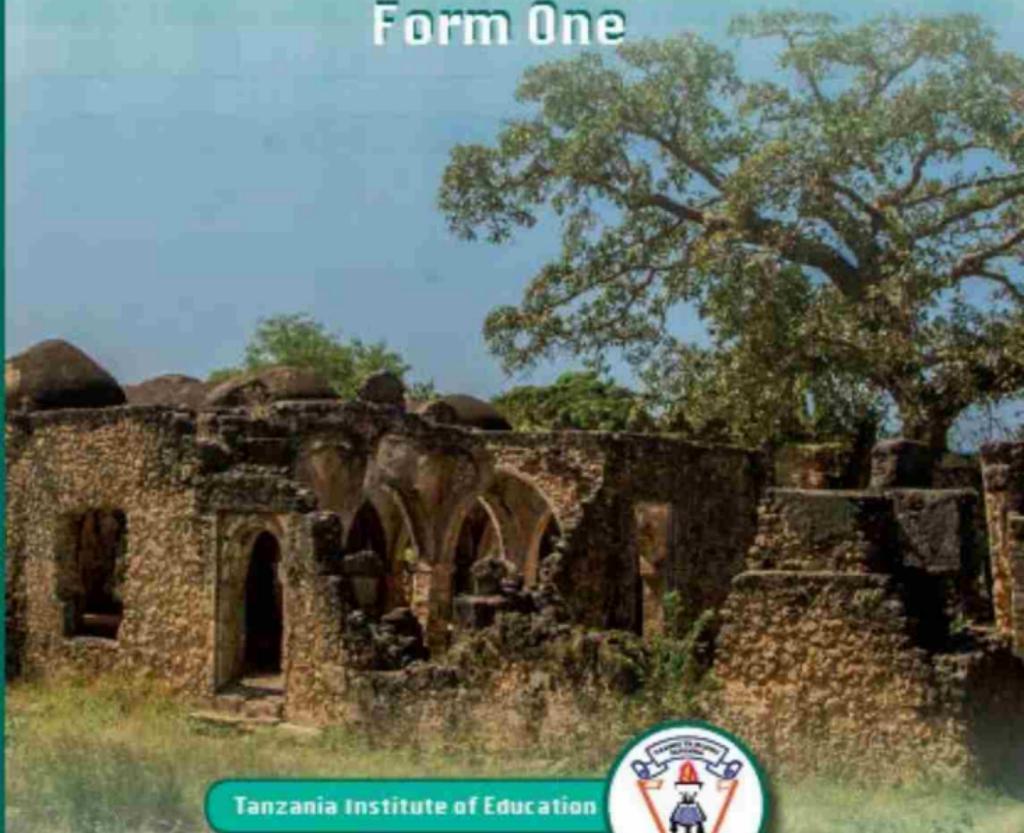


# History

for Secondary Schools

Student's Book  
Form One



Tanzania Institute of Education

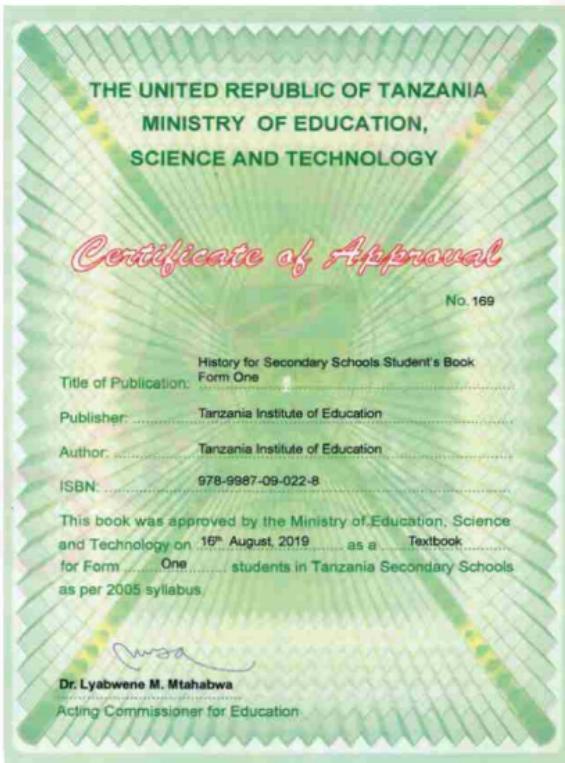


# History

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Tanzania Institute of Education

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## Preface

This book, *History for Secondary Schools*, is written specifically for Form One students in the United Republic of Tanzania. The book is prepared according to the 2005 History Syllabus for Secondary Schools, Form I - IV, issued by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training.

The book is divided into seven chapters, which are: Meaning, importance and sources of History; Human evolution, technology and environment; Development of agriculture in pre-colonial African societies; Handicraft and mining industries in pre-colonial Africa; Trade in pre-colonial Africa; Development of social and political systems; and State organisation in Africa. In addition to the content, each chapter contains activities, exercises and revision questions. Learners are encouraged to do all activities and answer all questions so as to enhance their understanding and promote acquisition of the intended skills, knowledge, and attitudes.

**Tanzania Institute of Education**

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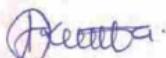
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Dr Aneth A. Komba  
Director General  
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## Chapter One

# Meaning, importance, and sources of History

### Introduction

In this chapter, you will learn about the History subject. After reading this chapter, you will be able to explain the meaning of History, the importance of studying History, sources of historical information and dating historical events.

### Meaning of History

History is the study of events and processes which happened in the past and which might influence the present. These events and processes are about social, political, and economic developments of people and society at large. The study of history enables us to answer the following questions, among others:

- (a) What happened in the past?
- (b) When did the events happen?
- (c) Why did the events happen?
- (d) Who took part in those events?
- (e) How did those events affect people's lives?

### Importance of studying History

History is about people's efforts to use and change their environments in order to get their socio-economic and political needs. There is a connection between people's past actions and their present life. In other words, we are what we are today because of what happened in the past. Studying History is important for the following reasons:

- (a) Understanding our origins

History enables us to understand our societies and their origins. It gives us a sense of belonging to our community. In this way, History influences us to love our country and its people. Studying History also helps us to know how and why our present societies differ from those of the past.

When we study history, we learn how people obtained their livelihoods and dealt with challenges in the past. For example, we learn how they obtained food, protected themselves from enemies, treated the sick and worshipped. Therefore, history helps us to understand how people used their knowledge and skills to live in their respective environments.

(b) Promoting tolerance

History is like a raised stage from which we can see clearly the lives of people in the past. It shows us their actions, courage, wisdom, and unity. In this way, we understand the culture and behaviour of other people. We also learn to respect and tolerate the differences between peoples and societies. We realize that our ethnic groups, beliefs, customs, and traditions may be different from those of other people. History teaches us to tolerate those differences.

(c) Learning from past actions

History teaches us that the actions of one person may affect other people. For example, our ancestors discovered crop cultivation and animal husbandry. These activities continue to benefit people up to now. Others discovered fire and iron tools, which are also being used today. Therefore, we learn that people are always influenced by what others did in the past. We also learn that the things we do today may be useful or harmful to others in the future. History, therefore, shows that what happens in one community at one time may later influence other communities as well.

(d) Encouraging the search for evidence

History is based on information collected from various sources. When we get a piece of information, we should ask ourselves questions pertaining to, for example, its source; whether the source is trusted; and whether the information might have been distorted. Finally, we should draw our own conclusions. In this way, we learn that, for every issue, there are various sources of information. We also learn that, for every problem, there may be several causes, solutions, and effects.

(e) Appreciating other people's culture

History helps us to know that people develop their culture depending on their environments and contacts with other people. Through such contacts, they come to understand the ways of life of other people. Therefore, through studying history, people learn and appreciate the cultures of others in the world.

(f) Promoting patriotism

History plays a very important role in promoting patriotism. Patriotism means the love of one's country or nation, and willingness to defend it. History can promote this love and willingness because it teaches how the past and present generations offered their lives to build the nation and to defend it from enemies. It teaches how a nation started, and how it evolved over time. Moreover, History acknowledges men and women who played important roles in building the nation as national heroes and heroines. Through History, learners develop an appreciation of the memory and identity of their nation. History is, therefore, very important in making people know their nation, love it and be ready to defend it. It is difficult for people who do not know the history of their nation to be proud of it, love it, or develop patriotism.

### Exercise 1

Answer the following questions:

1. Briefly explain the term History.
2. Provide five reasons for studying History.
3. Describe how History can promote patriotism in Tanzania.

## Sources of historical information

Sources of historical information provide someone with historical knowledge. There are several sources of historical information. These include oral sources, archaeology, historical sites, written records, museums, archives, historical linguistics, ethnographic records, and anthropology. However, it is important to remember that none of these sources is self-sufficient. Each of them may be used together with other sources. This is because each source has advantages and disadvantages. In the following section, we shall look at the meaning, functions, advantages, and limitations of each source of information.

### 1. Oral sources

These are sources of historical information via the word of mouth. There are two types of oral sources, namely oral traditions and testimonies.

#### Oral traditions

These are sources of historical information transmitted from one generation to another through the word of mouth. They consist of memorized stories, tales, riddles, narratives, poems, songs, and prayers. The information given in oral traditions can be presented differently by different people. For example, one Rwandese oral tradition says that the Hutu fell from heaven and met the Tutsi on earth. Another tradition holds that the Hutu and Tutsi are brothers. These two oral traditions refer to one event, namely the origin of the Hutu and Tutsi. They, however, present different views on the same event. In many African societies, there were professionals or official storytellers and poets. They used their skills to explain why and how important events occurred in the past. Oral traditions are still used today in research and in history writing. Examples of books written mostly based on oral traditions are Isaria Kimambo's *A Political History of the Pare of Tanzania, 1500-1900*, Israel Katoke's *The Karagwe Kingdom: a history of Abanyambo of north western Tanzania, c. 1400-1915*, and Bethwell Ogot's *Zamani: A Survey of East African History*. These books are available in universities and national libraries.

#### Oral testimonies

These narrations of the past are provided by people who witnessed the event or the process being examined. They provide information on events or processes within the living memory of the narrators. For example, soldiers who participated in the Tanzania-Uganda War of 1978-1979 can provide useful testimonies about the war.

In general, oral traditions and testimonies have one similarity. They are transmitted orally. The difference between them is that the information provided in oral traditions is about the distant past while the information provided in oral testimonies is about the recent past.

### Functions of oral traditions and testimonies

The following are functions of oral traditions and testimonies:

- They transmit knowledge about cultural beliefs, traditional values, and rituals from one generation to another.
- They provide education on the past to both literate and non-literate people in society.
- They encourage people to appreciate and preserve their culture.
- They entertain people during various cultural activities such as weddings, crop harvesting, and rituals.

### Advantages of oral traditions and testimonies

The following are the advantages of oral traditions and testimonies:

- They provide useful information on past events and processes where other sources are not available.
- They can be obtained from both literate and non-literate people.
- They give historians a possibility to capture the point of view of the local people from whom traditions have been collected.
- They express experiences, emotions and feelings about historical events.

### Limitations of oral traditions and testimonies

The following are the limitations of oral sources:

- They are not always accurate. Sometimes informants omit important information due to loss of memory because of age or distance in time. They may also give differing accounts of the same historical events or provide overstated information. All these possibilities sometimes make oral traditions and testimonies unreal. There are two ways of improving the reliability of oral traditions and testimonies. First, collect several oral traditions or testimonies on the same event or historical process. This can help historians to discover and avoid distortion found in oral information. Second, discuss with other people who know such traditions or testimonies.

After the discussion, compare their different views. Then, draw your own conclusions regarding the usefulness of the traditions or testimonies in question.

- (b) They can capture events from only a few past generations. This is because traditions only have partial information about the remote past due to loss of memory.
- (c) It is difficult to get information from people whose hearing and speaking abilities are impaired.

## 2. Historical sites

These are places where remains of past human activities and cultures are found. They include remnants of ancient settlements with buildings, dwelling caves and ruins from which various economic activities, as well as drawings and paintings, can be observed. Important historical sites in Tanzania include Olduvai Gorge, Isimila, Kondo Irangi, Magubike, Bagamoyo, Mikindani, Kilwa, Kaole, Zanzibar Stone Town, Engaruka and Kalambo Falls. In Uganda, they include Nsongezi, Ntusi, Bigo, Magosi and Lolui. In Kenya, they include Lamu, Fort Jesus, Rusinga Islands in Lake Victoria, Olorgesailie, Magadi, Njoro, Gamble Cave and Fort Ternan. Figure 1.1 shows some of these historical sites in East Africa.

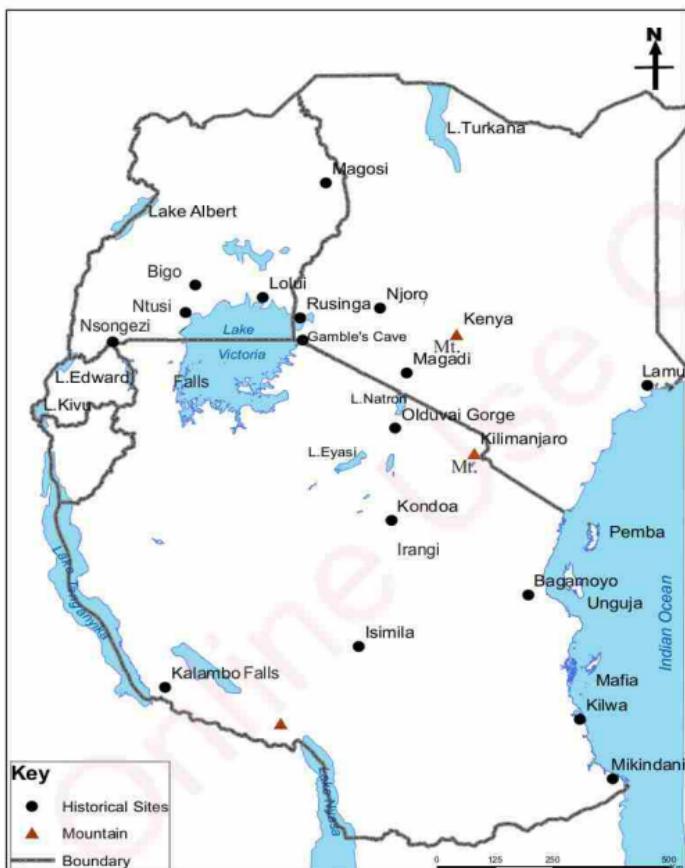


Figure 1.1 Some examples of historical sites in East Africa

### Functions of historical sites

- They provide useful historical information on past human activities.
- They provide proof on the level of knowledge and skills of people in the past. Examples of such knowledge and skills are rock painting, architecture, ironwork, irrigation, hunting tools, and food gathering routes.

(c) They act as places of entertainment for interested people. Accordingly, they may be used as sources of income through tourism.

### Activity 1

Draw a sketch map of Tanzania, and show the regions in which the following historical sites are found:

- (i) Kalambo Falls
- (ii) Olduvai Gorge
- (iii) Isimila
- (iv) Mikindani
- (v) Bagamoyo

### Advantages of historical sites

The following are the advantages of historical sites:

- a) Historical sites preserve evidence of ancient history as they contain different types of ancient information. For example, they show us styles of buildings, utensils, working tools and settlement patterns. An example of old buildings is the Great Mosque of Kilwa Kisiwani, as shown in Figure 1.2.



**Figure 1.2** Ruins of the Great Mosque of Kilwa Kisiwani

Some of the old buildings retain their original functions up to now. An example of such buildings is the old Roman Catholic Church at Bagamoyo which was built by early missionaries in 1872. It is still used today for worship and cultural tourism. The church is shown in Figure 1.3.



**Figure 1.3** The Old Roman Catholic Church at Bagamoyo

- (b) Historical sites are also places for preserving ancient objects. These are protected areas with important historical objects. In Tanzania, these sites are taken care of by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism through the Antiquities Department. Historians study and interpret the historical objects found at the site and write the history of the people around the site.
- (c) Some of the historical sites attract local and foreign tourists. These tourists get ideas about past life by looking at ancient structures. Examples of historical sites that are famous tourist destinations in Tanzania are Zanzibar Stone Town, Kilwa, Bagamoyo, and Olduvai Gorge.
- (d) All historical sites are important for historical research. Researchers obtain useful information for doing research and writing history. In this regard, they use historical sites to complement information collected from other sources of history.

### Limitations of historical sites

The following are the limitations of historical sites:

- They are susceptible to destruction or damage. Some of them disappear completely. This may be caused by natural and human factors. Natural factors include rainfall, earthquakes, wind, the sun's heat and floods. Human activities include war, construction, vandalism, grazing, and farming.
- Some sites are located in remote areas where it is difficult and expensive to visit by roads and other means of transportation. The ancient irrigation system at Engaruka is a good example of such sites.
- They are costly in terms of preservation and management. A professional or expert is needed to manage these sites.

### Activity 2

Draw a sketch map of East Africa indicating five historical sites in Tanzania, four in Kenya, and three in Uganda.

### 3. Written records

Written records are documents that provide historical information. They include letters, maps, magazines, newspapers, reports and minutes of meetings. These records are found in archives, libraries, museums, offices and on the internet. They are also found in individual people's homes as well as in religious institutions such as churches and mosques. Some of the written records are found in the form of books written a long time ago. An example of such books is *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* that was written by a Greek trader in the First Century CE. Another example of such books is Ptolemy's *Geography* written in the second century CE. These books describe the coastal people of East Africa and their trading activities. They also tell us about the beauty of the environments and cultures of people in cities like Kilwa.

Historians read various written records to get information about the past. Some of them contain pictures, tables, maps, and figures. These illustrations add meaning and information about the events being reported.

### Functions of written records

- (a) They provide historical information about past events and processes, such as the Maji Maji War, First World War, and European colonialism in Africa.
- (b) They help to keep historical information for long periods.
- (c) They help historians to write about the past such that the past can be read and understood as history.

