and extraordinary things. In it, the talking green bird called babaga (parrot) is found." "By the side of this province there is an anchorage or harbour for the ships of the Christians, who used to go there and purchase slaves. These slaves were exported from our country and sold to the people of Yarba, who resold them to the Christians."



- From this account, it is supposed Yarba people originated from the remnant of the children of Canaan, who were of the tribe of Nimrod. The cause of their establishment in the West of Africa was, as it is stated, in consequence of their being driven by Yar-rooba, son of Kahtan, out of Arabia to the Western Coast between Egypt and Abyssinia. From that spot they advanced into the interior of Africa, till they reach Yarba where they fixed their residence.
- On their way they left in every place they stopped at, a tribe of their own people. Thus it is supposed that all the tribes of the Soudan who inhabit the mountains are originated from them as also are the inhabitants of Ya-ory. Upon the whole, the people of Yarba are nearly of the same description as those of Noofee (Nupe)^"

- Arabia is probably the "Mecca" of our tradition. It is known that the descendants of Nimrod (Phoenicians) were led in war to Arabia, that they settled there, and from thence they were driven by a religious persecution to Africa. We have here also the origin of the term Yoruba, from Yarba, their first permanent settlement in Africa. Yarba is the same as the Hausa term Yarriba for Yoruba.

- In the history of Mahomet, there was a similar flight of his first converts from Mecca to the East Coast of Africa (the first Hegira), due also to a religious persecution; this fact will serve to show that there is nothing improbable in the accounts as received by tradition.
- That they emigrated from Upper Egypt to Ile Ife may also be proved by those sculptures commonly known as the "Ife Marbles," several of which may be seen at Ile Ife to this day, said to be the handiwork of the early ancestors of the race. They are altogether Egyptian in form.
- The most notable of them is what is known as the "Opa Oranmiyan," (Oranmiyan's staff) an obelisk standing on the site of Oranmiyan's supposed grave, having characters cut in it which suggest a Phoenician origin. Three or four of these sculptures may now be seen in the Egyptian Court of the British Museum, showing at a glance that they are among kindred works of art.

- From these statements and traditions, whether authentic or mythologic, the only safe deductions we can make as to the most probable origin of the Yorubas are : —
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  - 1. That they sprang from Upper Egypt, or Nubia.
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  - 2. That they were subjects of the Egyptian conqueror Nimrod, who was of Phoenician origin, and that they followed him in his wars of conquest as far as Arabia, where they settled for a time..

# Political Administration: Oyo Empire

Old Oyo society was an acutely hierarchical one. Being the capital of a city-state that later grew into an empire in the 11th Century, almost all the important functionaries of the state lived in the capital.

Kingship was vested in widespread dynastic lineages, with succession rotating in a more or less regular manner between their branches.

The Yoruba practised a centralised form of government with the Alaafin as the King

# The Oyomesi

- The members of this council also served as the kingmakers.
- The Council was very powerful because they shouldered much of the administration of the City and the State.
- Collectively, they were more powerful than the Alaafin not because they directly controlled the majority of the population in the city but also because their offices were hereditary and they occupied the offices for life.
- The Oyomesi counselled the Alaafin on State matters.
- Each member was expected to visit the palace everyday, and attendance was compulsory at the weekly meeting of the Council with the King.
- All meetings with the King were held in the Palace.
- Each Oyomesi also had state-level responsibilities in addition to their corporate ward. Their duties demonstrate that there were hierarchies within the council itself.

**A Table of the Oyomesi Hierarchy**

Oyomesi	Duties
Basorun	Leader of the Oyomesi, chief minister of state, regent during interregnum, spiritual guardian of the state
Agbaakin	Responsible for the worship of Oranyan, the ancestor of all the Alaafin and the eponymous founder of Old Oyo
Alapinni	Head of the Egungun cult (cult of the ancestors) and minister of religious Affairs
Laguna	Minister of foreign relations and envoy on foreign critical matters
Samu	Special adviser to the Alaafin on very critical matters
Akinniku	Minister of Reconnaissance in lieu of military engagements
Asipa	The most junior Oyomesi and the one that ran errands on important domestic affairs, also responsible for distributing the gifts received by the Oyomesi

# The Eso

- The Eso (the captains of the military guards). The Eso constituted the military nobility and in a way contrasted the Oyomesi as the civil lords.
- Numbering Seventy in all, they were divided into ten in each group of Seven, and each group was under the supervision of each of the seven Oyomesi, a political arrangement based on the principle that military personnel must be under the civil authorities.
- All the Eso had to live in the city. However, the head of the Eso, the Are Onakankanfo, directly reported to the Alaafin, and he was not allowed to live in the city. Rather, he lived in a different town where he was also the maximum ruler, although with the sanction of the Alaafin.
- The Are Onakankanfo was supposed to be a powerful personality, as the Commander-in-Chief of the Army. However, he could only go to war with the approval of the Alaafin and his Council, and he had to either win the battle or commit suicide.
- The titles of the Eso and the Are were not hereditary but were accorded on the basis of personal achievement in military matters.