### Advantages of written records

The following are the advantages of written records:

- (a) They are relatively easier to obtain and to use compared to other sources such as archaeology.
- (b) It is easier to identify distortions in them.
- (c) They may last for a long time, if well kept.
- (d) They may be reliable sources of information when honestly recorded and written.
- (e) They can be written and translated into different languages such as Kiswahili, Spanish, Arabic, and English. Therefore, people in different parts of the world can use them to write history.
- (f) They are usually well organized and logically presented. Therefore, it is easy to find relevant information from them; accordingly, historians can use it to write history.

### Limitations of written records

The following are the limitations of written records:

- (a) None of them contains all the information on a given topic. We cannot learn everything from a single written source. Therefore, we must read other sources of information to fill the gaps.
- (b) They are not always reliable. Some of them may contain wrong or distorted information. They may also promote political, ethnic, religious or personal interests. For this reason, written sources must be used with great caution.
- (c) During calamities or disasters, written documents can be destroyed or lost. Such calamities can be fire, floods, earthquakes, and wars. Therefore, special skills and facilities are required to keep them safe.
- (d) They can only be written by literate people. People who are unable to read and write cannot use written records for any purpose.

#### 4. Archives

Archives are places where documents and old written records are kept. These documents come from both individual people as well as from public and private institutions. They include missionaries and travellers' records, reports, photographs, some of the old books, colonial records, postcolonial records, and files.

The documents are carefully preserved in order to be used for a long time. Some of them are available for use by the public while others are confidential. There are national, regional, district and village archives located in various areas. The best-known public records in Tanzania are the Tanzania National Archives located in Dar es Salaam, the Zanzibar Institute of Archives and Records, the National Records Centre in Dodoma, the Mbeya Records Centre, the Arusha Records Centre, and the Mwanza Records Centre. There are also church archives like the Moravian Church Archives in Rungwe district and the Benedictine Fathers Archives in Peramiko. These archives keep pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial records. Currently, archival information may be accessed in two main ways which are: manual archives and digital archives. Manual archives provide written records in hard form by visiting the respective archives. Digital archives provide written records in soft form by accessing online archives.

It is important to note that one can only access either manual or digital archives after getting an official research permit from the respective institution.

#### Functions of archives

- Archives are used to preserve historical information for public use.
- Some of the archival records are confidential, but they may later be opened for public use.
- Archives are the most important shelters for historical information. These shelters are specifically designed to reduce the possibility of damage to the materials stored in them from threats by fire, thieves, pests as well as excessive heat and moisture.
- They provide conducive environments for the retrieval of information from written sources of various kinds.

#### Advantages of archives

The following are the advantages of archives.

- They preserve past and recent documents. Documents in the archives present information from both recent and distant past. By using these documents,

one can trace the continuities of the historical facts or processes over time.

- (b) Archives consistently organize information that can easily be located or traced by researchers.
- (c) The materials in archives can be quite detailed, providing in-depth information about people, places, time and events.

### Limitations of archives

The following are the limitations of archives:

- (a) If an archive is not properly designed and kept, documents housed in it may be destroyed.
- (b) Archives are expensive to establish and run. It is costly to set up archives because they involve constructing special buildings. In addition, they need special facilities, skilled personnel and trusted people. There may not be sufficient funds to meet the costs of these requirements.
- (c) Archives apply strict regulations for users to follow. This makes it difficult for the users to obtain and use the records or documents at their own pace. Moreover, some of the records are confidential and cannot be made available to every researcher. Similarly, new documents with restricted information cannot be availed to researchers immediately. They can be released for use after 30 years. During that period, those records cannot be used to get historical information.
- (d) Sometimes, documents may be lost, or misplaced in the archive. In such cases, researchers will not get all the information they needed.

## 5. Museums

Museums are places or buildings in which historical objects are kept. For example, in museums, we find cultural objects relating to religious beliefs and ceremonies. We also find collections of animal and plant fossils. Good examples of animal fossils are shells and bones. Moreover, there are political objects such as crowns and drums; economic objects such as coins, minerals, and cowries; and technological objects such as stone tools, iron tools, canoes, and clothing. There are also remains of artwork such as rock paintings, drawings, sculptures, pottery, and basketry. Two types of objects are housed in museums. The first type consists of artefacts, which include stone tools and iron tools. The second type consists of ecofacts, which include human, animal, and plant remains. In many countries, there are national, regional, district and even village museums. For example, in Tanzania, there is the Museum and House of Culture in Dar es Salaam, the Village Museum in Dar es Salaam, the House of Wonders in

Zanzibar, the Maji Maji Museum in Songea, the Natural History Museum in Arusha, the Mwalimu Nyerere Museum in Mara, and the Arusha Declaration Museum in Arusha. Other museums include the Kalenga Museum in Iringa, the Bujora Museum in Mwanza, the Moravian Church Museum in Rungwe, and the Livingstone Museum in Kigoma. Figure 1.4 below shows the National Museum and House of Culture in Dar es Salaam.



**Figure 1.4** The National Museum and House of Culture in Dar es Salaam

### Functions of museums

- Museums keep varieties of cultural materials under one roof. These consist of objects and rich information, which are beneficial for the present and future generations. Furthermore, national museums keep historical objects from all over the country. They make them available for viewing and learning by the public.
- They preserve national heritage and historical information.
- They provide education to people about different cultures.
- They are sources of entertainment. Museums can be visited as places for leisure. Both local and foreign tourists visit museums to view varieties of cultural objects such as pottery and hoes.
- They are used as sources of income through fees charged for tourist visits.

### Advantages of museums

The following are the advantages of museums:

- Museums provide job opportunities. They employ both professionals and other workers. Professional employees include conservators, curators, and attendants.
- Museums secure artefacts. The artefacts are preserved so well that they cannot be stolen or damaged.

### Limitations of Museums

The following are the limitations of museums:

- Museums are very expensive to construct and maintain. A large space is needed to build a museum. Moreover, trained members of staff are needed to run museums. All these cost a lot of money.
- Artefacts can be easily destroyed. Cultural objects kept in museums can be destroyed by fire, moisture, heat, dust, insects, and rats. For example, the pages of an old book may turn yellow and tear easily due to moisture and heat. Therefore, much care is needed in museums to keep the materials in good condition.
- Individual researchers are not allowed to take out the materials kept in a museum for gathering historical information. Instead, they have to visit museums several times for research purposes. This can be costly and time-consuming.
- Some of the historical remains cannot be preserved in museums due to their nature and size. Examples of such remains are huge commercial ships, ruins of houses, and graves.
- Not every person can afford to visit museums due to costs, distance and museum restrictions.

## 6. Archaeology

Archaeology is the study of past human activities through material remains. Examples of such material remains include pottery, hoes, utensils, bows, arrows, animal bones, seeds, ancient buildings, irrigation channels, and iron-smelting furnaces. These remains are also called archaeological materials. A person who studies archaeology is called an *archaeologist*. Examples of such people are Dr. Louis Leakey and his wife, Dr. Mary Leakey. These archaeologists worked at Olduvai Gorge in north-eastern Tanzania in Arusha region. They discovered the oldest known human skull in 1959. They named this skull *Zinjanthropus boisei*.

This skull is shown in Figure 1.5 below and it is kept in the National Museum and House of Culture in Dar es Salaam.



Figure 1.5 The skull of *Zinjanthropus boisei*

Another example of archaeologists is Professor Felix Chami, a Tanzanian who has conducted archaeological studies along the coast of eastern Africa. Other senior Tanzanian archaeologists include Amin Mturi, Simon Waane, Bertram Mapunda, and Audax Mabula.

Places in which material remains of past human activities are found are called archaeological sites. In these sites, material remains may be found either above the ground or under the ground while some of them are found in caves.

Archaeologists use survey and excavation methods to discover archaeological materials. Using the survey method, archaeologists walk randomly or systematically around the area to find archaeological materials on the earth surface. Excavation, on the other hand, is used to obtain archaeological materials, which were buried in the ground. Excavation is a systematic digging and removal

of layers of soil to obtain material remains in them. This is done by using special equipment such as trowels, picks, shovels, and hoes. During excavation, archaeologists record all objects or buildings (Figure 1.6).



**Figure 1.6** An archaeological excavation team from the University of Dar es Salaam

Archaeologists study and interpret material remains to explain the relationship between them. For example, the discovery of human bones in association with stone tools may help archaeologists to explain the culture of people who lived in that particular area. These archaeologists can also understand how those material remains were made and used. The information gathered is used to write the history of the people who lived at that site. That is why we regard archaeology as one of the sources of history.

Some of the important archaeological sites in East Africa are Olduvai Gorge (Arusha), Engaruka (Arusha), Isimila (Iringa), Kaole (Bagamoyo), Kilwa (Lindi), and the Kondoa rock paintings (Dodoma) in Tanzania. Others include Koobi Fora, Olorgesailie, Kariandusi and Lewa Downs in Kenya and Kafu Valley, Ntusi, Nsongezi, Lolui and Magosi in Uganda. Examples from outside

East Africa are Omo and Hadar in Ethiopia as well as Kromdraai Swartkrans and Sterkfontein in South Africa.

### Functions of archaeology

- (a) It provides evidence of material remains used by ancient people. Examples of such material remains are hoes, axes, arrows, and spears.
- (b) It enables archaeologists and historians to reconstruct past events using evidence from actual objects. For example, past settlement patterns can be reconstructed from excavated remains.
- (c) It provides historical knowledge about the past.

### Advantages of archaeology

The following are the advantages of archaeology:

- (a) It is based on actual material objects. Archaeology uses material remains of things made and used in the past. For that reason, it can describe people's past cultures more reliably compared with other sources.
- (b) It benefits History from the scientific methods of archaeology. For example, historians can benefit from the carbon 14 dating technique, which is used by archaeologists. Therefore, historians cooperate with archaeologists to date historical events and processes.
- (c) Some materials excavated by archaeologists can be kept in museums for future generations.

### Limitations of archaeology

The following are the limitations of archaeology:

- (a) Some of the material remains cannot be recovered. Not all cultural remains survive long in the ground. Plants and some bones decay quickly when buried. Therefore, some of the material remains that could tell about the past cannot be found for study.
- (b) Archaeological research requires a lot of money for buying excavation equipment, travelling to and from the sites, camping facilities, storage and carrying facilities. The money required to meet these costs may not be available.
- (c) Archaeological work is a long process that involves surveying, excavating the site to get the remains, and analysing the materials in laboratories. Therefore, archaeological work consumes a lot of time.

- (d) Many sites are in remote areas. Some of the archaeological sites are found in very remote areas, which cannot be reached easily. Sometimes it becomes difficult for archaeologists to locate such sites.
- (e) Shortage of personnel and equipment is another limitation of archaeology. Archaeological excavations require highly trained people. However, such people are not always readily available.

## 7. Historical linguistics

Historical linguistics is one of the methods of obtaining historical information by studying languages and their change. Through this method, the origin of people is traced by studying their languages. By doing so, historical linguists and historians discover past human migrations and interactions. They can even tell when contacts between specific groups of people occurred. For example, Arabic words such as *shukrani*, *shikamoo*, *madrasa*, *karafuu*, and *alhamis* in Kiswahili reveal contacts between Arabs and Swahili that occurred along the coast of East Africa before colonialism. The greatest period of contact can be determined by looking at when a good number of Arabic words were introduced into Kiswahili.

## 8. Anthropology

Anthropology is a discipline that deals with the study of cultural practices and patterns of human societies. In particular, it studies human societies in terms of their origin, development, customs, beliefs, and taboos. People who study these issues are called anthropologists. They travel around the world to study and record the cultures of existing societies. Anthropologists use long and intensive field work approach by staying in such societies for relatively long periods. Through a deep examination of the existing societies, anthropologists give various historical information on matters pertaining to such societies. This information enables historians to reconstruct the past. Good examples are the works done by anthropologists such as Allan Jacobs on the Maasai communities, Monica and Godfrey Wilson on the Nyakyusa, John Beattie on the Bunyoro, Aidan Southall on the Alur and Simeon Mesaki on the Sukuma.

## 9. Ethnographic records

These records are made by people who encountered societies other than their own. They include written records and images recorded on tapes and films. In Africa, these records were mostly made by Europeans who travelled across the

continent for various reasons during the pre-colonial and colonial times. They recorded information on subjects such as cultural practices and customs observed during their stay on the continent. This was long before the start of anthropology as a discipline. People who recorded this ethnographic information cannot be referred to as anthropologists because anthropological work involves a lot more than the simple recording of cultural practices and customs.

### Exercise 2

1. Explain how the following studies are used to obtain historical information:
  - (a) Historical linguistics
  - (b) Anthropology
2. List four advantages of using oral traditions as a source of historical information.
3. Mention four advantages of using archaeology as a source of historical information.
4. Outline the similarities and differences between oral traditions and archaeology.
5. Give the difference between anthropology and ethnographic records.

### Dating methods in History

Historians divide time into days, weeks, months, years, decades, generations, centuries, millennia, periods and ages. A decade is a period of ten years. A generation is a period of time that it takes for children to grow into adulthood and have children of their own. This period is usually 30 years. A century is a period of 100 years. A millennium is a period of 1,000 years.

Age is a period during which a particular historical phenomenon dominated. It may cover several years, centuries or millennia. Known ages in history include the Stone Age, the Iron Age, the Industrial Age, the Nuclear Age, and the Digital Age. A period is determined by one continuous event lasting a number of years. Examples include the period of long-distance trade in East Africa, the period of the slave trade, and the period of the colonial rule in Tanzania.

## How to divide time

In order to divide time, a starting point has been chosen. This is known as year zero. The period from zero onwards is called the Common Era (CE). Initially, this period was known as *Anno Domini* (AD), which meant years after the birth of Jesus Christ. Thus, we say Tanganyika became independent in 1961 CE. The period before year zero is called Before Common Era (BCE), which was previously known as Before Christ (BC). Thus, we say the ruler of the Roman Empire, Julius Caesar, died in 44 BCE.

## How to determine dates

There are four main ways of determining dates, namely recalling events, language studies, carbon 14 dating, and Potassium-argon.

### (a) Recalling events

In this method, one has to remember important events. Examples of such events are famines, wars, droughts, eclipses of the sun or moon, volcanic eruptions, floods, epidemics, the arrival of strangers, age groups, births and deaths. This method is very useful in studying societies which did not keep written records.

### (b) Language studies

Dates can also be determined by studying languages. For example, foreign names and words have been introduced into Kiswahili over a long period. One of such words is *karafiu*, which means cloves. Thus, by determining when the word *karafiu* started being used in Zanzibar or along the East African coast, we can tell when cloves began to be grown there. Other concepts emerged at almost the same time with *karafiu*. These included clove plantations, feudal lords, landlords, and slave markets.

Another example is the name *Gunze*, which is very common in Ukerewe. There was a German colonial official whose name was Gunzet. He introduced cotton growing in Ukerewe. Parents began to call their children *Gunze*. Therefore, by finding out when the name was adopted, we can know when cotton growing started in Ukerewe.

### (c) Carbon - 14 dating

This is a scientific method of determining dates. It is used in finding dates for remains of animals and plants which died over 5000 years ago but not more

than 150,000 years ago. Carbon 14 is an element found in carbon dioxide which is absorbed by plants and other living things. When living things die, Carbon 14 starts leaving them at a constant rate. In laboratories, scientists measure the amount of Carbon 14 that has remained in particular animal or plant remains in order to find out the number of years that have passed since the plant or animal died.

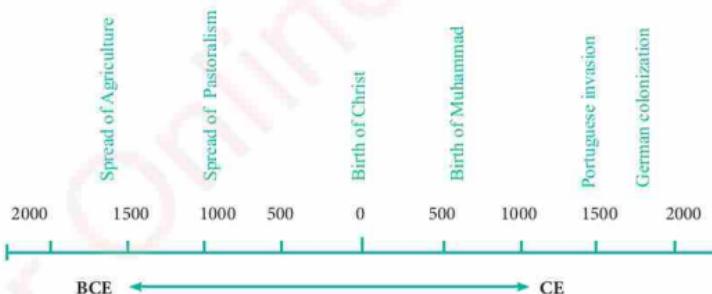
**(d) Potassium-argon**

Archaeological materials that last beyond 150,000 years can be dated using another scientific method known as Potassium-argon. This technique is used to date inorganic materials associated with volcanic remains that lasted beyond 150,000 years.

**How to order historical events**

Historians use illustrations such as timelines, time graphs, family trees, and time charts to show how historical events followed each other. Examples of these illustrations are given below:

**(a) Time-line**



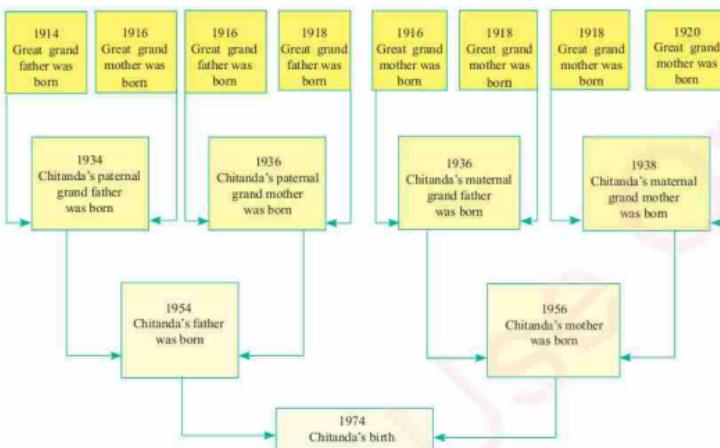
**(b) Time graph**



**(c) Time chart**

| Period CE | Historical event                                      |
|-----------|---|
| 1500      | The beginning of Ntemi systems or organisation        |
| 1698      | End of Portuguese rule on the East African coast      |
| 1741      | Mombasa Arabs established their sheikhdom             |
| 1840      | Seyyid Said moved his capital from Muscat to Zanzibar |

#### (d) Family tree



#### Activity 1

Ask your parents and elders to describe the history of your family. Construct your family tree for three generations and present it in the class.

#### Revision questions

Answer the following questions:

1. Upendo and Rashid are Form One students who are less interested in studying history. Explain to them the importance of studying history.
2. (a) List six sources of history.  
(b) Distinguish oral traditions from written records.

3. (a) Mention six (6) historical sites found in East Africa, two from each East African country, namely Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya.  
(b) Complete the following statements by filling in the blanks.
  - (i) Archaeologists who discovered the skull of the earliest human being in East Africa were known as \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (ii) *The Periplus of the Erythrean sea* is a good example of \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (iii) \_\_\_\_\_ is a collection of private and public documents.
  - (iv) Bujora is an example of \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Write brief explanations for each of the following terms.
  - (a) Sources of history
  - (b) Oral traditions
  - (c) Museums
  - (d) Carbon 14
  - (e) Archaeology
5. List four advantages of using archives as a source of historical information.
6. Mention four weaknesses of oral traditions.
7. What are the major limitations of archaeology as a source of historical information?
8. Name the differences between the following:
  - (a) A decade and a century
  - (b) An age and period
  - (c) Common Era (CE) and Before Common Era (BCE)
9. Mention three methods used by historians to determine historical dates.

## Chapter Two

# Human evolution, technology, and environment

### Introduction

In the previous chapter, you learnt about the meaning and importance of History. You also learnt about the sources of historical information, and how to organise this information in historical dates. In this chapter, you will learn about human evolution, technology, and environment. After you have covered this chapter, you will be able to link the process of human evolution and technological changes. You will also be able to state the contribution of technology to the developments of the present societies.

### Theories of the origin of the human being

A theory is a way of explaining something different from other ways. There are two theories on the origin of human beings, namely the theory of creation and theory of evolution.

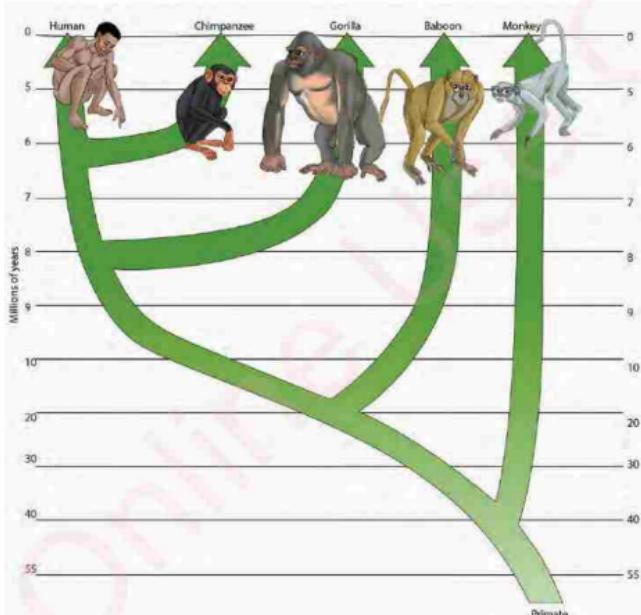
#### 1. The theory of creation

According to the theory of creation, God created the world and all things within it, including human beings. The theory of creation is especially upheld in Judaism, Christianity, Islam and African indigenous religions. For example, in the Bible, it is written: *Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, ...* (Genesis 1:26 NIV). In the Quran, it is written: *"Who made all things good which He created, and He began the creation of man from clay"* (Surah 32:7 Sajdah). Likewise, many African societies had similar concepts of creation that the supreme being created everything including human beings.

Those who support the theory of creation argue that the earth and all the living and non-living things on it were created by God. They say that, after the creation of the first man and woman, human population increased through biological reproduction. They further argue that people migrated to various places on earth. The theory also asserts that human beings and other creatures have not undergone fundamental changes since their creation.

## 2. The theory of evolution

This theory is based on the scientific explanation about the origin of humans. It states that human beings and some of the non-human beings, particularly monkeys and apes, shared a common ancestor more than 13 million years ago. This common ancestor was known as *Primate*. With time, humans split from non-human creatures and underwent evolution until they became modern human beings, as shown in figure 2.1.



**Figure 2.1** Human splitting from non-human creatures

This theory was advanced by a British scientist called Charles Darwin in his book titled *On the Origin of Species*, which was published in 1859. In this book, Darwin describes how the evolution took place. He argues that, among the many individuals who are born, only the strongest or the fittest survive. In contrast, the weak ones die or perish. The survivors continue to produce more offsprings of their type. In this way, new and stronger species keep appearing in every coming generation.

## Evidence of the evolution of the human being

There are two pieces of evidence supporting the theory of evolution: comparative studies of modern animals, and fossil evidence.

### Comparative studies of the evolution of the human being

Evidence from comparative studies of the evolution of human teaches us that two groups of animals with similar features have the same ancestor. Therefore, the similarity of the features of humans to those of monkeys suggests that humans and monkeys share a common ancestor.

### Fossil as evidence of the evolution of the human being

This evidence is based on animal bones that have survived for many years under the ground. They are used to give evidence of the gradual change in the shape of humans as well as technological development. In Tanzania, for example, the earliest fossil evidence has been found at different sites. Such sites include Laetoli, Olduvai Gorge, Lake Natron, Lake Ndutu and Lake Eyasi in the Arusha region. Olduvai Gorge is the most important site in Africa in regards to the evolution of human being. It produced many pieces of evidence on the physical evolution of human being and technology. Therefore, Olduvai Gorge, together with other sites such as Laetoli, has made Tanzania famous as the original home or cradle of humankind.

Archaeologists such as Louis Leakey and his wife Mary Leakey discovered many fossils in East Africa. They then studied them to learn about human ancestors. Other human remains were discovered in various sites in eastern and southern Africa. These include Koobi Fora in Kenya, Omo and Hadar in Ethiopia as well as Sterkfontein and Swartkrans in South Africa. Therefore, eastern and southern Africa are considered homes of human ancestors.

Fossil evidence has shown three main groups of the ancestors of human beings: *Ardipithecus*, *Australopithecus*, and *Homo*. Figure 2.2 shows the stages of human evolution from *Ardipithecus* to *Homo sapiens sapiens*. The following are descriptions of each group based on analysis of fossil remains:

#### a) *Ardipithecus*

This is the earliest evidence of human ancestor who lived from about 5.8 to 4.4 million years ago. *Ardipithecus* had more ape-like features such as strong teeth with small enamel; strong arms and bones which suggest that he/she climbed trees and walked on two legs. *Ardipithecus* was discovered at the Omo archaeological site in Ethiopia.

**b) *Australopithecus***

*Australopithecus* is another evidence of human ancestor who lived from about 4.2 to 2.0 million years ago after the disappearance of *Ardipithecus*. *Australopithecus* means the southern ape. It was discovered first by Raymond Dart in the Taung site, South Africa and named *Australopithecus africanus*. Other *Australopithecus* were discovered in various sites in eastern and southern Africa. These include *Australopithecus afarensis* who was discovered in Laetoli, Tanzania and Afar, Ethiopia; *Australopithecus robustus* in Swartkrans, South Africa; and *Australopithecus boisei* (*Zinjanthropus*) in Olduvai Gorge, Tanzania.

**c) *Homo***

About 2.5 million years ago the creature called *Homo* appeared. It was discovered and named *Homo* because it was believed to represent the first modern human being. *Homo* differed from *Australopithecus* by having a smaller body size, relying on meat, and having a bigger brain size. More importantly, *Homo* started making and using tools. Genus *Homo* is divided into several species including *Homo habilis*, *Homo erectus*, *Homo sapiens* and *Homo sapiens sapiens*.

The following are the descriptions of the stages in the evolution of human beings from *Homo habilis* to *Homo sapiens sapiens*.

**(i) *Homo habilis***

*Homo habilis* lived approximately between 2.5 and 1.6 million years ago. They were the first human beings able to make and use tools. That is why they were nicknamed the ‘handyman.’ Fossil evidence of *Homo habilis* has been found at Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania, Koobi Fora in Kenya and Sterkfontein in South Africa.

**(ii) *Homo erectus***

*Homo erectus* lived approximately between 1.9 million and 300,000 years ago. They were the first to make advanced stone tools called hand axes. Due to their more advanced brain size than that of *Homo habilis*, *Homo erectus* was the first human to learn how to make and use fire for roasting meat and creating warmth. The fire also enabled them to migrate from Africa and live in other parts of the world. In this case, *Homo erectus* was the first human to move out of Africa into Asia and Europe. That is why the fossils of *Homo erectus* are also found in Europe and Asia. Fossil evidence of

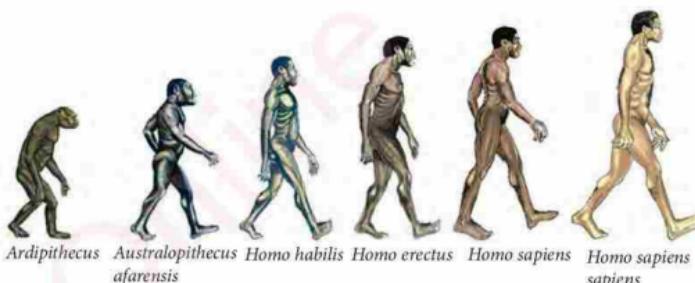
*Homo erectus* have been found at Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania, Koobi Fora in Kenya, Zhoukoudian in China and Dmanisi in Georgia.

**(iii) *Homo sapiens***

*Homo sapiens* lived approximately between 400,000 and 70,000 years ago. Some of the sites in Africa where *Homo sapiens* have been found include Laetoli, near Lake Eyasi and Lake Ndutu in Tanzania; Bodo in Ethiopia; Broken Hill in Zambia; Taung Cave in South Africa; Tangiers in Morocco; and Taramsa in Egypt. Examples of sites outside Africa include the Tabun cave in Israel, Krapina in Croatia; and Saccopastore in Italy.

**(iv) *Homo sapiens sapiens***

These were the forefathers and mothers of modern human beings. Their fossil remains are spread all over the world. They date approximately between 150,000 and 20,000 years ago. They had relatively larger brain size than that of *Homo sapiens*. These modern humans were found in Nasera and Mumba rock-shelter in Arusha, Tanzania; Middle Awash in Ethiopia; as well as in Border Cave and Klasies River Mouth Cave in South Africa.



**Figure 2.2** Stages of human evolution

**Activity 1**

Read either the Bible or the Quran in order to get information about the origin of human beings. Compare that knowledge with the evolution theory and report the answers you have got in the classroom

## Human Technology

Evolution of the human being went together with technological development. This development passed through two common ages, namely the Stone Age and the Iron Age.

### The Stone Age

The Stone Age refers to the period in human history when stone was the main material for making tools and weapons. Human beings used those tools to meet their needs. Most likely, our ancestors also made non-stone tools by using softer materials such as bones, wood and plant fibres. However, such tools could not last long. Hence, they are difficult to trace.

The Stone Age is divided into three phases, namely the Early Stone Age or the Old Stone Age, the Middle Stone Age, and the Late Stone Age or the New Stone Age.

### The Early or Old Stone Age

The Early Stone Age lasted approximately from 3.0 million to 400,000 years ago. During this period, human ancestors made and used simple stone tools for hunting and gathering. They hunted wild animals and gathered fruits, roots, and eggs from the surrounding environment. The Early Stone Age was characterised by the use of two types of tools, namely *Oldowan* and *Acheulian* (Figure 2.3).

#### **Oldowan stone tools**

*Oldowan* tools were named after Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania where they were first discovered. In addition, they have been found on the shores of Lake Turkana in Kenya and the Omo and Hadar valleys in Ethiopia. The tools were simple and crude, and they were obtained from hard natural rocks; sometimes, little modifications were made. In some other cases, such stones were not modified at all; instead, they were used to perform certain tasks as they were picked. The *Oldowan* tools included flakes, choppers, and cores. These tools were mainly used for simple activities such as killing, skinning animals and breaking bones to obtain marrow. They could also be used for breaking nuts and digging roots. The maker of Oldowan stone tools was *Homo habilis*.

### Acheulian stone tools

*Acheulian* stone tools were discovered first at St. Acheul in France. These tools were more advanced than the *Oldowan* tools because they were made by breaking small sharp pieces of stones from hard bigger rock. This process is called flaking. The *Acheulian* stone tools included hand axes, cleavers, and picks. They were used for heavy-duty activities such as cutting trees, killing animals and processing meat. The maker of *Acheulian* stone tools was *Homo erectus*. *Acheulian* stone tools are found in Isimila, Olduvai Gorge, Lake Natron and Laetoli in Tanzania; around Lake Turkana in Kenya; and St. Acheul in France. Apart from making stone tools, *Homo erectus* lived together in small camps, hunted animals, and shared food.



Figure 2.3 Old Stone Age tools

### Physical changes in human beings during the Old Stone Age

In the Early Stone Age, the physical changes in human beings involved three stages of evolution, namely *Australopithecus*, *Homo habilis* and *Homo erectus*. *Australopithecus* was characterized by a hairy body, which helped to protect them from cold; large jaws and teeth; and a small brain size but larger than that of chimpanzees, which was about 400 cranial capacity (cc). Their bodies were like those of chimpanzees. Their legs and pelvis were like those of human beings. In addition, the body size of women was smaller than that of men. This creature walked on two legs (bipedalism). Evidence for bipedalism is found at Laetoli in Arusha, where *Australopithecus afarensis* left their footprints on volcanic ashes about 3.5 million years ago.

*Homo habilis* had modern human shape with a large brain, ranging from about 500cc to 800cc. This brain size was larger than that of *Australopithecus*. He also had a prolonged face and smaller jaws, small teeth, longer arms, and shorter legs than that of modern humans. Males were heavier and taller than females.

During this age *Homo erectus* became a complete upright creature and could communicate through speech. *Homo erectus* had a larger brain than that of *Homo habilis*. It ranged from about 700 cc to 1,250 cc. They had a flat face, thicker skull bones, and smaller teeth than that of *Homo habilis*. In addition, their arms and legs were similar to those of modern humans.

### How humans obtained food during the Old Stone Age

During this age, humans obtained food by hunting wild animals using simple and crude tools, and gathering roots, tubers, eggs and fruits from the surrounding. They hunted antelopes, buffaloes, and other animals. Bones of animals hunted by human beings during this age have been found at Olduvai Gorge in East Africa.

### Exercise 1

1. Briefly explain the theory of creation and the theory of evolution.
2. Compare and contrast *Ardipithecus* and *Australopithecus*.
3. List two features of *Australopithecus* and four features of *Homo*.
4. List five archaeological sites found in Tanzania that show the evidence of biological human evolution.

### The Middle Stone Age

The Middle Stone Age covered the period approximately between 500,000 and 50,000 years ago. The main difference between the Middle Stone Age and the Old Stone Age lies in the quality of the tools made. During this period, tools were better and specialised than Old Stone Age tools. They were smaller, sharper and easier to handle. Examples of Middle Stone Age tools included spears, arrowheads, knives, scrapers and stone picks (Figure 2.4). The makers of tools in this period were *Homo erectus* and *Homo sapiens*.

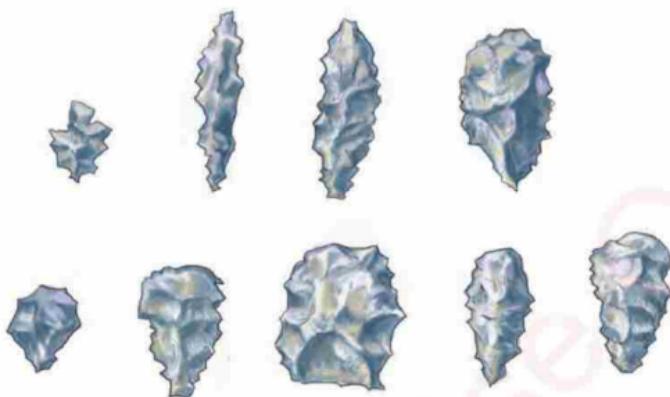


Figure 2.4 Middle Stone Age tools

Middle Stone Age societies developed the culture of obtaining food through hunting and gathering. They also managed to live in different environments such as in grasslands, rock shelters, river valleys, riverine areas, and highlands. They also did rock painting and personal decoration. They also developed religions. The major technological development during this period was the discovery and use of fire, which was made by striking stones against each other. Later on, they learnt how to make fire by hand drilling a stick on a dry wood as illustrated in Figure 2.5 below. With fire and such tools, human beings controlled their environment better than before. They managed to clear bushes and forests. This enabled them to live in thick woodland and mountainous regions. Evidence of Middle Stone Age tools have been found at Olduvai Gorge, Lake Eyasi basin, Laetoli, Isimila and Kilwa in Tanzania; Koobi Fora and Chesowanja in Kenya; and Swartkrans in South Africa.

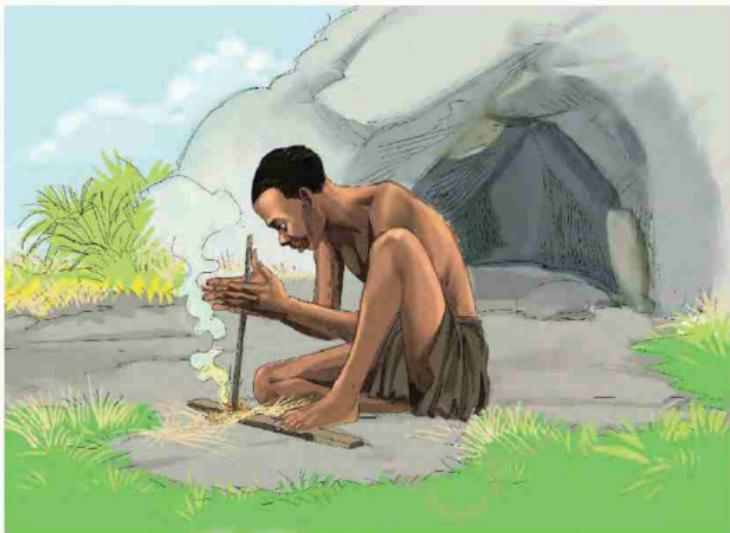


Figure 2.5 A human being making fire with a stick and wood

### Advantages of using fire

The use of fire had the following advantages:

- It enabled human beings to roast food instead of eating it raw.
- Human beings could also burn trees and bushes to drive out or kill wild animals.
- It enabled human beings to move to and live in the cold regions of Europe and Asia. This was possible because man could warm his body by using fire.
- It was used to turn gums into glue, which was used to join spear and arrow points onto shafts.