# Ogboni Cult

- it provided an institutional check on the powers of the Oyomesi and the Alaafin.
- The Ogboni is a secret and virtually united corporation of political and religious leaders and its special priests.
- They also partook in the burial rituals of a deceased king.
- The power of the Bashorun and the Oyomesi was in fact restrained by the Ogboni as a group concerned with the mystical aspect of Yoruba life, they controlled as a third force, the relationship between the Alaafin and the Oyomesi, the Council of State.
- However, J. A. Atanda, in his work has proved that the Ogboni did not exist in the original Old Oyo but that following the evacuation of the imperial city in the 1830s and the relocation of the capital at New Oyo (Ago Oja), the institution developed.
- This means that in the early Old Oyo, the manipulation of powers and hierarchies by the members of the Oyomesi and the Alaafin and his officials was the means by which balances and checks were maintained.

# Other Officials

- There were also the palace officials, who were very relevant to the successful implementation of the kingdom's goals and objectives. They include: Iya oba (Official mother of the king),
- Iya kere (a female keeper of palace treasures, royal insignia and paraphernalia of authority),
- Osi efa ( a palace eunuch and political representative of the Oba),
- Arokin (national historians, several in number),
- Tetu (Executioners) and
- Ilari (messengers and bodyguards of the Alaafin, numbered in hundreds and were of both sexes, to mention just a few.

- The intense struggle for power between the royal authority and non-royal chiefs reached a climax in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, marked by cycles of intolerance between the Alaafin and the Oyomesi led by the Bashorun.
- The protracted Alaafin-Oyomesi conflict was a wild political ride that eventually crashed the internal administration of Old Oyo and resulted to a large extent in the collapse of the Oyo Empire and the evacuation of the capital in the 1830s.

# Economic/Commercial Activities of Yoruba People

- This history of Yorubaland counters the Eurocentric perception of Africa's economy as unspecialised, subsistence-based, and not market-oriented, and therefore, primitive and inimical to 'modern development'.
- Citing Ibadan city, which was modernised and modernising before colonial rule: Yoruba people developed sophisticated market and credit facilities with dynamic monetization and profit-oriented production ventures.
- The British colonialism brought traditionalism and primordialism to the political economy of Ibadan whereby the political elite became dependent on the '*hand-out*' or '*rent*', defined as salaries, from the colonial institution.

- The pre-colonial economic institutions that were built in Yorubaland during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century developed partly as a result of the articulation of Yoruba economy in relation to the Atlantic Commerce between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Although the Yoruba economy was monetized during and before the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the cowry that sustained the monetization, was an European import, and therefore, the growth of domestic economy was dependent on a foreign import, the production, supply and convertibility of which no Yoruba State had control over.
- This grew due to European merchant capitalism in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, which finally culminated in colonialism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. In other words, despite the local economy based on local commercial initiatives such as 'trade by barter', and indigenous transactional conventions, "the currency that oiled the engine of the local economy and gave it life after the 16<sup>th</sup> Century depended on a transcontinental economic system that was dominated by Europe.

- Moreover, Caravan system thrived in Yorubaland because long-distance trade was important to the economy of Yorubaland despite the pervasive insecurity in the region during the 19<sup>th</sup> C.
- Itinerant trading, credits and employment that linked different parts of Yorubaland were also cultural chains that connected villages, towns and cities to one another and to regional and global circuits of goods and a wide universe of thought.
- As distributors of new products, itinerant traders were also harbingers of new ideas, novelty and consumer cultures.

- The state and the political elite also collected tolls from travelling parties. The tolls collected from caravans, each sometimes, numbering about a hundred participants, constituted part of the economic basis of power of the Yoruba states and the elite.
- The toll is, in addition, to the agricultural taxes, through which the state survived.
- The toll system was controlled by powerful political figures, usually senior chieftains who collected tolls for the purpose of satisfying both their private desire and for executing public projects such as road maintenance, public administration and prosecution of wars. One of the significant features of tolls was that the bulk of them were collected in cash (cowry currency). This helped the monetisation of the regional economy.
- Interestingly, the upper class (royal and noble, princes and lineage chiefs) succeeded in presiding over the imperial economy to the exclusion of the lower classes, which led to a protracted conflict between the two groups.

- In terms of regional commerce, unlike the Igbo or the Hausa long-distance traders in pre-colonial Nigeria, women dominated the Yoruba caravans. Caravan membership was neither based on membership in a particular religion, town, or group nor organised and controlled by powerful and dominating proprietors.
- Rather, the caravans were open to interested individuals with each trader buying and selling, paying the tolls and other dues.
- It was a lucrative means of accumulating wealth and the expected high profit returns made the troubles and risks of itinerant trading worthwhile



- The process by which a town developed out of market sites intensified particularly after 1500 due to the expansion in the Yoruba regional economy and increasing scale in regional mobility, especially between 1500 and 1900.
- According to Samuel Johnson, 'a cluster of huts around the farmstead of an enterprising farmer may be the starting point: perhaps a halting place for refreshments in a long line of march between two towns...if the site be on the highway...in a caravan route, so much the better; a market soon springs up in the place, into which neighbouring farmers (and their wives) bring their wares for sale, and weekly fairs held.

- As soon as houses began to spring up and a village...formed, the necessity for order and control becomes apparent...the principal man who has attracted people to the place and formally recognise him as the Bale ...of the village...the village must necessarily be answerable to the nearest town from which it sprang and thus an embryo town is formed...From this we see how it is that the principal market is always in the centre of the town and in front of the house of the chief ruler (Oba or Baale, or any other chieftaincy). This explains why the term Oloja (owner of the market) is applied as generic appellation or title for all the rulers of a town.'

- Farmers also participated in craftworks and public works. Though they lived in towns from where they commuted to their farmlands daily. In cases where the farmland was more than five kilometres from the town, members of a household often opted to live for most of the year on the farm, especially during the planting season, and returned periodically to the town for social and other economic engagements.
- The Yoruba people had the guild system, which was mainly a capacity-based contributory scheme designed to enhance the economic empowerment of its members. The women folk established clear dominance in the affairs of several guilds in pre-colonial Yorubaland.
- Among the Yoruba during the pre-colonial period, each town or state organised its own guild system (Akinjogbin, 1981:69). Within every settlement or town, the guild process had three main categories which were: guild of general traders (*Egbe Alajapa*), that traded largely in inanimate objects such as medicinal herbs, fruits and other food items , guild of traders (*Egbe Alaroobo*) that trade in different types of animate objects such as fowls, goats, etc, *Egbe alaso* (guild of cloth dealers), *Egbe olose* (guild of soap makers), *Egbe alaro* (guild of dyers), *Egbe alata* (guild of pepper sellers), *Egbe eleni* (guild of mat makers), *Egbe onisona* (guild of carvers), *Egbe alagbede* (guild of smelters)

# Warfare and Diplomacy

- The political model suggests the ambition of the ruling class for territorial gains and expansion as the causes of most wars, the economic thesis suggests that the primary purpose of wars in Atlantic Africa was for the projected profit in the enslavement and trading of war captives.
- However, both political and economic considerations are related factors in relation to the several wars in Yorubaland in the 19<sup>th</sup> C.

# BENIN EMPIRE

- Benin is one of the earliest, most renowned forest states and most highly developed states of Africa, one that maintained centuries-old relationships with Europeans. The area of Nigeria formerly known as the Benin Division during the colonial period, has been described as the core area of Benin Kingdom and Empire.
- This area is about four thousand square miles and is situated in a low-lying plain, with few rivers running in a north-southwesterly direction in steep valleys. The soil is composed of tertiary sediment made of highly ferruginous sands due to the excessive rainfall that leaches the soil, leaving it with little clay.
- The very nature of the soil and its retention of water at great depth favours growth of deep-rooted crops or trees. This results in the formation and sustenance of dense rainforest vegetation, which in turn helps to protect and enrich the soil with leaf droppings.

- The Bini people spread across the Southern parts of contemporary Nigeria and are the descendants of the founders of the Benin Empire. The origin of there is a bit complex. It is argued that the name 'Benin' or 'Bini' is a Portuguese coinage, extracted from the word 'Ubinu'.
- It was corrupted first to Bini by the mixed ethnicities domiciling together at the Capital; and later transformed to 'Benin' in the 1480s when the Portuguese established trade relations with Oba Ewuare, the Great.