### Physical changes in human beings during the Middle Stone Age

During this period, human beings (that is, *Homo sapiens*) became more intelligent than before. This is because they had developed bigger brains that ranged approximately between 900 cc and 1,300 cc. *Homo sapiens* contained features of both *Homo erectus* and modern human beings. Their physical features

include large bodies and heavy muscles. They also had thick chests, well-rounded foreheads, and smaller teeth than those of the Old Stone Age people.

### How human beings obtained food during the Middle Stone Age

During this period, human beings were able to prepare good tools from stones and woods. These enabled them to hunt large animals such as buffaloes, rhinoceros and elephants. The hunted animals provided sufficient food for families and communities. Men also engaged in other activities like fishing and gathering.

### The Late Stone Age

The Late Stone Age, also known as the New Stone Age, existed from approximately 50,000 to about 1500 years ago. Tools made in this period were better and more efficient than those made in the Middle Stone Age. They included various types of blades, stone axes, barbed arrows, and spears. The makers of these tools were *Homo sapiens sapiens*. In addition to making stone tools, *Homo sapiens sapiens* made non-stone items. These items were made from bones, beads, feathers, and eggshells. The tools produced during this time were generally smaller than the tools produced during the Early Stone Age and the Middle Stone Age. These tools are known as *microliths*. Some *microliths* were hafted onto wooden shafts or handles to form composite tools, which were easier to use and more effective. Examples of these tools included spears and arrows (see Figure 2.6).

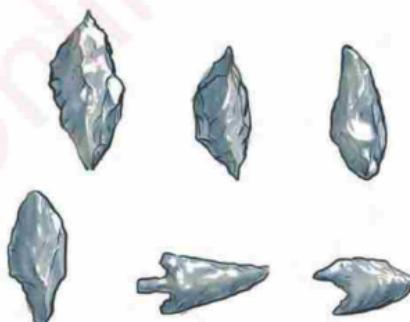


Figure 2.6 Late Stone Age tools

The Late Stone Age witnessed major cultural and technological improvements. For example, by 6000 BCE, there were settled fishing communities near lakes Edward, Rudolf, Victoria and along river Nile. Such fishermen used barbed bone points and harpoons for fishing. Examples of the Late Stone Age sites in East Africa are Mumba rock shelter, Nasera rock shelter, and Kisese in Tanzania; Gambles Cave and Enkapune ya Muto in Kenya; and Magosi in Uganda. Archaeological findings from these places indicate that there were settled communities. The first evidence for that is the presence of large quantities of remains of tools in those areas and large quantities of fish, fowl and animal bones. The second evidence is drawings and paintings in caves and rocks that show hunting and other activities of settled communities. The paintings indicate that the Late Stone Age's societies held religious beliefs, made religious symbols, and decorated their bodies.

### **Physical changes of human beings during the Late Stone Age**

During the Late Stone Age, human beings had smaller teeth than it was during other stone ages. The teeth were adapted to eating softer food and had a large brain capacity of about 1300 – 1450 cc. The shape of the skull was similar to that of modern human beings. By this time, human beings walked upright with two legs and had less body hair. In addition, they had smaller brows, high forehead, little facial projection, light built jaws, and smaller limb bones.

### **Major changes in human beings' way of life during the Late Stone Age**

Late Stone Age societies lived depending on hunting, gathering, fishing, and farming. The most important hunting weapons were bows and arrows. Sometimes arrows were coated with poison to kill animals such as antelopes, buffaloes, elephants, and others. They hunted a wide range of small and large animals. They processed skins and used them as clothes. They also engaged in fishing which provided them with protein. Fishing was done in rivers and lakes. In addition, women gathered fruits and nuts. They also dug up edible roots and tubers using digging sticks.

By the year 8000 BCE, crop cultivation and animal husbandry had developed in some parts of Africa to supplement hunting and gathering. The crops that were cultivated included wheat, barley, finger millet, rice, yams, and palm oil. They also domesticated animals such as cattle, goats, sheep, and dogs. Evidence for earliest food production activities has been discovered in Serengeti plains, Ngorongoro Crater, West Kilimanjaro and Machaga Cave in Zanzibar. Moreover, *Homo sapiens sapiens* practised arts like rock painting and engraving. These portray various activities like hunting, gathering, farming, and ceremonies.

## Activity 2

Do the following activity.

Make fire using a dry stick and wood.

### The Iron Age

The Iron Age was a period when human beings used iron in making tools and weapons. In Africa south of the Sahara, iron technology developed between 500 BCE to 600 CE. Iron tools enabled human beings to master the environment more efficiently than during the Stone Age. Therefore, iron production was an important technological innovation in pre-colonial Africa.

Iron production in Africa, particularly south of the Sahara, started in the basins of rivers Niger and Congo from the first millennium BCE. From there, the culture spread to other parts of the continent by the Bantu-speaking people. The main centres of ancient ironworks in Africa include Nsukka and Taruga in Nigeria, Meroe in Sudan, Aksum in Ethiopia, Tunis in Tunisia, and Cairo in Egypt, and in the interlacustrine region. This is the region comprising Buganda and areas between Lakes Victoria, Kivu and Edward (Figure 2.7).

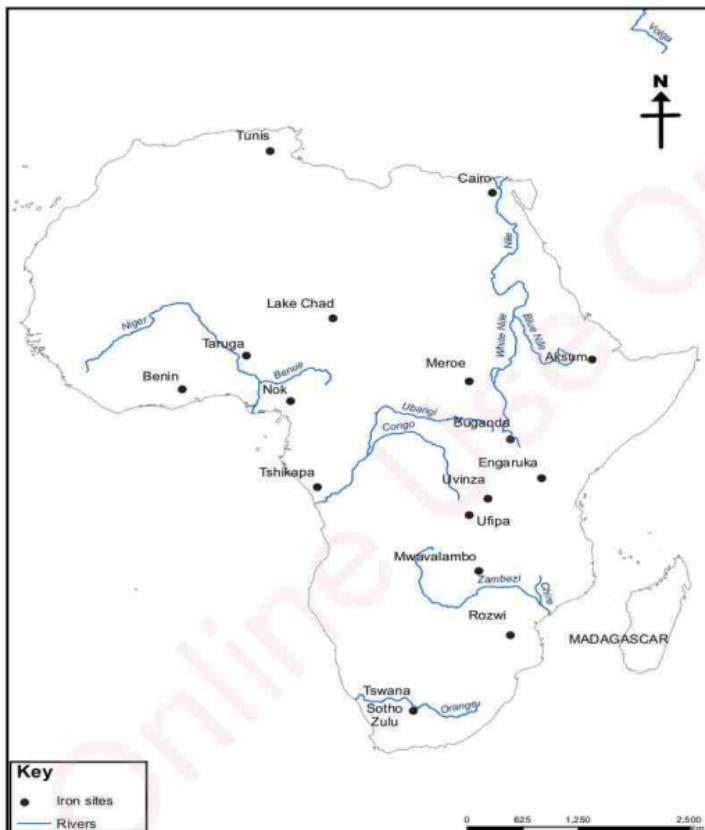


Figure 2.7 The map of Africa showing Iron Age Sites

There are many archaeological iron sites in Tanzania because iron and its tools were produced almost everywhere in the country. This is because iron tools were highly demanded for cultural and economic activities. Some of the early iron sites include Karagwe in Kagera, Limbo in Pwani, Ntuha in Ruvuma, Dakawa in Morogoro, Olduvai Gorge and Engaruka in Arusha, Ugweno in Kilimanjaro, the Usambara mountains in Tanga, Uvinka in Kigoma, and Ufipa in Rukwa (Figure 2.8).

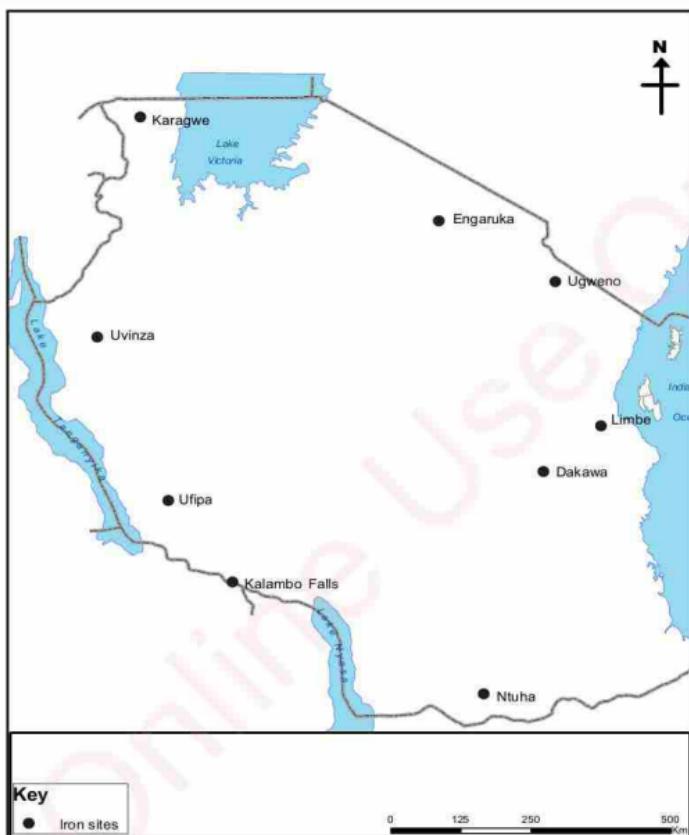


Figure 2.8 The map of Tanzania showing iron sites

### The discovery of iron

It is believed that iron was discovered when human beings were using fire to burn bushes. The fire melted iron ore that was on the earth surface. Later on, they discovered that iron ore could be smelted to get pure iron, which could be forged to make iron tools. Iron smelting involved changing iron ore into pure iron through heating. Iron forging, on the other hand, meant processing and shaping smelted iron into usable objects such as hoes, axes, knives, machetes, and others (Figure 2.9).

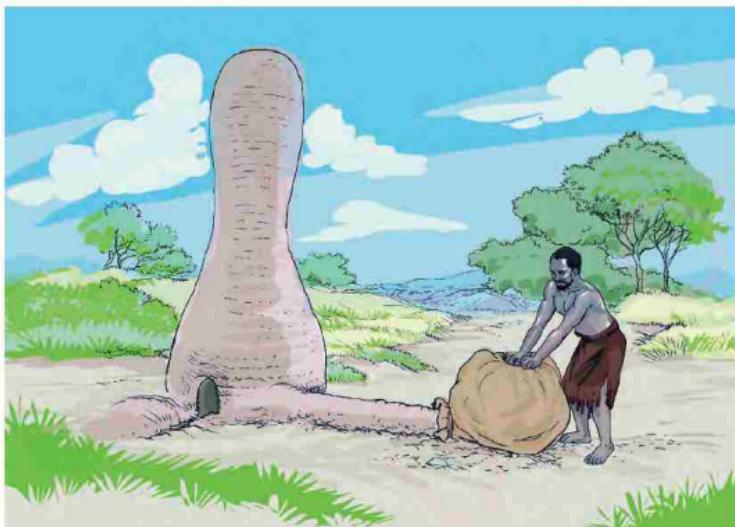


Figure 2.9 Iron tools

### Iron smelting and forging

Smelting of iron began with the collection of iron ore and charcoal. It also involved constructing furnaces and blowpipes (*tuyere*) as well as making bellows. Iron smelting furnaces in African societies were of two basic types. The first type was a bowl-like furnace, which was dug below the ground. The second type was a constructed furnace on the ground that was approximately a meter or two meters high.

Iron ore and charcoal were put in the furnace. Then the furnace was lit while air was pumped into it through *tuyere* that were connected to the bellows. Air from bellows entered the furnace through the *tuyere* (Figure 2.10). There is plenty of remains showing that iron smelting and forging was widespread in Africa. Examples of such remains include furnaces, *tuyere*, bellows, blooms, slags, anvils, and iron objects.



**Figure 2.10** A man smelting iron using a furnace

### Advantages of producing and using iron tools

The use of iron tools had the following advantages:

- (a) Expansion of agriculture

Agriculture expanded because people started to use better iron tools such as machetes, axes, and hoes for production. These tools enabled human beings to cultivate larger pieces of land than before.

- (b) Consolidation of settled life

Expansion of agricultural activities due to the use of iron tools led to the production of sufficient and sometimes surplus food. This encouraged the formation of large communities, which produced surplus food.

- (c) Population increase

Surplus food production due to the use of iron tools led to an increase in population. This increase also resulted from the immigration of people from different regions to iron producing areas.

(d) The emergence of chiefdoms and kingdoms

The use of iron weapons encouraged not only increase in population but also wars among different groups. These situations needed permanent and centralised political organisations in the form of states to resolve problems and conflicts. The need for a centralised political organisation led to the rise of chiefdoms and kingdoms. Examples are Buganda and Karagwe.

(e) Increased efficiency in hunting

The use of iron weapons such as arrows and spears improved hunting and made the process more efficient. This is because iron tools were more effective than stone tools in hunting.

(f) Improvement of self-defence

The use of iron weapons such as arrows and spears helped people better to defend themselves against wild animals than during the time they were using stone tools.

(g) Emergence of specializations

Since communities could produce sufficient and surplus food, not everybody had to engage in agriculture. Therefore, other people started specializing in other activities such as basketry, pottery, pastoralism, and fishing.

(h) The growth of commodity exchange (trade)

Iron producing communities exchanged iron tools with other items produced by non-iron producers. In this way, the exchange of commodities increased between communities.

## Exercise 2

1. Briefly explain the following terms:
  - a) The Iron Age
  - b) Iron Smelting
  - c) Iron Forging
2. Mention five sites with evidence of iron technology in Tanzania.

## Revision questions

1. Explain the concept of Stone Age.
2. Name the periods of the Stone Age.
3. What are the differences between *Oldowan* and *Acheulian* stone tools?
4. What were the advantages of using fire by ancient people?
5. Mention five advantages of the discovery of iron.
6. Describe the physical characteristics of human beings during the following periods:
  - (a) The Early Stone Age
  - (b) The Middle Stone Age
  - (c) The Late Stone Age

## Chapter Three

# Development of agriculture in pre-colonial African societies

### Introduction

In the previous chapter, you learnt about the influence of the environment on human evolution and technological changes. This chapter focuses on the developments of agriculture in pre-colonial Africa. By the end of this chapter, you will be able to explain the relationship between agriculture, environment, and technological development. You will also be able to describe the types of agricultural practices in pre-colonial Africa, and their contribution to the lives of human beings.

### Agriculture

Agriculture is an activity involving cultivating crops and keeping livestock. It started at the end of the Late Stone Age after human beings had improved their tools of production. The kind of crops cultivated or animals kept in an area depended on the environment and the efficiency of the tools used. Examples of crops cultivated in pre-colonial Africa were maize, sorghum, millet, yams, and wheat. Domesticated animals included cattle, goats, and sheep.

Agricultural practices were influenced by environmental factors such as weather conditions, diseases, and vegetation cover. These factors worked hand in hand with the level of technology attained by a particular society. The term environment refers to the natural world in which human beings live. It includes fellow human beings, land, water bodies, forests, mountains, and many other physical features.

In addition, the environment includes other man-made features such as dams, buildings, and harbours. As mentioned earlier, environmental factors such as weather conditions, diseases and vegetation cover largely determined the types of economic activities undertaken in a given place. For example, crops like banana and wheat were cultivated in areas that received relatively high amounts of rainfall. In contrast, crops such as sorghum and millet were cultivated in areas that received moderate or low amounts of rainfall.

Technology means the practical application of science in making tools. It helps to improve human lives in a given environment. For example, the discovery of ironworking enabled human beings to develop tools for agricultural production, defence, and hunting. Our ancestors invented tools which enabled them to control their environment. They continued to improve their technology as they faced new challenges of life throughout history. For example, African societies started using stone tools and later invented iron tools. These great achievements led to the development of various economic activities including agriculture.

### Types of agricultural practices in pre-colonial Africa

Three types of agricultural practices had developed in Africa by 1700 CE. These were crop cultivation, pastoralism, and mixed farming (Figure 3.1).

#### Crop cultivation

Crop cultivation is a type of agriculture involving the use of land to grow different types of crops. There were two types of crop cultivation during the pre-colonial period, namely, shifting and permanent crop cultivation.

##### (a) Shifting cultivation

Shifting cultivation involves the movement of farmers from one place to another. This type of crop cultivation was common in grassland areas with long dry seasons and scattered trees. An area with such natural vegetation is known as savannah. Ethnic groups that practised shifting cultivation in Tanzania included Yao, Makonde, Mwera, Sukuma, and Nyamwezi.

In the savannah areas, soils were light and fertile. However, soil fertility in these areas exhausted quickly after a few years of cultivation. Human settlements in these areas were usually temporary. People lived in an area for a short time and shifted when their land was exhausted. They moved on to open new agricultural land and settled there to begin crop cultivation afresh. This could be close to the old farmland or far away from it. Sometimes, shifting cultivation involved the use of a particular area for more than one growing season.