# Myth of Origin

- Myth of origin is also complex
- Major Myth-
- The story of Osanobuwa, his sons, the hornbill and the old snail shell.
- Osanobuwa was impressed with the youngest child for choosing the snail. Thus God named the land, EDO and made him king over it. His brothers could not find a place to berth, and had to offer parts of their talents and gifts to their young brother in exchange for a place to settle. Due to this myth of creation, snail shell containing medicinal earth forms an important part of the coronation rituals of the Oba of Benin.
- Other myths: the Egypt dimension; the Oduduwa legend dimension

# Political Administration

- The political organisation of the Benin people like the Yorubas was monarchical and centralised. The Oba was the theoretical and political leader of the empire with absolute authority. Unlike the Yoruba kings, he was not bound by the constitution or laws of the land. He wielded solely the legislative, executive and judiciary powers of the empire.
- Nevertheless, he had council members and officials to assist in the running of the empire.



- The first dynasty of kings-*Ogiso*. , meaning, 'King from above' or literally, 'king from the sky' was assisted by a state council of officials, including four nobles who were also the kingmakers.
- The four nobles were headed by the Oliha, who with the Edohen and Ero held hereditary positions except the fourth member, the Ezomo that was a non-hereditary military position.
- This Council was renamed by the first of the second dynasty, Oba Eweka 1, as the Uzama and increased the membership to six by adding the position of the Eholo n'ire and Oloton.
- Following the political reforms introduced by Oba Ewuare the Great (1440-1492), the position of the Edaiken as heir-apparent, being the first son of the Oba, was created and added to the Uzama. Since then, the institution has been known as the Uzama n'Ihinron (the seven kingmakers) and recognised as the first order of chiefs next only to the Oba.

- The Uzama advised the king on important matters, concerning the affairs of the empire. But unlike a Yoruba king, he was not subject to their advice and decisions.
- Following the Uzama, are the Unwagwe and Eribo, who were in charge of the empire's trade. They monitored the flow of goods in the empire and advise the king on how the economy of the empire could be improves.
- Other officials include the Ezomo (adviser), Ebohon and Iyasere and Ologbosere, the Chief priest

- The kingdom had 68 guilds in the kingdom out of which 37 were devoted to diviners and medicine men. The native doctors were the most popular of all classes in Benin kingdom. They were the most feared, honoured and respected by all.
- The Oba was the grand patron of the religious institutions and was responsible for providing them with sacrificial materials when required. This helped to ensure ideological dominance and control over members of the society and to uphold the powers and authority of the oba and the ruling aristocracy.

# Other Officials

- The reforms of the Ewuare also led to the emergence of new central political institutions of the State such as: The Eghaevbo n'Ore (Town Chiefs) and Eghaevbo n'Ogbe (Palace Chiefs).
- In the early 16<sup>th</sup> Century, Oba Esigie created the institution of the Iyoba (Queen Mother).
- In all, the monarchy, the Uzama, Eghaevbo n'Ore and Eghaevbo n'Ogbe and Iyoba constituted the central political institutions of the state till date.

- The Benin Empire was divided into two classes: they were the nobility and the common classes.
- Traditional chiefs and administrative officials were mostly chosen from the noble classes. For instance, the *Iwebo* were in charge of the regalia; the *Ibiwe*, supervised the king's harem and the *Iwagwe*, who provided the king with personal attendants.
- The commoners were not involved in the administration of the empire. Their main concern was providing food for their communities. Each of the commoners owned a piece of land they cultivated but could also be hired by the nobles to work on their farms for a period of time for a fee, a piece of land, or cancellation of debts.

- Members of the royal family were automatically, part of the nobility. King's mother was known as Iyaoba and maintained her own court near Benin City while King's younger brothers reigned over the villages throughout the kingdom, therefore, constituting part of a limited rural based elite.
- The Oba had the power of life and death over his subjects. In the alternative, the Oba endowed wealthy individuals with titles. Most of the titles had had ritual functions that committed the holders to the service of the state and the Oba, and in turn, led to prosperity and well-being of the people and the kingdom.

- The principle of the judicial system was that every head of a compound, quarter, village or town heard cases within his jurisdiction. But serious cases like murder, treason or succession disputes were formally brought to the king's council in Benin. Trial by ordeal was used in cases of theft, perjury and witchcraft.
- Communal system:

# Age-Grade System

- The eldest male, known as the Odionwere (plural, Edionwere), headed the administration of the community and was assisted by the three most senior males who formed the *Edion ne ene* (the four pillars holding the community), a kind of privy council.
- The eldest male in the every family unit was a member of the *Edion* age grade that constituted the village administrative council, or *Edion Evbo*.
- The younger males-the *Ighele* (25-40 years), *Igbama* (12-25 years), and *Evbore-evbo* or *evbin re Oba evbo* (below 12 years old) age grades-performed the strenuous and menial jobs in order of decreasing seniority.
- They were a kind of executive arm of the administration. This communal organisation, based on the *use* principle, probably accounts for the origin of the age grade system in Edo region. This organisation still persists though now in a ceremonial form.



# Economic Development

- Agriculture- Subsistence/Trade: yam, pepper, melon, groundnuts and corn, and later, palm oil.
- Introduction of iron technology resulting in the manufacture of iron tools
- Craft production, textile and fibre weaving, pottery, processing of dyes, cosmetics, medicines and food processing flourished
- A. Barter trade within and between communities.
- B. Regional trade: Inter-regional markets included those of the neighbouring Yorubaland close to Benin. It also included markets located in other areas such as Idah (across the River Niger, and located Northeast of Benin) and nearby Igboland. Sometimes, these markets fall within the category described as long-distance trade.

- C. Transatlantic trade: Between the late 15<sup>th</sup> Century and 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the Oba controlled the state's commerce with the Europeans, including the coastal trade through representatives. As the trustee of the Kingdom's land, he collected rent from strangers trading and fishing in the kingdom.
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- The long-distance trade was divided into two sectors; that is, trade with the North and trade with the south or Atlantic.
- Benin traded with the Gold Coast. While the Benin sold cloth and bead, including their crafts to the Akan people, they got an exchange of gold. They also traded in slaves between each other. The channels of trade between the two were through the Creeks behind the coast of modern day Benin and Togo Republics.
- Trade existed along the long-distance trade with the Yoruba and Hausa States. While goods such as salt, bronze, coral beads, iron implements and brass utensils were exported to Ondo people, including European goods such as calicoes, iron brass linen, beads, mirrors and cowries, In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries, tobacco, necklaces, guns and gunpowder joined the list of goods exported by the people of Bini.
- In return, the people of Benin bought ivory, palm oil, leather goods, Ilorin beads and savannah products such as locust beans and cloths produced by Ijebu women, Ekiti, Igbomina and Nupe communities were bought and re-exported to coastal areas of Ghana, Gabon and Angola. This form of trade intensified with the arrival of the Europeans

- Trans Atlantic Trade: Trade transactions were controlled through state regulations enforced by state market officials known as eghaeki. They allocated sheds, ensured peaceful transactions, enforced market regulations and fixed prices especially for commodities like ivory, pepper and later palm kernel that were reserved for the oba's trade monopoly.
- In the mid-16<sup>th</sup> Century, the king met and traded with European merchants in person. By 1590, king's chief vendors intervened in trade on behalf of the king although the king reserved the last word in trading matters.
- There was gender-based division of labour in the industries. Men were exclusively found in smithing, carpentry and carving whereas women engaged in pottery, dye making and food processing operations.

# HAUSALAND UP TO 1800

- Hausaland is an area of West Africa consisting of large states of Kano, Katsina, Zaria, Dara, Kebbi, Rano and Garun Gaba, and some other smaller states situated in the present day Northern Nigeria and Niger Republic.
- The land is bounded by a line moving from Azben southwards to the North-eastern boundary of Jos Highlands, westwards to the great bend of the River Kaduna and runs North-West to the valley of Gulbin Kabi and then North-eastwards to Azben (Smith, 1987). This was the area in which the majority of the people spoke Hausa as their first and only language and the cultural and social traits often associated with the Hausa people predominated.
- But since the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, the combined effect of the southward movements of the Hausa people and the coming of the Tuaregs, Fulani and Bare-Bari immigrants caused the development of two marches of Hausa land, the northern and eastern in which though the Hausa language continued to be the commonest language, it was no longer spoken as the first language by the majority of the inhabitants

# Origin of Settlement

- Bayajida and the Hausa Bakwoi
- However, it has been argued that the legend of Bayajida and the founding of Hausa Bakwoi is of very doubtful authenticity; and secondly that, if it throws any light on state formation in Hausaland, it can only refer to the foundation of some Hausa states and not all; thirdly, that even if the legend provides a description of the foundation of some Hausa states, it gives no real explanation of the process of state formation.
- In other words, the Bayajida legend ignores the complexity and dynamics of state formation in Hausaland.

- The long process of the emergence and expansion of the Hausa gari (town) appears to be the crucial factor in the formation of state-like institutions in Hausaland rather than the explanation given by the Bayajida legends.
- The expansion of gari and the building of *birni* the capital city with its substantial industrial and commercial population, its dependent arable land and its developed fortifications, seem to have marked 'the final stage of development of the Hausa state.'
- The expansion of each state, due to the presence of rich and fairly well distributed deposits of iron ore and defence mechanisms, was therefore, a factor of frontier control of additional territory and its population.