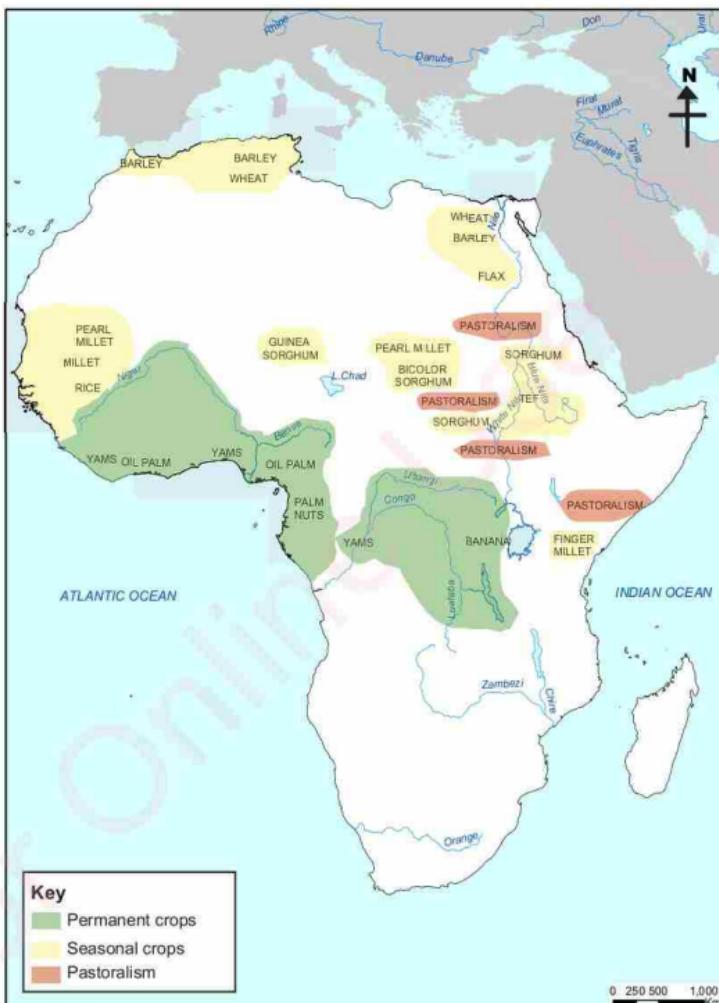


Figure 3.1 Agricultural practices in pre-colonial Africa

Under shifting cultivation, people cleared and burned bushes and trees. Planting and sowing began when rainy season started. The crops grown were mainly the drought-resistant ones such as cassava, millet, sorghum, pumpkins, and cowpeas. This type of agriculture produced a few harvests that could only support a small population.

Shifting cultivation involved livestock keeping as well. Pre-colonial shifting cultivators kept animals such as cattle, sheep, and goats. These animals provided them with milk, meat, blood, manure, and hides. In East Africa, such societies lived in central, southern, and western Tanzania. They also lived in most parts of central and north-eastern Kenya. The presence of tsetse flies infected both people and animals with *trypanosomiasis* (sleeping sickness).

Shifting cultivation had two major disadvantages. First, it led to soil erosion as it encouraged repeated clearing and burning of vegetation, which caused loss of forest and vegetation cover. Second, it required intensive labour power because it needed much labour to clear the vegetation before planting crops.

**(b) Permanent crop cultivation**

Permanent crop cultivation involved farming of permanent crops. This was practised in fertile areas with heavy rainfall and thick vegetation. In this type of agricultural practice, permanent crops such as yams, kola nuts, palm oil, pumpkins, and bananas were grown. In Tanzania, some of those crops were grown in Kagera (West of Lake Victoria), on the slopes of the Kilimanjaro and Meru mountains, Uluguru highlands, Usambara mountains and the southern highlands of Tanzania (Mbeya and Iringa). Such crops were also grown in the central highlands of Kenya and the Buganda region in Uganda.

**Advantages of permanent crop cultivation**

The following were the advantages of permanent crop cultivation. Firstly, it led to an increase in agricultural production. Secondly, it stimulated population growth, since there was adequate food. Thirdly, it stimulated the exchange of goods or trade. Fourthly, it led to the development of permanent settlements. Fifthly, it led to the emergence and growth of centralised political systems like chiefdoms and kingdoms. Lastly, it encouraged the improvement of farming technology. People needed better tools in order to simplify their work and quality seeds in order to increase production. The main disadvantage of permanent crop cultivation is that

it led to increase of conflicts in society. These conflicts resulted from the scarcity of resources caused by the increase in population.

Both shifting and permanent cultivators invented and used various techniques for improving crop yields. The Nyakyusa, Shambaa, Sukuma and Nyamwezi, for example, terraced hillsides. This technique conserved water and prevented soil erosion. Similarly, water channels were dug in the gardens to keep rainwater. The Buganda, Ankole, Buhaya, and Ufipa planted various crops in their farms to conserve moisture. They also made mounds on which they planted crops such as yams and potatoes. Such mounds kept rainwater and prevented soil erosion. Plant remains were buried. When remains decayed, they became composite manure. People who lived in the highlands such as the Chagga, Pare, and Shambaa dug irrigation furrows into their farms. They also made and used composite manure as well as manure produced by cattle and goat. The people of Ukerewe and Ukara islands enriched the soil with composite and animal manure. They also kept cattle, which provided milk, meat, and manure.

### Exercise 1

- (a) What is agriculture?
- (b) Mention three types of agriculture practised in pre-colonial Africa.

### Activity 1

Do the following activity in groups.

Visit any library and read texts on shifting cultivation. List its advantages and disadvantages and present your answers in class.

### Pastoralism

Pastoralism refers to keeping and grazing livestock. People who practised pastoralism were called pastoralists. Ancient pastoral communities kept animals such as cattle, sheep, camel, donkeys, and goats. Livestock served several purposes. For example, they provided meat, milk, blood, manure, and hides or animal skins. In some societies, animals like camels and donkeys were used for transportation (to carry people and goods). In many societies, livestock was a

source of wealth. Pastoralism was common in arid, semi-arid, and savannah or tropical grassland areas in pre-colonial Africa. These areas received little amounts of rainfall.

There were two types of pastoral societies, namely nomadic and sedentary or settled pastoralists.

**(a) Nomadic pastoralists**

These pastoralists often moved from one place to another in search of water and pastures for their livestock. They lived on milk, meat, and blood. They also ate vegetables and food grains such as maize and sorghum. These were obtained through exchange with neighbouring agricultural communities, which needed livestock products. Nomadic pastoralists were also war-like people; they were always ready to fight in defence of their wealth. They raided their neighbours for livestock from time to time. Examples of nomadic pastoralists were the Tuaregs of North Africa, the Fulani of northern Nigeria, the Somali of Somalia and Kenya, the Karamajong of northern Uganda and the Maasai of Tanzania and Kenya.

**(b) Sedentary pastoralists**

Sedentary pastoralists did not move from one place to another. Instead, they settled in one place and grazed their animals. They kept fewer animals than nomadic pastoralists who owned big herds. Members of the same family shared meat, milk and animal skins obtained from their herds. An example of such societies is the Sukuma of Tanzania.

**Exercise 2**

1. List down three characteristics for each of the following:
  - (a) Nomadic pastoralism
  - (b) Sedentary pastoralism
2. Mention two examples for each of the following:
  - (a) Nomadic pastoral societies
  - (b) Sedentary pastoral societies

### Mixed farming

Some of the societies combined animal keeping and crop cultivation. This type of agriculture is known as mixed farming. It was practised in areas with heavy rainfall as well as in grasslands with seasonal rainfall and woodland savannah. It was practised by people such as the Gogo, Sukuma, Nyamwezi, Hutu, Ankole, Pare and Kimbu. These people grew both permanent and seasonal crops such as bananas, yams, beans, and cereals. They also kept livestock such as cattle, donkeys, sheep, and goats. The long-horned Ankole types of cattle were kept in the interlacustrine region. The short-horned was kept in the drier woodland savannah and wooded steppes.

### How pre-colonial agriculture changed the lives of human beings

Agriculture led to increased food production. This, in turn, contributed to the population increase. As the population grew, social conflicts emerged. This gave rise to the need for leadership to solve conflicts. Leadership also became increasingly responsible for protecting important sources of wealth such as salt mines, pastoral lands, and iron ore. Similarly, leadership became responsible for the distribution and utilization of resources such as land, water, and pastures. Moreover, agricultural activities contributed to the rise of specialisations. For examples, while some of the community members engaged in agriculture, others made iron tools or engaged in fishing, basketry, and pottery.

Specialisation emerged because of two main reasons: Firstly, not every member of society engaged in crop cultivation or animal keeping. Secondly, there was surplus food to feed non food producers who specialised in skilled craft works. Hence, some people weaved baskets and mats while others made and repaired iron tools. Others specialised in trade and exchanged their surplus products in order to obtain commodities that they did not produce.

## Revision questions

Answer the following questions:

1. Write short notes on the following terms.
  - (a) shifting cultivation
  - (b) environment
  - (c) technology
  - (d) mixed farming
2. Write TRUE for a correct statement or FALSE for an incorrect one.
  - (a) Agriculture started in the Middle Stone Age. \_\_\_\_\_
  - (b) Pastoralism encouraged communities to cut down trees and burn vegetation. \_\_\_\_\_
  - (c) The Kara and Kerewe people terraced hillsides to prevent soil erosion. \_\_\_\_\_
  - (d) Mixed farming was based on livestock keeping and crop cultivation. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Mention the techniques used by the following ethnic groups to improve crop harvests.
  - (a) Nyamwezi and Nyakyusa
  - (b) Baganda and Hutu
  - (c) Pare, Chagga, and Shambaa
4. Explain the differences between mixed farming and shifting cultivation.
5. Draw a map of Africa showing the areas where pastoralism was practised.

## Chapter Four

# Handicraft and mining industries in pre-colonial Africa

### Introduction

In the previous chapter, you learnt about the relationship between the environment, technology and agriculture. In this chapter, you will learn about handicraft and mining industries as some of the economic activities which pre-colonial African societies practised. Specifically, you will be able to define basic concepts of industries, identify the types of industries that existed in pre-colonial Africa and their advantages. Finally, you will be able to explain the uses of different types of minerals extracted in pre-colonial African societies.

### Handicraft industries

Industries are places where raw materials are transformed into various goods. For example, in iron smelting industry, iron ore is smelted and forged to produce iron goods such as knives and hoes. Also, people mould and bake clay into pots, bowls, and bricks. Handicrafts are activities in which hands and skills are used to make objects such as baskets, pots, and mats.

In pre-colonial Africa, handicraft industries enabled people to make and obtain tools and other objects. The main handicraft industries included cloth making, ironworking, basketry, wood carving, and pottery. These industrial activities simplified human life.

### Cloth making

Cloth making is an art of making clothes from cotton, bark of trees and skins of animals. A number of communities specialised in cloth making. For instance, the Fipa of the Rukwa valley produced cotton clothes using local handlooms. Other types of clothes were made by pounding the bark of certain trees. This way of making clothes was common among the Haya, Ganda, and Nyakyusa of East Africa. Other societies used skins of animals such as sheep, goats, and camels to make clothes, as shown in Figure 4.1. This was common in Madagascar, northern Africa, Sudan and the Sahel belt of West Africa.

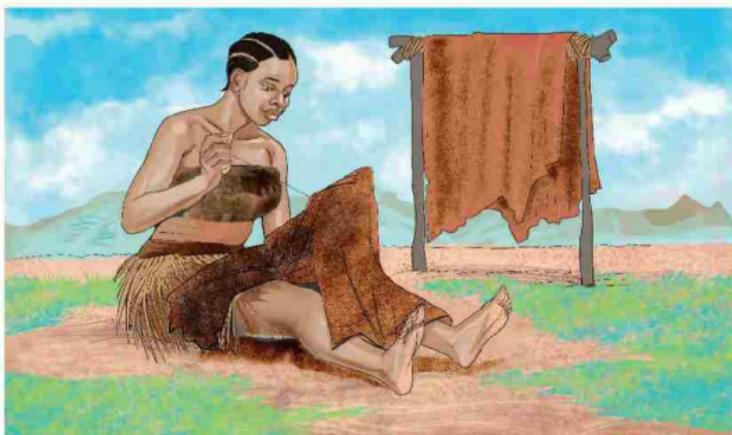


Figure 4.1 A woman making cloth from animal skin

### Uses of clothes

People wore clothes in order to cover their bodies from nakedness, to decorate themselves, or to keep themselves warm. Clothes were also worn on special occasions such as during religious and funeral ceremonies. Clothes became an important commodity and stimulated the development of trade in the pre-colonial period.

### Pottery

Pottery is an art of making pots and other items from clay soil. This skill was common in areas with suitable clay soil. In pre-colonial Africa, people who specialized in pottery made items such as pots, pipes, and bowls for domestic use and exchange. Pottery was common among the Pare people of northeastern Tanzania, the Kerewe of the Ukerewe Island in Lake Victoria, and the Kisi on the shores of Lake Nyasa. It was also common in the Nok area in northern Nigeria.

### Uses of pottery

Pottery was useful for making items for cooking and storing water, beer, milk, and grains. Pottery items also became important commodities in both local and regional trade. For example, Pare potters traded their items with neighbouring societies such as the Chagga and the Maasai. Kisi potters traded their items with the Nyakyusa, Ndali, Kinga, Pangwa, Ngoni, and other neighbouring societies.

## Basketry

Basketry is the art of weaving palm leaves and other special reeds to make items like fish traps, mats, hats, baskets, and ropes. Basketry was practised by many societies. Examples of the societies involved in basketry include the Nyamwezi, Gogo, Zaramo, Yao, and Buganda. The materials used in basketry were mostly obtained from palm trees, reeds, bamboos and various types of grass that were found in many places.

### Uses of basketry

Baskets were used in different ways. Some of them were used to collect and carry agricultural products from farms while others were used to store grain and seeds for later use. Basketry also produced fish traps, which were used to catch fish in rivers, lakes, and oceans. Mats were used for sitting, sleeping and drying foodstuffs. Moreover, they were used to wrap human dead bodies for burial.

## Carpentry

Carpentry involved working on wood logs and poles to make wooden items. It was common in many African communities living in woodland. For example, artisans carved wood to make stools, mortars, doors, canoes, and beehives.

### Uses of carpentry products

Canoes were used to transport people and commodities. They were also used in fishing. The Makonde of southern Tanzania and northern Mozambique carved wood to make figurines, masks, earrings, and bracelets. Other people made mortars; these were used to pound grains into flour and crash herbs into usable medicines.

## Activity

Do the following group activity:

First, study the advantages of handicraft industries and second, identify what you think are the most important handicraft industries in pre-colonial Africa. Present in class the reasons why you think those industries you chose were the most important.

## Mining industry

Mining is the extraction of minerals from the ground. It was practised in different parts of Africa by people who had knowledge and skills in mineral extraction.

Examples of such minerals in pre-colonial Africa were iron, salt, gold, copper, silver, and tin.

### Ironworking

Ironworking started in some of the African communities in the first millennium BCE. In East Africa, this technology started around 500 BCE and widely spread in the region by around 1700 CE. The production of iron tools passed through the following main stages: firstly, iron ore was mined from the ground, secondly, the ore was smelted in furnaces in order to purify it. Thirdly, pure iron was left to cool and solidify. Fourthly, the solidified iron was heated until it became red hot. Then it was hammered into different shaped tools or weapons. The process of hammering iron into tools is known as forging. The African specialists who processed iron into iron tools and weapons were called blacksmiths.

### Advantages of using iron tools

The use of iron tools and weapons had the following advantages:

- It led to the expansion of agriculture, which in turn led to increased food production.
- It simplified the mining of iron and non-iron minerals and the making of other handicrafts.
- It enabled communities to increase production of different items. This led to the rise and development of trade. In some African areas, people used iron bars as currency.
- Iron technology consolidated sedentary or settled life. This was because the technology enabled people to establish homes and use iron weapons to defend their families and property against enemies.
- It contributed to the rise of states in some parts of Africa, such as Fipa, Buganda, and Karagwe.
- The use of iron weapons made great changes in warfare. Societies with iron weapons became stronger. They conquered weaker ones, which were still using stone and wood weapons. These conquests led to the expansion of chiefdoms or kingdoms. It also increased the frequency of wars among rival communities.

### Taboos in ironworking

Some of the taboos were attached to the process of making iron tools. For example, women were neither allowed to participate in iron smelting nor to observe blacksmiths while at work. Some societies believed that, if women participated or observed the process, the craftsmen would get problems. Other

societies believed that if women were involved in making such tools, iron could get spoiled. Yet other societies believed that, if women came close to the place of work, the blacksmiths could lose attention and get hurt.

In East Africa, ironworking developed among the Meru, Kerewe, Haya, Fipa, and Baganda. Among the Pare, ironsmiths came from the royal Shana clan. Among the Zinza of Geita, iron smelting was taught to anyone who paid a fee to learn that skill. Iron technology also developed among the Venda people of southern Transvaal in South Africa. Others were the Mashona of Zimbabwe, the Mang'anja of Malawi and societies around the Kalambo Falls in Zambia. In West Africa, ironworking societies were found in the Futa Djalon plateau in present-day Guinea. In north-eastern Africa, examples included societies in Nubia, Meroe, and Axum in present-day Sudan.

### **Salt making**

Salt making was among the earliest industries in pre-colonial Africa. There were four main methods of obtaining and processing salt. These included salt extraction from salty reeds, leaching of rocky soils, salt mining from rocks and evaporating salty water.

#### **(a) Salt extraction from salty reeds**

Salty reeds were burnt and their ash was dissolved in water. The solution was filtered and boiled until all the water evaporated. The remaining residue was used as salt. This method was common among the Mang'anja people along Lake Nyasa. In East Africa, it was practised among the people of the interlacustrine region.