- The Bayajida legend only explains princely migration into Hausaland, and the introduction and planting of the structures and ideas of state and monarchy to Hausaland as a package.
- External influence in the process of state formation in Hausaland cannot be undermined. For example, migration from Borno to Daura in Hausaland, may have been that of the Berebari political refugees led by Dogari, described as a Prince of Borno.
- According to Palmer's dating, Dogari came to Kano in the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century and settled there. To the east of Hausaland, in the Lake Chad region, the powerful empire of Kanem-Borno was already established well established before the birth of Hausa states in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, and migrations from this area of centralised political institution could have created the intensification and elaboration in the political processes in Hausaland in the early second millennium.



# Pre-Islam Growth of Hausaland

- What is the connection between evolution of Hausa states and religion?
- Islam was responsible for some important developments in the land.

- Hausa people practised the tropical African religion, which involved belief in a high and distant god not actively connected with the everyday life of men.
- The high god the Hausawa was Ubangiji, the nearer spirits iskoki and the maintenance of relations with the latter, was the object of ritual.
- Communion with the spirits was partly achieved by sacrificial procedures carried out by family heads and also by 'possessions' spirits in possession of human beings are termed, 'bori'.
- The bori is carried out by the Bokaye who were specially skilled in mysteries of the spirits and playing an important political role in the Hausa States (Smith, 1987).

- Economically, farming was the major occupation of the Hausa people because of the fertility of the land and its strategic location to other parts. But other occupations include dyeing, iron working and basketry,
- Women focused on farming, hair weaving and trading. But most importantly, in pre-Islam Hausa state, women were very independent, especially in dispensing their economic activities unlike now that most of them are tied to the harem culture. Women had free and willing access to make money and spend on themselves and their families. They had no dress code, and could engage in any form of occupation.
- Socially, it was a very liberal society and men had access to alcoholic drinks.

- The location of Hausaland, which stretched from the Sahel in the North to the Southern Savanna in the South-movement-production of a variety of crops-Sedentarization.
- The economy also survived on the mining of iron-ore used for producing iron implements and especially, weapons.

- Trade, namely; local trade, regional trade with Chad, Mali and Sudan to mention a few; and trans-Saharan trade with North Africa. Items such as millet, sorghum, rice, maize, peanuts, beans, onions, cotton, kolanuts and indigo, cattle, sheep and goats; leatherworks, pottery, tunics, and baskets.

- Politically, using the Maguzawa communities in the North, the political system was a very simple one. The Maguzawa communities had three patrilineal cultural leaders. The Sarki'n Noma (Head of Farming), Sarki'n dawa (head man of the bush) and Sarki'n arna (head of pagans). The latter had the best beer in the community while the Sarki'n dawa was the best hunter in the community.
- The system developed into a more coordinated form with the expansion of the state

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- The Hausa states from very early times, developed an efficient system of administration. The King exercised overall control over every department of administration.
- He was both the political and religious head of his people and had under him, subordinate local rulers most of who were members of the royal family. They assisted him in government.



- Justice was given either by a district or village head or in special cases, by the king himself. The King was the supreme judge of the state, especially on cases bordering on land and murder. His court also served as an Appeal court.
- The Sarki was assisted by the Grand Qadi or Chief Alkali and other Qadis or Alkali. In fact, majority of the cases were conducted by the Alkali who was versed in Islamic laws

# Islamization and Development

- Several records about the period of Northern Islamization:
- Traced to the 1th century.
- The Wangarawa migration into the North (1431-1432)
- The Bayajida record: the people of the city were prevented from fetching water from the only well unless on Fridays. Similarly, Friday in Islam is referred to as the most sacred day 'being a small Id-Day (gathering for the Friday congregational prayers), the day Prophet Adam was created and ejected from the paradise; the day the world was created and the last Day (Day of judgment) the day which Prophet Abraham was saved from the fire.
- The activities of the Islamic scholars from North Africa,
- The role of merchants through the Trans-Saharan trade. The trade routes and the terminus served as channels of spreading and exchange of goods and ideas.

- By the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, the spread of Islam in Hausa Land recorded an overwhelming success.
- The Jihad of Uthman Fodio, further consolidated the development of Hausaland. This was the period when leaders or kings started accepting the faith and championed its spread.