#### **(b) Leaching**

Leaching is a method by which water was drained through rocky soils that had a high content of salt. It was sieved and boiled to obtain salt crystals. The method was practised at Uvinza in Tanzania and at Bilma and Awil in West Africa.

#### **(c) Salt mining from rocks**

In this method, people directly mined salty rocks. Then, the rock crystals were used as salt. This method was used by people around Bangwelo and Luapula rivers in Central Africa. In West Africa, the method was used at Taghaza, Idjil, and Taoudeni.

#### **(d) Evaporation**

In the evaporation method, salty ocean water was trapped in pans and left to dry under the heat of the sun. After drying, salt crystals remained in the

pans. This method was and is still common along the East African coast. For example, saltpans are found along the coastline of Tanga, Bagamoyo, and Lindi.

### Uses of salt

Salt had many uses in the pre-colonial period.

- It served as a food ingredient as well as a food preservative. Foods like beef and fish lasted longer when salted.
- Salt was also used as a medium of exchange because it was a rare commodity in many societies. Therefore, it became an important commodity in trade. For example, salt from Uvinza was a commodity of exchange all over the Great Lakes region. In addition, the nomads of Ethiopia and the merchants of Timbuktu in the Sahara Desert used salt as a medium of exchange.
- It was used for the treatment of wounds. In some societies, people used salt as medicine for curing wounds.
- Salt was also used for preserving dead bodies from decaying. This was common among the ancient Egyptians. This practice of body preservation using salt is called mummification.

### Gold mining and processing

In pre-colonial Africa, gold was mined and processed mainly in different parts of the continent. In southern Africa, it was mined along River Sabi and River Zambezi in Mozambique. In West Africa, it was mainly produced in areas such as Bambuk, Bure, Lobi and the forest area of Asante. The methods used to obtain gold differed from one place to another. In some places, several different methods were used.

### Methods of obtaining gold

In pre-colonial Africa, two methods were commonly used to obtain gold:

- The panning method  
In this method, people collected alluvial gold found along the streams or river beds. They used pans to separate gold from sand or rocks. The method was mainly practised along the tributaries of River Sabi in Mozambique and River Zambezi in Zimbabwe.
- The shaft method  
Some of the areas contained underground gold veins. In order to obtain gold, people dug out rocks containing gold. The rocks were then taken to furnaces where they were burnt to obtain pure gold. This method was used in the Mashonaland of Zimbabwe and Asante in Ghana.

### Uses of gold

- (a) It was used as a commodity or trade item.
- (b) It was also used as a medium of exchange or a form of currency.
- (c) It was used to make symbols of authority for African rulers. For example, in Ashanti of Ghana, the King's stool was made of gold.
- (d) Gold was used to make jewellery, ornaments, and decorative materials.
- (e) It was used to make golden utensils like cups and plates as well as handles of knives and swords.
- (f) Gold served as a symbol of wealth for those who possessed it.

### Copper mining and processing

Copper was produced mainly through smelting of copper ores. Ores containing copper were smelted and made into pieces of pure metal shaped like a brick. Mining of copper took place in many areas of pre-colonial Africa. These included the Kafue in Zambia, Gwai River in Zimbabwe and Katanga in the Congo region. Others included the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt and the land of Igbo and Yoruba in Nigeria.

### Uses of copper

- (a) It was used to make items like ornaments, bowls, copper wire, daggers, and helmets.
- (b) It was also used as a medium of exchange especially in West Africa.
- (c) It was used to make fish hooks. This was mainly done in Egypt.

### Exercise

1. Briefly explain each of the following terms.
  - (a) Blacksmith
  - (b) The panning method
  - (c) The shaft method
2. Mention and briefly explain the advantages of the following:
  - (a) Salt
  - (b) Gold
  - (c) Copper

## Revision questions

Answer the following questions:

1. Define the following terms:
  - (a) Industry
  - (b) Handicrafts
  - (c) Mining
  - (d) Iron Smelting
2. Name the products or items made by the following handicraft industries in pre-colonial Africa.
  - (a) Iron smelting
  - (b) Basketry
  - (c) Carpentry
  - (d) Pottery
3. Mention the uses of the following minerals in pre-colonial Africa.
  - (a) Gold
  - (b) Copper
  - (c) Salt
4. Explain the advantages derived from the discovery and use of iron by human beings in Africa.
5. Write T for TRUE statements and F for FALSE statements.
  - (a) By 1500 CE, all salt in Africa came from the coast. \_\_\_\_\_
  - (b) Trade and production of commodities depended on one another. \_\_\_\_\_
  - (c) In Katanga, the Fipa produced copper wire. \_\_\_\_\_
  - (d) The Kisi were famous potters while the Maasai were famous herdsmen. \_\_\_\_\_
  - (e) The Kamba produced and traded in iron tools and fish. \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter Five

# Trade in pre-colonial Africa

### Introduction

In the previous chapter, you learnt about pre-colonial handicraft industries in Africa. In this chapter, you will learn the meaning of trade and give a general account of the rise and development of trade in various parts of pre-colonial Africa. In addition, you will be able to explain the main types of trading systems in pre-colonial Africa, the reasons for their development, their outcomes, and the factors for their ultimate decline.

### Meaning of trade

Trade is a system of buying and selling goods or commodities and services. In pre-colonial African societies, trade was among the economic activities that facilitated interactions within communities and beyond. Initially, trade was mainly practised through a barter system. Barter trade is a system of trade in which people exchange commodity with another commodity. This trade ensured that commodities which were not available or not sufficient in one community, were obtained from another community. Eventually, various objects such as cowrie shells, gold, and copper were used as a medium of exchange (money) in order to simplify trade.

### Reasons for the development of trade in pre-colonial African societies

African societies engaged in trade due to a number of reasons. The first was the demand for certain goods in some communities. Trade, therefore, developed to ensure the supply of goods and services that were not available in a given area. Several societies produced different commodities. For example, the Chagga of northern Tanzania produced bananas and beans. They exchanged them for meat, milk, and skins with the Maasai who raised cattle, goats, and sheep.

The second reason was specialisation in economic activities. For example, in a given society, some of the people became blacksmiths, while others became farmers, traders, potters, fishermen, or carpenters. In such cases, farmers exchanged

their farm produce with other groups. Similarly, blacksmiths exchanged their tools with farmers, livestock keepers, fishermen, and carpenters.

The third reason was the availability and use of animals, especially camels and donkeys, for transporting people and goods. For example, the trade between West and North African societies was facilitated by the use of camels and donkeys for transportation. This led to an increase in the volume of commodities that could be transported over long distances to the markets. In addition, it made the movement of goods faster, which enabled traders and their goods to reach distant markets.

### Types of trade

There were two types of trade in pre-colonial Africa, namely local trade and regional trade.

#### Local trade

This exchange system developed among people living in the same area. There were no specific market days or places during early stages of the trade. Traders sold goods from door to door. For example, a woman who needed salt, but had some beans, approached her neighbour who had salt and exchanged beans for salt.

#### Effects of local trade

The development of local trade had various effects on the African societies involved. These included the following:

- Local trade led to the emergence of local market centres such as Timbuktu, Zanzibar, Gao, Pate, Kilwa, and Lamu. These were towns and market centres that grew out of the trade. Eventually, some of these centres developed into large trading centres and towns where buyers and sellers met.
- Population increased since many people were attracted to settle along the trading routes and centres. In the course of time, these small trading centres evolved into towns.
- Local trade also led to the emergence of groups of people who specialized in trade. Their main activities were to buy goods from different producers and sell them for profit. Examples of such people were the Yao of southern Tanzania, the Chewa, and Bisa of Central Africa, the Imbangala and Vimbundu of Angola and the Dyula of West Africa.
- Sometimes local trade resulted in an increased volume of trade, which led to the introduction of the medium of exchange or money. Examples of items

used as the early medium of exchange were salt, cowry shells, gold, copper, and iron bars.

(e) Production of goods increased due to their high demand in the trading centres.

### Exercise 1

1. Explain what you understand by the term local trade.
2. What were the effects of local trade in pre-colonial African societies?
3. Mention local trade items that were in your community.

### Regional trade

Regional trade is also known as long-distance trade. This trade was conducted between societies in a large geographical area or across different regions. These geographical regions included Eastern Africa, Central Africa, Southern Africa, Western Africa, and Northern Africa. Therefore, regional trade was an extension of local trade.

### Regional trade in Central Africa

In Central Africa, regional trade was well developed by the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE. By that time the Shona of Zimbabwe were exporting gold to the Venda in exchange for iron tools. They were also exporting gold to Katanga in exchange for copper. Similarly, trade between eastern and central Africa had started. The commodities involved in this trade were agricultural products, copper, ivory, hides, and clothes.

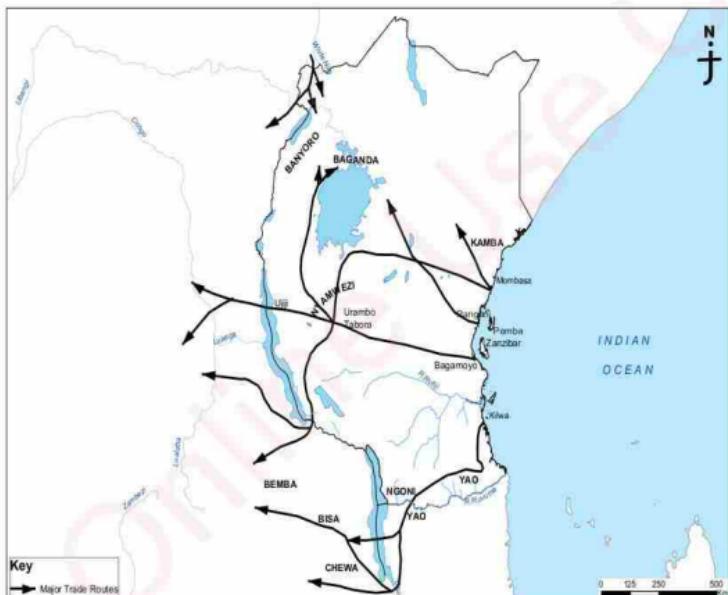
By the 10<sup>th</sup> century CE, the Chewa of Malawi and Yao of southern Tanzania were exporting ivory to the East African coast. Likewise, the Shona of Zimbabwe exported gold to the East African coast. These commodities from Central Africa were re-exported overseas to the Middle East. From the Middle East, traders from the East African coast imported glassware and beads. They also imported daggers, cowry shells, silk, spices, clothes, and porcelain utensils.

### Regional trade in East Africa

Long-distance trade in East Africa dates back to the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE. It greatly expanded from the 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Traders from the interior moved to and from the coast to sell and obtain commodities. The most important traders were the Yao from the southern route, the Nyamwezi from the central route, and the Kamba from the northern route. Likewise, the Swahili and Arab traders travelled

to and from the interior to sell and buy commodities. Famous traders from the coast included Rumaliza, Tippu Tip, and Mohara. Similarly, chiefs and kings in the interior participated actively in regional trade by organising trade, protecting sources of wealth, as well as controlling trade routes and caravans. Such rulers included Mirambo of the Nyamwezi, Nyungu ya Mawe of the Kimbu, Machemba of the Yao, and Kabaka Mutesa of Buganda.

Three trade routes were used in this trade as illustrated in Figure 5.1.



**Figure 5.1** Major trade routes and trading communities in Central and Eastern Africa

The first was the northern route. It started from the ports of Pangani, Tanga, and Mombasa and went to Taita. Then it split into two branches. One branch went through Kilimanjaro up to the shores of Lake Victoria. The other branch proceeded through the north-west part of Mount Kenya and crossed the Rift Valley to Buganda. It stopped at the slopes of Mount Elgon. Commodities

obtained from the interior and sent to the coast were animal skins, iron, ivory, slaves and grains. This route was dominated by the Kamba.

The Second was the central route. It started from the ports of Bagamoyo and Saadani and went through Zaramo and Gogo areas to Tabora. At Tabora, it was divided into two branches. One branch went north-west to Karagwe, Buganda, and Bunyoro. The other branch went to Ujiji on the shores of Lake Tanganyika up to eastern Congo. It proceeded to the south-west part, round the southern shores of Lake Tanganyika where it branched into two routes. One of these routes crossed the lake into eastern Congo. The other route rounded the southern tip of Lake Tanganyika into Katanga. The central route was dominated by the Nyamwezi.

The third was the southern route. This route started from the ports of Kilwa, Lindi, and Mikindani. It passed through the land of the Yao, Makua, Makonde, Mwera, and Ngindo and went as far as the shores of Lake Nyasa. It was the main route for exporting slaves, ivory, and gold from Mwenemutapa. This route was dominated by the Yao.

### Commodities traded on different routes

Commodities that were obtained from the interior and sent to the coast through the northern route were mainly animal skins, iron, ivory, slaves and grains. Items that were transported to the coast from Central Africa through the central route were ivory, slaves, beeswax, honey, copper, and animal skins. Slaves, gold, and ivory were the main commodities obtained from Central Africa through the southern route. In exchange for these commodities, coastal traders received European and Asian made goods such as clothes, swords, cowry shells, guns, silk, and beads. Other commodities were ornaments, porcelain, utensils, and glassware. The coastal traders transported and sold these commodities to people in the interior of Central Africa.

### Effects of the regional trade in East and Central Africa

The regional trade had several cultural and economic effects on East Africa.

#### (a) Cultural effects

The following were the cultural effects of the East and Central African long-distance trade:

##### (i) Introduction of Arabic culture

Some of the Africans adapted Arabic dressing styles. People started

to wear white caps, gowns (*kanzu*), sandals and black gowns (*baibui*) for women. They also adapted Asian architecture in East Africa. In addition, they adapted Arabic marriage and burial traditions.

(ii) Introduction of Islam

Islam was introduced firstly along the coast of East Africa. It slowly spread to the interior as Arab and other coastal traders penetrated inland. In the interior, it was first introduced in the main Arab trading centres such as Tabora, Ujiji, Kondo, Ushirombo, Tunduru, and Buganda.

(iii) Development and spread of Kiswahili into the interior

The penetration of Swahili traders into the interior of East Africa resulted in the use and spread of Kiswahili. This language became common for many people and traders. As a result, Kiswahili borrowed many Arabic words such as *wakati*, *shukrani*, *kitabu*, *sala*, *shikamoo* and *salaam*. Therefore, trade played a significant role in the spread of Kiswahili into the interior of East Africa.

(iv) Intermarriages

Intermarriage between Arabs and African people resulted in the emergence of people of mixed race. Intermarriages strengthened the social relations between foreign traders and local people.

**(b) Economic effects**

The East and Central African long-distance trade had the following effects:

(i) Introduction of foreign goods and crops

Foreign goods were introduced in the interior of East and Central Africa. Examples of those included, firearms, beads, cotton clothes, and porcelain utensils. Similarly, new crops were introduced. These included: mangoes, rice, pineapples, sugarcane, bananas, sweet potatoes, and maize. By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, clove and coconut plantations were introduced along the coast. However, cloves were only introduced in the Islands of Zanzibar and Pemba.

(ii) Growth of commercial centres

Long-distance trade led to the growth of trading centres and coastal city-states. Examples of such city-states include Lamu, Mombasa, Bagamoyo, Malindi, Kilwa, Mikindani, Zanzibar and Pemba. In the interior, the trade centres established include Tabora, Urambo, Kondo, and Ujiji. Their development largely depended on slaves and ivory trade.

- (iii) Linkage between East Africa and the world economy  
Long-distance trade integrated East and Central Africa to the external world. It was turned into the producer of commodities for European and Asian countries. In return, Africa received various commodities manufactured in other countries.
- (iv) Exploitation of East Africa  
East Africa produced and exported items of great value. These included slaves, ivory, copper, iron, and gold. In exchange, East Africa imported unproductive and less valuable commodities such as alcoholic drinks, beads, porcelain, guns, and gunpowder. Therefore, this trade was based on unequal exchange relations. Consequently, it led to the underdevelopment of East Africa.
- (v) Rise and expansion of states  
Regional trade led to the rise and expansion of centralised states. This was because trade enabled rulers to acquire weapons such as guns and ammunition. Rulers used these weapons to conquer rivals, accumulate wealth and build or expand their states. Examples of these states were Bunyoro, Buganda, and Karagwe.

## Exercise 2

1. Define the term regional trade.
2. What are the differences between local and regional trading systems in pre-colonial Africa?
3. Describe the major trade routes used in pre-colonial east African regional trade.
4. What were the items of trade in the central African trading system?

## The Trans-Saharan Trade

The Trans-Saharan Trade was conducted between West Africa and North Africa societies across the Sahara desert. It flourished from the 8<sup>th</sup> century up to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It involved traders from the Western Sudanic states and the Forest states in West Africa as well as traders from North Africa and the Mediterranean region. Western Sudan was the region between the Nile River and the Atlantic Ocean, south of the Sahara desert. The Forest states covered the areas of ancient Dahomey, Oyo, Benin, and Asante. Northern Africa is the area covered by Morocco, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Egypt.

The introduction of camels simplified the development of the Trans-Saharan Trade. Camels became the major means of transport across the Sahara desert. This was because camels could endure the hard conditions of the desert. As trade expanded, camel caravans increased and permanent trade routes were established. Important trading centres such as Timbuktu, Gao, Jenne, Kano, and Walata developed as a result of this trade. (Figure 5.2)

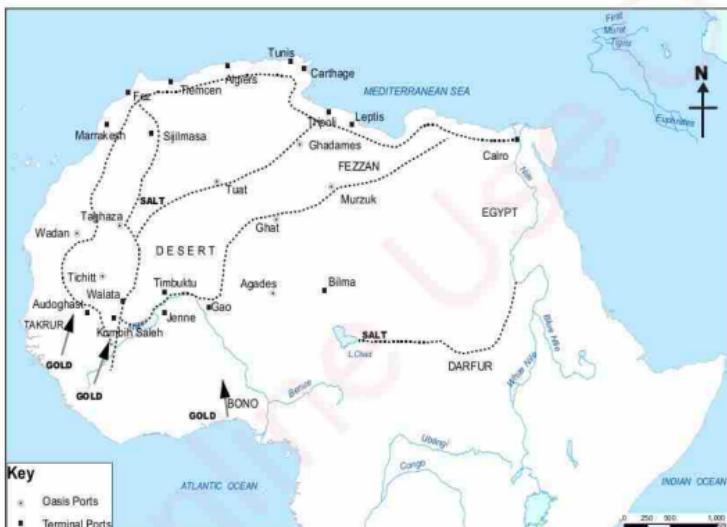


Figure 5.2 Trans-Saharan Trade routes: terminal and oasis ports

In the beginning, this trade was carried out through barter exchange. As the volume of trade increased and trade became more complex, a need for a medium of exchange arose. Items such as salt, cowrie shells, copper and gold became the medium of exchange in different parts. These items were accumulated and stored as forms of wealth. They were also transformed into other commodities when the need arose.

From North Africa, Muslim Arabs, tribes such as: Berbers, and Tuaregs brought in manufactured commodities such as cotton, woollen textiles, and garments.

These were exported across the Sahara to Western Africa. They also made and sold copper and silver products. Similarly, they produced and sold spices, salt, dates, horses and camels to West Africa. Northern Africa also re-exported beads, glassware, porcelain, utensils and silk from Asia to Western Sudan. People from West Africa imported firearms and ornaments from Europe through northern Africa. From the Sahara Desert, salt and dates were produced and sold at Taoden, Taghaza, and Bilma. Similarly, gold was mined, refined and sold at Wangara and Audoghast.

Western Sudan greatly contributed to the growth of the Trans-Saharan Trade. This great area is divided into three climatic zones or belts. These were the forests zone, the savannah belt, and the desert zone. Within these belts, many economic activities took place and formed the basis of the Trans-Saharan Trade. Within the forest belt, the Yoruba were weaving and spinning clothes, which they exchanged with the Akan people who specialized in gold mining and processing. Palm oil, honey, beeswax, gum, indigo, and salt were also among the major commodities produced and exchanged among the forest belt societies. Other commodities included kola nuts, ivory, slaves, and animal skins.

In the Savannah belt, crops were grown and animals were reared. Examples of items produced from the Savannah belt included grains, fish, kola nuts, ostrich feathers, leather goods, clothes, yams, salt, and dates. These items were exchanged with products from the forest zone. Some of these products were gold, ivory, kola nuts, iron, palm oil and bronze. People in the Savannah belt, in turn, exported salt, leather goods, and handicraft products to the forest zone.

People in the Forest and Savannah belts exported to North Africa commodities, which they produced locally. Similarly, traders from North Africa exported to West Africa goods from their own areas and those obtained from Europe and Asia through the Mediterranean Sea. The most important commodities from West Africa to North Africa were slaves, gold, ivory, kola nuts, leather and clothes. North Africa re-exported some of these goods to Europe and Asia. For example, through North Africa, tanned and dyed leather from West Africa was exported to Europe. These goods were produced by Hausa and Mandinka specialists in northern Nigeria and Mali. West Africa obtained salt, dates, horses, and camels from North Africa; porcelain and silk from Asia; and firearms and ornaments from Europe.

## Factors which led to the growth of the Trans-Saharan Trade

Several factors led to the emergence, growth and expansion of the Trans-Saharan Trade. They included the following:

(a) Political stability

Societies in which trade routes passed were peaceful and politically stable. This enabled both traders and rulers in those societies to conduct profitable trade. For example, king Mansa Kankan Musa of Mali controlled and protected trade routes. He also collected taxes and built armies to ensure peace and security along the trade routes. Therefore, traders and commodities were protected and this attracted more traders.

(b) Availability of valuable commodities

The availability of valuable commodities for sale attracted traders to participate in this trade. The vast area covered by the Trans-Saharan Trade produced various goods needed both within and outside it. These commodities included gold, ivory, slaves, leather goods, clothes, salt, and foodstuffs. They were, in turn, exchanged with commodities or goods from Europe and Asia. Examples of such goods are clothes and firearms.

(c) Honesty and trust among traders

Traders involved in the Trans-Saharan Trade were honest and trustworthy. Therefore, they conducted business with confidence and trust. This situation helped the growth of the Trans-Saharan Trade.

(d) Availability of means of transportation using camels

Camels promoted the Trans-Saharan Trade in many ways. With camels, traders carried large amounts of goods at a time. Camels also travelled long distances in the desert without drinking water. This situation enhanced the development of the Trans-Saharan Trade.

(e) Spread of Islam and the Arabic language

These developments led to the growth and expansion of the Trans-Saharan Trade. Islam united traders because its believers regarded each other as brothers. At the same time, the Arabic language became the main medium of communication among the traders. This made negotiation and communication easy.

(f) Availability of foodstuffs and valuable trade goods

The Trans-Saharan Trade took place in areas with plenty of foodstuffs. Availability of foodstuffs enabled traders to travel long distances and sell their goods without fear of food shortage and hunger.

### The decline of the Trans-Saharan Trade

The Trans-Saharan Trade started to decline from the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The following were the main reasons for this decline:

(a) Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

The rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade on the coast of West Africa led to the decline of the Trans-Saharan Trade. The Forest traders stopped to trade with traders from western Sudan and North Africa and developed an interest in the slave trade with European slave merchants along the Atlantic coast. From these merchants, they obtained guns and ammunition. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the intensification of the slave trade between the coastal people and the Forest rulers had caused a decline in the volume of gold, gum, and ivory. These commodities were no longer exported in large quantities to and from the Sahara and North Africa. The rate of such decline increased in the 1820s when gold was not being exported northwards along the Hausa-Bornu-Tripoli routes.

(b) Changing political conditions in the Sahara region

In the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Islamic religion movements occurred. These caused religious wars known as *Jihads*. These wars were led by famous Muslims like Uthman dan Fodio, Alhaji Umar, and Samori Toure. Their main intention was to reform Islam in West Africa and make it stronger. *Jihads* disrupted the organisation of the Trans-Saharan Trade. The trade routes were no longer safe to be used by traders.

(c) Shortage of water

The increase of trading activities between West Africa and North Africa, across the Saharan desert, dried up the Oasis; consequently, it becomes difficult to get water for different uses by the traders.

(d) Attack from Tuaregs

The Trans-Saharan Trade also declined because of attacks from Tuaregs. These attacks were dominant after the decline of the Songhay Empire. Before the attacks from the Tuaregs, Songhay Empire provided security to the traders crossing the Sahara desert. After the decline of the empire, the Tuaregs continuous attacks on traders created fear and insecurity that ultimately undermined the Trans-Saharan Trade.

## Effects of the Trans-Saharan Trade

The Trans-Saharan Trade had the following effects on West Africa:

(a) Emergence of towns

The trade led to the emergence of many trade centres, which eventually developed into towns. The towns developed along the trade routes. Such towns included Gao, Sijilmasa, Taghaza, and Timbuktu.

(b) Spread of Islam and Arabic culture

Most traders from North Africa were Muslims. They brought Islam and Arabic culture in West Africa. Therefore, many people in the western Sudanic states were converted into Islam.

(c) Emergence and growth of states

Trade made some people, especially rulers and traders, wealthy and powerful. They used their wealth to influence the growth of states which they defended using strong armies. Examples of such rulers were Sundiata Keita and Mansa Musa of the Mali Empire. Others were Askia Mohammed and Sunni Ali of the Songhay Empire.

(d) Intermarriages among people of different races

The Trans-Saharan Trade led to intermarriages between Africans and Arabs. This, in turn, gave rise to people of mixed race.

(e) Unequal relations of trade

There were unequal trade relations between the people of Africa and those from the Far East, the Middle East and Mediterranean Europe. This is because Africans exported valuable trade items such as slaves, gold, copper and iron products; in contrast, they imported less valuable commodities such as beads, wines, spices, mirrors, daggers, cloth, and guns. These unequal trade relations resulted in the underdevelopment of West African societies.

(f) Development of new technical skills

The Trans-Saharan Trade led to the development of new technical skills among the West African people. For example, people started processing leather and other items. These were exchanged with manufactured items from North Africa and Europe.

(g) Integration of West Africa to the outside world

Prior to this Trans-Saharan Trade, the interior of West Africa was unknown to Europe and Asia. Subsequent to the trade, the situation changed; the region attracted people with different cultures and nationalities from Europe, the Middle East, and the Far East.

## Activity

Perform a role play demonstrating how traders who did not know each other's language managed to exchange goods during the Trans-Saharan Trade.

## Revision questions

Answer the following questions:

1. Define the following terms:
  - (a) Trade
  - (b) Barter trade
  - (c) The Trans-Saharan Trade
2. What are the effects of the pre-colonial East African long-distance trade?
3. Mention the main trading centres that existed in the central route of the East African long-distance trade during the pre-colonial period.
4. Give the reasons for the decline of the Trans-Saharan Trade.
5. What are the similarities and differences between the East African pre-colonial long-distance trade and the Trans-Saharan Trade?

## Chapter Six

# Development of social and political systems in pre-colonial Africa

### Introduction

In the previous chapter, you learnt about trade systems in pre-colonial Africa. In this chapter, you will learn about how pre-colonial African societies developed their own social and political systems. By the end of this chapter, you will be able to explain the variations in the types of political systems among pre-colonial African societies and the nature and characteristics of centralised and non-centralised political systems.

### Non-centralised political systems

Non-centralised or decentralised social and political systems were forms of organisation which had no central authority. They shared a number of characteristics. First, they did not have a central ruler known as king or chief. Second, the political leadership was not hereditary. Third, they had no clearly defined territorial boundaries. Fourth, political leaders were mainly clan heads, who were assisted by councils of elders. Fifth, in non-centralised states, political power and authority were shared among the council of elders and clan heads.

There were two forms of non-centralised social and political systems in Tanzania, namely clan or kinship organisation and the age-set system.

### Clan or kinship organisation

A kinship or clan organisation was a collection of closely related families with the same or common ancestor. They consisted of several families with a close blood relationship. The family consisted of the husband, wife or wives, children and the grand parents. The family was the basic unit of production.

There were two forms of clan or kinship organisation, namely the patrilineal and matrilineal systems. By definition, a patrilineal system is the one in which children take and follow the clan names of their fathers. Example of societies

that followed the patrilineal clan system included the Nyakyusa, Ndali, Hehe, Sukuma, Gogo, Chagga, Shambaa, Haya, Nyamwezi, Bena, and Kuria. One of the characteristics of patrilineal kinship was that men on the fathers' line dominated social, economic and political relations. They made important decisions on issues concerning family or clan members. They also owned and determined the use of the major means of production such as land. In marriage transactions, they decided on the amount and distribution of dowries for their daughters. In patrilineal societies, children inherited the names from the father's clan.

The matrilineal system is one in which children belong to their mother's clan. Therefore, children take and follow the clan names of their mothers. Thus, clan inheritance was based on the mother's clan. In matrilineal societies, females dominated social, economic and political relations in the households and communities. In family relations, fathers had no power over children. Uncles made all important decisions concerning their nephews and nieces, including deciding on dowries for these children. Most societies that followed the matrilineal system were found in the coastal, southern, and south-eastern parts of Tanzania. They settled around the basins of rivers such as Rufiji, Kilombero, Mmbwemkulu, and Ruvuma. They included the Makonde, Yao, Luguru, Pogoro, Zaramo, Matumbi, Ngindo, Ndonde, and Makua.

### Characteristics of the clan or kinship organisation

The following were the characteristics of the clan or kinship organisation:

- A clan or kinship had common rituals, taboos, and customs. These cultural characteristics helped to create stability, strength, and uniqueness of each clan in relation to other clans and forms of social organisations. They helped to bind members of the clan together and to forge a community.
- Clans or kinships were self-governing, but they had no rulers, chiefs or kings. The absence of these leaders meant that they had neither centralised political administration nor state instruments of power. They were also classless societies. It is because of these characteristics that clan or kinship systems are regarded as forms of non-centralised or stateless societies. They were a social and political organisation without a government to enforce laws. Clan leaders had limited political and military powers.
- Clan or kinship communities were small and simple. The populations of clan or kinship communities were small and their levels of economic and technological development were low. They relied on simple economies such as hunting, gathering, fishing, and cropping. They also used simple

technologies such as stone and wooden tools. Some of these communities acquired simple iron tools from neighbouring societies through barter trade.

(d) They had enough land and lived in closely united clan units. There was less competition for basic resources such as livestock, agricultural land, minerals, and water. Therefore, there was no marked economic differentiation in terms of wealth or property ownership.

### **The social, political and economic organisation of clans or kinships**

In clan or kinship organisation, the family was the basic unit of production. Land, which was the major means of production, belonged to the whole clan. However, the tools or instruments of labour belonged to the individual family. The clan head and clan elders did not own the major means of production. Their responsibility was to allocate the land for use to other members of the clan. The elders also guided clan members in the production process. Each family in the clan was given as much land as it could utilise. Most of the products of labour obtained by clan members were shared according to the needs of each member. These relations of production and distribution are called communalism. The basic means of production and product of labour were shared among all members of a given clan system.

Politically, kinship organisation revolved around the position of the clan heads who provided leadership for the group. Clan heads were responsible for regulating political, economic and social relations in the community. In particular, they performed various functions. They settled disputes in the community, arranged marriages for members, and performed clan rituals. In addition, they allocated land to members of the clan or to immigrants; gave names to newly born babies; and acted as guardians of all communal properties such as land, forests, and water sources.

Socially, clans were settled communities. The closeness of family units ensured the existence of the kinship or clan. This closeness was enhanced by cultural elements such as rituals, values, customs, and taboos. These connected individuals and bonded them together as members of the clan. Each clan made efforts to transmit these cultural elements from one generation to another in order to ensure its continuity across time and space.

## Exercise 1

Write T for correct statements and F for the incorrect ones

(a) Pre-colonial African societies were organized in similar social systems. \_\_\_\_\_

(b) A clan consisted of one kinship. \_\_\_\_\_

(c) Patrilineal clans were led by men. \_\_\_\_\_

(d) In kinship organisation, land was sold by clan heads. \_\_\_\_\_

(e) In the matrilineal form of kinship, children took names from their mother's kin. \_\_\_\_\_

### The age-set system

The age set system is an organisation of the society based on age and sex groups. In the age-set system, one's age group determined his or her position and responsibilities in the community. This is another form of non-centralised society that existed in Africa before and after the colonisation of the continent.

### Social, political, and economic organisation in the age-set system

There was no overall authority under the age-set system. Leadership consisted of the council of elders. In this system, children of almost the same age were initiated together and taught the values of their community. During initiation, such children were taught about their culture, history, and responsibilities. After initiation, they were given their group name. From then onwards, they performed special social functions and responsibilities together as an age-set unit.

Each age-set consisted of members who belonged to a particular generation. Age groups were determined by initiation, rituals and cultural ceremonies. Seniority in each age group depended upon one's age, wisdom and good character. Leaders in each age group were older than the rest, more hardworking and reliable. Obedience was an important aspect of life in an age group. The wrongdoers were punished by the community. Decisions on day-to-day issues were made by the members of each age group.

The age-set system was most common in pastoral communities such as the Maasai and Datooga in Tanzania. A variant of the age-set system was also practised by some of the agricultural communities such as the Nyakyusa in the southern highlands of Tanzania.

### Age-set organisation in pastoral communities

Pastoral communities such as the Maasai and Datooga were nomadic. They lived in areas with little rain covered by short grass. This environment allowed them to engage in pastoralism as a major economic occupation. As nomads, they kept moving from one place to another with their herds of cattle in search of good pasture and water. They did not live in large communities but small and simple ones. Such pastoral societies relied on rivers, streams, and rain to get drinking water for people and for their livestock. They also depended on the surrounding vegetation for pastures. Furthermore, pastoralists required safe places for both people and their livestock.

### Division of labour in pastoral societies

Since they were nomadic, the members of pastoral societies fulfilled various responsibilities at family and community levels. However, no single family could perform all the necessary duties. Most responsibilities were assigned according to age-sets and gender. Therefore, men, women, children, youths, and elders carried out different responsibilities.

(a) Duties and responsibilities of women and children

Women stayed and worked at home. They cooked, milked the livestock, grazed the calves, and took care of children. They were assisted by children in fulfilling such responsibilities.

(b) Duties and responsibilities of the youth

Males' responsibilities were distributed according to the following age groups:

(i) *The youth of about 9 to 18 years*

This group was involved in livestock grazing during the afternoon and in assisting their mothers to do household duties when they returned home in the evening. (See Figure 6.1 below)

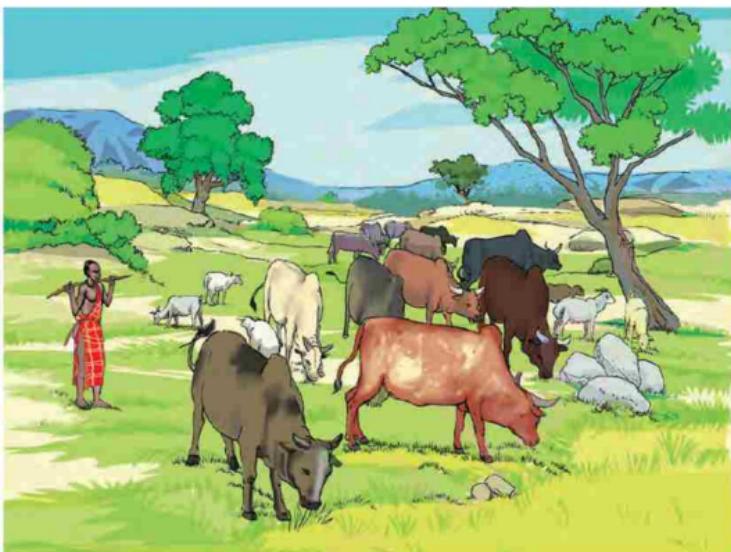


Figure 6.1 A Maasai boy herding livestock

(ii) *The youths of about 15 to 25 years*

This group consisted of the middle-aged youths who among the Maasai were called the *Moran*. The *Moran* had six responsibilities, namely defending the community from enemies; protecting livestock against thieves and wild animals; raiding herds of neighbouring communities to obtain more livestock; driving cattle to new grazing land; collecting tribute from traders who passed on the Maasai territory; and surveying their neighbouring areas for pastures and sources of water.