# Impact of Islamization of the North:

## Socio-Economic Impact

- The Harem Programme (Ba Shiga)
- The development of Islamic education, associated with the immigration of Wangarawa scholars was witnessed in Hausaland. It led to the Al-Majeri phenomenon.
- Direct contact : The coming of Islam into Hausaland and its development from the 15<sup>th</sup> Century connected the Hausaland with the North African states, Middle East and Europe for trade purposes, especially, slave trading.
- The most significant development, which occurred after the Jihad, was the increase in the volume of trade towards the North. In addition, Hausa commercial activities expanded as a direct result of the expansion of the Sokoto Caliphate. Emirate towns established by the Jihad became centres of operation for Hausa traders.

- In the Hausa city-states, the centre of power was organised around Birni (the city). The sarki ruled from the city where he maintained an elaborate court and official hierarchy, and before the influence of Islam, he was a priest-king in spiritual bond with other dieties.
- The attempt to rule the city-state according to Islamic practices from the fifteenth century onwards had impacts on the organisation of state and society across Hausaland., especially in Kano.
- The kingship institution in Hausaland acquired extensive powers by the 15<sup>th</sup> Century but a state council, composed of chief ministers and territorial officials, provided checks and balances to these kingly powers.

- Despite the broad similarities among the various Hausa city-states, there are important differences.
- The position of the Galadima was that of that of the heir-apparent in Kano but in Zaria, he was a eunuch who was left in charge of the town when the Sarki and other chiefs went out to war.
- The Madawaki was next to the King and he advised the king on appointment and dismissal of title holders; he replied to the King's address on feast days, he summoned the chief councillors to their meetings and with the councillors, he chose the new king. Waziri (Chief Minister) performed these functions in other Hausa states.

- Other officials include the Magaji (the Finance Minister; The Sarkin Yari-Chief of Prisons; 5 Sarki Dogarai-Head of the King's bodyguards and 6. Sarkin Dan Yan Douka-the Chief of the Police in Charge of Prisoners and Convicts

- Territorial administration was exercised through district and village heads; sometimes, the district heads were appointed by the king from his own or other important families and ‘ each of them had a representative in the capital, to whom the district head reported events in the district about who informed the king accordingly.



- After the Jihad, the Caliphate became extremely relevant as new and large political machinery was founded. As its head was the Caliph, which still exists.
- His duty was to select or confirm the section of Emirs to govern the outlying states of the Caliphate.
- The Caliph appointed Waziri, who served as his representative in the emirates and acted on his behalf on issues of appointment.
- The Koja was the judicial officer through whom all appeals from the emirates were brought to the Caliph's court at Sokoto.
- The emirates were to visit Sokoto on the appointment of a new Caliph, and afterwards, were still expected to make periodic visits.
- They were also expected to pay taxes such Zakat, Waraji, Khum, and Jizya.

# IGBO, STATE AND SOCIETY FROM 1500 TO 1800

- The heterarchical and decentralised nature of power distribution in some societies has an 'inferior' form of socio-political organization in colonial anthropology. Hence, terminologies such as stateless, kin-based, segmentary, clans and tribal have been applied to sum up the otherwise dynamic and complex political systems of these decentralised societies.
- At the core of such summations is the assumption that acephalous societies were without history, movement, and changes before the so-called 'civilizing mission' of colonialism appointed 'warrant chiefs' over them.
- The Tiv people of the Middle Niger Valley and the Igbo, east of the River Niger, belong to the so-called "stateless societies" in pre-colonial Nigerian historiography.

- Igboland is located between latitude 5° and 7° north and longitude 6° and 8° east; bounded to the north by the Igala, Idoma, and Ogoja peoples, to the east by the Ibibio, the South by the Ijaw and to the West by the Edo. It covers an area of 40,922 square kilometres.
- Igboland is split into two unequal parts by the River Niger with the greater proportion lying to the east of the river. Other important rivers in Igboland are Imo, Orashi, Anambra, Mamu and Ebonyi while the Lakes include Oguta, Agulu, Nike, and Opi.

- The ecology played important roles in the development of the early population in Igboland.
- The northern part of Igboland comprising the Nsukka, Awgu-Okigwe, and Afikpo divisions, has been an important subregion for studying the origins of Igbo civilization.
- Caves and rock shelters are common features in this northern section and they were the foci of early settlement in the area.

- Contrary to the predominant references in the literature that the Igbo were organised into acephalous or segmentary socio-political systems, a few states with kingship existed in parts of Igboland, including Nri, Onitsha, Oguta, Osomari, and Aro Kingdoms to the east of the Niger, and Aboh and Umuezechima Kingdoms to the west of the Niger, to mention a few.
- Nri was the oldest of the oldest of the Igbo kingship systems. Eze Nri and his agents sponsored men in Igbo towns through the ozo title ceremonies and gave them their emblems of office, which is the Ofo.
- This gave Nri priests wide religious and cultural influence.

- Another example is the Aro kingdom. Aro kingdom evolved a form of government that regulated the relationship between the king, his court and the Aro people on one hand, and on the other, the surrounding Igbo communities who had come under Aro influence.
- Aro produced a well-defined state organisation with judicial system and an organised army, a state whose economic basis was the control and domination of long-distance trade in Igbo hinterlands.

- Elaborate myths and rituals were built around the institution of kingship in Igboland.
- Kings were believed to be sacred, possessing spiritual powers, and complex ceremonies were performed at their installations and death.
- The kings were the head of government but they ruled with the cabinet chiefs (ndi ichies) who equally exercised some powers, and acted as checks on the powers of the king. Succession to the throne varied from one state to another.
- In Nri for example kingship rotated among the Umu Nri Obeagu lineages in the Agukwu section of Nri. In Arochukwu, succession was strictly hereditary and invested by primogeniture in the first son born to the reigning king while he was in office. However, the King could nominate any of his sons that showed great wisdom and knowledge in administration to succeed him in office.

- In Igbo states, every palace had officials with defined roles in administration. The palace was usually divided into different sections for specific activities and functions such as the King's private chamber, meeting chamber, public arena and palace wives' and children's chambers.
- Some states had eunuchs as part of the king's servants but in the case of the Eze Nri, the dwarfs (male and female) played important roles in the palace. They were used by the Eze Nri to send messages/ summons to the leader of any town.
- Dwarfs were seen as mystical beings in Igboland and their presence in any town was interpreted as a sign of danger and palaver.



- Where a monarch could be identified as the holder of executive authority, contemporary observers noted that such authorities were symbolic, and that powers were diffused through a complex system of lineage, council, and monarchical representations, and that the king (Obi) did not have privilege of absolute political power.

- However, to understand the Igbo segmentary lineage system, it is important to begin with the kinship structure, which operates at four levels:
- Minimal segment (the single, immediate extended family unit)
- Minor segment (a sublineage or the higher extended family unit) made up of related minimal segments
- Major segment, which corresponds to a lineage (consisting of related higher extended family units)
- Maximal segment which corresponds to a village and made up of lineages.

- It was based on village and direct democracy, where everybody in the village has the authority to contribute to decision making in the public space.
- Each Igbo village was viewed as a political unit inhabited by related families who were bound by common belief and origin. Each family head in the village had the 'Ofo' title and altogether formed the council of elders.
- The Council of elders presided over important issues on the village's welfare, safety, development etc. among the council of elders, one was recognised as the oldest and was referred to as 'Okpara'. He presided over meeting, adjourned meetings and led judgments. The Council represented the Igbo ancestors, and they helped maintain laws, customs and traditions of the land.

- One cannot ignore the role of the age-grade system. The age-grade comprised people that belong to the same age group.
- The Senior age group maintained peace and order in the village and also provided security to ward off external attacks, while the junior age group concentrated on the cleanliness of the environment.
- They also acted as checks to the council of elders and other administrative bodies. In places such as Mbaise, Nsukka, Abiriba, and Afikpo, age grades managed the affairs of the villages.

- Another level of the Igbo political administration were the 'Ozo' title holders. It was conferred on wealthy and influential men in the community, who after getting the title, could preside over meetings with the elders.
- The priests were part of the political system because they served as the mouthpiece of the gods on matters concerning the running of the affairs of the state and government.

- The classical segmentary lineage political system manifests the most in the southern and central regions of Igbo culture area, “from Orji River parts of the Nsukka area, through the Agbaja (including Udi and Agwu and the Ihiala Uli-Oba-Ogidi areas, to the Orlu....., Okigwe ...., and Owerri areas, as well as the Ikwerre-Etche, Ukwu, Ngwa (Aba), Ohuhu-Ibekwu and Bende areas.’

- Under this arrangement, each level of kinship structure tended to be an autonomous unit in matters concerning its members. The implication was that the near total sovereignty at each level of kinship structure meant that extended family units were interlocked through the sublineage, lineage and village level administrative apparatuses.
- Yet a centralising figure coordinating the affairs of all the segments was lacking.
- Even the age-grades, associations and title-societies were too weak to supercede the power and influence of these segments.

- In all, the principles of political representation and mass political participation were the guiding forces in the evolution of political systems in Igboland. Even though leaders or representatives were not elected, political decision-making processes bore the markings of democratic participation.
- People participated in discussing matters affecting the welfare of their communities either as individuals or through their representations from the lineages to the village group level.
- Even the nature of the political structures in the states ensured some balance of power in order to limit the possibilities of despotism.