(c) Duties and responsibilities of elders

This age group was comprised of the most senior men in the society. These men made important decisions concerning their society. They mediated conflicts and solved social problems. They were the guardians of livestock and other types of communal properties. Their wisdom guided society. They were the senior age set and hence respected by other age groups in the

society. The elders were also owners of cattle in their respective households. The most senior elder among the Maasai was called *Laibon*. He commanded special respect as the topmost cultural, political and religious authority. The *Laibon* also presided over major cultural and religious ceremonies. He was also seen as the link between his people and the gods. The head of council of *Laibon* in the ethnic group is known as *Laigwanan*. He is chosen among the senior *Laibon* in the ethnic group.

### Age-set organisation in agricultural communities

The Nyakyusa were among the agricultural communities who practised the age-set system. The Nyakyusa population tended to rise very rapidly. This led to the dense concentration of people in small areas. However, the Nyakyusa owned vast areas of fertile land that could be used for agricultural production activities. In order to prevent overpopulation in small areas, they adopted the age-set system. In this case, the youth of certain age groups were allocated a completely new land to occupy and establish their own settlements. Each age group cleared its land and established its own settlement. Each age-village was headed by *Amafumu*. A ceremony called *Ubusoka* was held to mark this occasion of the passage of a new age-set into adulthood.

### Activity

Using examples from different Tanzanian societies, outline the duties of age-set groups.

### The *Ntemi* system

*Ntemi* is a Sukuma word which comes from the verb *kutema* which means to cut. This system was based on the practice of clearing land for cultivation and settlement. The *Ntemi* system was established in northern and central Tanzania by the Sukuma and Nyamwezi. Gradually, it was adopted by their neighbouring ethnic groups like the Nyiramba, Kimbu, and Gogo. Each *Ntemiship* was ruled by *Mtemi*. A successful *Mtemi*, therefore, was the one with many people under him. More people meant enough labour force, which led to increased production, wealth, and power.

### Political, social, and economic organisation in *Ntemiship*

*Ntemiship* evolved as a social and political system characterized by centralization of power. This evolution came about as many clans were united under one leadership. The leader in charge of this new political organisation was known as *Mtemi*. He was elected by elders who were clan heads. He was elected based on his wisdom, courage, experience, and leadership. He evolved to become the most powerful individual in *Ntemiship*. His economic, political and social decisions were final. The clan heads who elected *Mtemi* became his assistants and advisors. They were known as state elders. Among the Sukuma, they were known as *Banangoma*. As advisors to *Mtemi*, *Banangoma* constituted the council of elders who advised *Mtemi* on important matters of the *Ntemiship* system. Below the council of elders were the headmen. These performed day-to-day duties of leading subjects in the clans. Among the Sukuma, these headmen were called *Banangwa*.

*Ntemiship* had an organisational structure in which *Mtemi* was at the top as the overall leader of the chiefdom. In the middle of the structure was the council of elders. The lowest cadre in the administrative hierarchy were the headmen or clan heads. Below the headmen were the labouring men and women who shouldered the productive and reproductive functions of the society. They were exploited by all other socio-economic strata in *Ntemiship*. That is why the system marked the evolution of societies from simple to complex communities. This complexity was a sign of political centralisation that embodied features of state formation. It was a change from simple political and social systems that operated through clan and age-set organisations.

The *Ntemiship* organisation was supported by a growing economy that adapted to the environmental conditions. Climatic conditions supported crop cultivation and livestock keeping as important economic activities in the *Ntemiship* organisation. Other activities included hunting, honey collection, and fishing. Access to iron tools from neighbouring iron producing communities made it possible for communities in *Ntemiship* to produce food that sustained annual needs. This development enhanced food security, sustained population growth, and enabled surplus production. This surplus was appropriated by *Mtemi*, the council of elders, and headmen or clan heads.

Socially, *Mtemi* was closely guarded to ensure stability in the community. He could have many wives, but the first was more respected than others. *Mtemi*'s wives were from specific families and chiefdoms. In addition, *Mtemi*'s mother was regarded as an important person; she was also one of his chief advisors.

The social, economic and political relations of *Ntemiship* revolved around *Mtemi*. His power and influence determined the stability of the chiefdom. Similarly, his health was an indicator of stability and wellbeing of the *Ntemiship* organisation. A poor health condition of *Mtemi* was perceived by his people as a bad sign for the welfare of *Ntemiship*. His roles, responsibilities and health status were therefore critical for the survival and continuity of *Ntemiship*.

### **Roles and responsibilities of *Mtemi***

The roles and responsibilities of *Mtemi* included the following:

- (a) *Mtemi* was a chief who provided overall leadership of *Ntemiship*. He was the top-most authority in all political and judicial matters. For example, he could declare war or make peace with the advice of the council of elders. He opened the planting season and enforced proper use of land, water, forests, and other resources.
- (b) He was the overseer of the state's grain reserves. These were used to reward subjects or relieve famine in areas with food shortages. Most importantly, he used the reserved food to assist people hit by war, drought, floods, or locusts.
- (c) He collected tribute from his subjects. This was in the form of grains or livestock. Hunters paid part of what they got from hunting such as meat, ivory, and animal skins. Artisans paid part of their wares such as hoes, spears, and knives.
- (d) He collected taxes and duties from trade caravans in the form of cloth, cowries, beads, chineseware, salt, and gold. Above all, people who acquired the status of *Mtemi* usually participated in local and regional trade.
- (e) He settled disputes and judged complex cases such as murder, witchcraft, treason, and arson. Simple cases were handled by junior officials in the council of elders or headmen.
- (f) *Mtemi* also performed religious roles. For example, he offered sacrifices and presided over religious ceremonies. Therefore, he was regarded as a link between his people and the gods.
- (g) *Mtemi* embodied kindness, peace, and unity. In general, he was supposed to be strict but kind. This meant showing kindness and understanding. People believed that there was a connection between the ruling style of *Mtemi* and the wellbeing of the *Ntemiship* system. A bad *Mtemi* could not maintain peace, order, and unity of the state.
- (h) *Mtemi* enhanced the welfare of the *Ntemiship* system. In many ways, *Mtemi* was regarded as a 'holy man.' It was believed that there was a strong

connection between the well-being of *Mtemi* as a person and the conditions of his *Ntemiship*. The system was hereditary and was bound with rituals, which were considered important in maintaining order and in keeping the society together.

### Exercise 2

1. Define the age-set organisation.
2. Describe the roles played by different age-sets among the pre-colonial pastoral Maasai people.
3. What were the characteristics of the *Ntemiship* organisation?

### The state organisation

A state is an occupied geographical area with the power to exercise some political authority over its people and resources. A state is always under one political authority. Important elements that make up the state include population, territorial boundaries, freedom from foreign rule, and government.

### Centralised states

Centralised states were political units under one central authority. Rulers of such states were kings or chiefs who had great powers. They also had permanent armies to enforce rules and protect sources of wealth such as land, minerals, ivory, cattle, traders and trade routes. A good example of a centralised state in precolonial Tanzania was Karagwe. Other states included Fipa, Hehe, Shambaa, Pare, Buha, Sangu and many others as seen in Chapter Seven (Figure 7.1).

### Factors for state formation

The following were the factors for the emergence and consolidation of states during the pre-colonial period:

(a) Good climate and soil fertility

Fertile soils and reliable rainfall increased agricultural production. Accordingly, there was an increase in population, which in turn ensured sufficient food production and good living standards. The need to have authority to protect and distribute the fertile land and other resources led to the rise of states in Africa.

(b) Development of iron technology

Iron technology enabled some of the societies to make and use better tools for agricultural production. This resulted in surplus production. Kings or chiefs used iron to make weapons for conquering and defeating weaker societies. They integrated defeated societies into their own states. In this way, the conquering state became larger and stronger. Karagwe rose and grew in this way.

(c) Religion

Many African kings and chiefs used religion as a unifying tool in their states. Both indigenous and adopted religious faiths played a great role in the rise of states. For example, the Nyamwezi state was unified under local beliefs based on the spiritual leadership of the kings or chiefs.

(d) Good geographical location

Some of the states like the Unyanyembe chiefdom under Mirambo were formed and expanded because they were located in areas through which long-distance trade passed. Other states were formed in areas that were rich in mineral resources such as gold and copper; these were necessary items of trade.

(e) The Ngoni migration

The Ngoni migration contributed to the formation of states in southern, central and eastern Africa during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The migration was caused by the outbreak of *Mfecane*. Some of the Nguni ethnic groups who feared King Shaka's tyranny moved away from the Natal region to other parts of southern, central and eastern Africa. As they migrated, they formed strong kingdoms to defend themselves against the people they came across. Examples of the leaders who formed strong kingdoms were Msilikazi, who founded the Ndebele Kingdom. Others were Sebituane, the founder of the Kololo Kingdom, and Moshoeshoe who founded the Basuto Kingdom. In Tanzania, the Ngoni came in two groups. The group which was led by Mputa Maseko settled in Songea while the group which was led by Zwangendaba settled in Ufipa.

(f) Trade

Trade interactions were among the factors that contributed to the rise of states in Tanzania. The chiefdoms of Nyamwezi under Mirambo and Yao under Machemba arose due to trade. Likewise, all coastal city-states arose due to trade. Such states included Zanzibar and Kilwa.

(g) Strong leadership

Strong leaders included Mkwawa of the Hehe, Kimweri of the Shambaa and Merere of the Sangu. These leaders had great strength in leadership.

They established and organised powerful armies, which marked them out as strong leaders. They used their armies to conquer weaker groups in order to expand their chiefdoms.

### Exercise 3

1. Briefly explain the term state.
2. List five factors that contributed to the emergence of states in pre-colonial Africa.

### Karagwe Kingdom

Karagwe Kingdom was established by the Nyambo people. Its founders are believed to have migrated from the northern part of the kingdom. The kingdom rose in the 17<sup>th</sup> century under the leadership of Ndagara. The neighbours of the Nyambo were various Bahaya chiefdoms to the South and the kingdom of Rwanda to the West. Other areas located near Karagwe were Biharamulo, Bukoba, Kiziba, and Koki. The location of Karagwe is shown in Chapter Seven (Figure 7.1).

### Factors for the rise of the Karagwe Kingdom

The following are the reasons for the rise and growth of the Karagwe Kingdom:

(a) Development of iron technology

Iron tools helped the people of Karagwe to produce more food that favoured the growth of population. Iron was also used to manufacture weapons for the defence of the kingdom.

(b) Long-distance trade

Trade routes from the coast of East Africa passed through Karagwe. The Arabs and Swahili traders paid tributes and taxes to the king in terms of beads, guns, clothes, and others. From this trade, the Karagwe state accumulated wealth that strengthened the kingdom.

(c) The presence of strong leadership in the kingdom

The kingdom had strong leaders who were respected by their people because they were thought to possess divine powers. The kingdom was divided into sub-dynasties and each dynasty had a leader who helped the king in administrative matters. These dynasties helped to create unity among the people in the kingdom. Family and clan systems were integrated into larger political units ruled by the king whom the Nyambo people called *Omukama*.

These units came to constitute a united political state ruled by the dominant clan – the Sita – whose last leader was Nono.

(d) Strong army

Rulers acquired guns from the East African coastal traders. They used these weapons to strengthen their army. In turn, the army was used to defend the kingdom and conquer weak states for territorial expansion.

(e) Agricultural activities

Agricultural activities facilitated the rise and growth of the Karagwe Kingdom. The Nyambo practised mixed agriculture. They farmed the land and kept cattle. Both agriculture and pastoralism formed the base of the economy of the kingdom. As population increased, the demand for more grains to feed people and their rulers also increased.

### Factors for the decline of the Karagwe Kingdom

The Karagwe Kingdom declined due to various reasons, including the following:

(a) The influx of immigrants from the North

Such immigrants were the Bantu groups from Ankole, Toro and Bunyoro. They brought in plenty of cattle and new crops. The immigrants were pastoralists and agriculturalists. The growth of population and increase in cattle led to conflicts over land, which the king could not settle. Consequently, the people lost trust in him and their loyalty to him declined.

(b) Occupation of Karagwe by the Bahinda

The Bahinda removed Nono from power. These new rulers shifted the capital into Bwehange in which they established seven new Bahinda sub-dynasties. These new dynasties were Ukerewe, Nasa, Busiba, Ihangilo, Kyamtewara, Gisasa, and Buzinza.

(c) Disputes over succession after the death of Ruhinda

When Mukama Ruhinda died, the Karagwe Kingdom broke up into independent states, each retaining its power. The new states became stronger because they brought the cult of divine royalty. Each leader acquired symbols of power, notably drums and spears so that their authority could not be challenged.

### Exercise 4

1. List the dominant people of the Karagwe Kingdom.
2. List three major factors for the rise of the Karagwe Kingdom.
3. Explain the factors for the fall of the Karagwe Kingdom.

### Revision questions

1. Define the following concepts:
  - (a) Family
  - (b) The *Ntemi* system
  - (c) Clan organisation
2. State two functions of each of the following:
  - (a) Morans
  - (b) Laibons
  - (c) The council of elders
3. Show the differences between matrilineal and patrilineal clan systems.
4. What were the responsibilities of the following officials in the *Ntemiship* system:
  - (a) A clan leader
  - (b) *Mtemi*
5. Explain the characteristics of kinship basing on the following:
  - (a) Economic organisation
  - (b) Social organisation
  - (c) Political organisation
6. Describe the division of labour in age-set societies.
7. Differentiate between kinship and *Ntemiship* organisations.

Chapter  
SevenState organisation  
in pre-colonial Africa

## Introduction

This chapter extends the discussion on state organisation that was introduced in Chapter Six. The chapter focuses on the centralised states that evolved in Africa, notably in western, central, southern and eastern Africa. After reading this chapter, you will be able to explain the rise, organisation, and decline of those states in pre-colonial Africa.

## Centralised states in East Africa

A number of centralised states developed in East Africa. They included Buganda, Bunyoro, Rwanda-Urundi, Nyamwezi, Chagga, Hehe, Sangu, Sukuma, Pare, Shambaa, Kamba and Zanzibar Sultanate as shown in Figure 7.1. Buganda and Bunyoro are analysed as examples of state formation in the region.

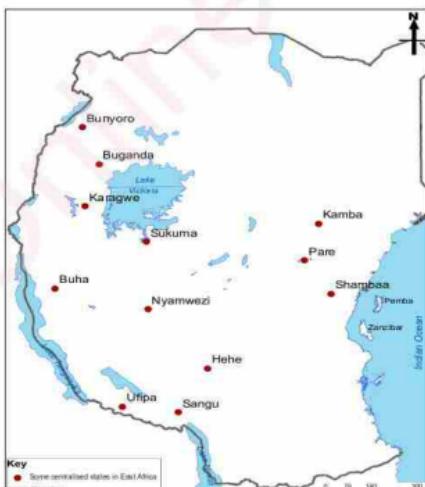


Figure 7.1 Centralised states in East Africa

## The Bunyoro Kingdom

The Bunyoro Kingdom can be traced back to the kingdom of Bunyoro-Kitara founded by the Bachwezi people in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. By the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Bunyoro-Kitara started to decline and gave rise to new and smaller kingdoms. One of the new kingdoms, which emerged, was Bunyoro. The title of the king of Bunyoro was *Omukama*.

### Factors for the rise of the Bunyoro Kingdom

The following are the factors for the rise of Bunyoro Kingdom:

(a) The influence of traditions

Traditions had great influence in choosing the *Omukama*. The *Omukama* was chosen from among the chiefs who came from the ruling family or the royal dynasty of Babito. This practice helped to reduce disputes over power succession among the provincial chiefs who were called *Saza*.

(b) The role of strong kings

The Bunyoro Kingdom needed strong leadership in order to maintain its position. Such leadership was provided by famous kings like Omukama Kabalega who helped Bunyoro to grow into a powerful kingdom in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Kabalega Kamurasi created Bunyoro's standing army, which consisted of about 20,000 soldiers. His soldiers were called *Abarusura*. He divided his army into ten divisions, each under a commander. These were then deployed in the provinces to defend the empire against external invasions. They also checked the internal revolts against the central government. Apart from ensuring law and order, the army was also used to raid neighbouring empires of Toro, Ankole, and Busoga during the wars of conquest and expansion.

(c) The influence of the geographical condition

Bunyoro was one of the most fertile areas in the Great Lakes zones. Its climate was good, which enabled the people of Bunyoro to grow various types of crops and raise livestock. They produced enough food, which supported their society including rulers and soldiers.

(d) A strong and efficient political system

The kingdom was divided into provinces. These provinces were ruled by provincial chiefs known as *Saza*, who were appointed by the *Omukama*. These chiefs were loyal to the king. In their provinces, they distributed land to peasants and cattle herders in return for loyalty, services, and tributes. They helped to promote peace and unity among the people of Bunyoro.

### The decline of the Bunyoro Kingdom

The Bunyoro Kingdom declined in the 16<sup>th</sup> century due to a number of factors. These factors are described below:

(a) Expansion in size of the kingdom

The increased geographic coverage of Bunyoro made it difficult for the king to control the kingdom efficiently. Sometimes, the provincial chiefs, especially those along the borders, revolted against the central government and broke away. Examples of the provinces that broke away were Buddu, Toro, Busoga, and Koki. This led to the decline of Bunyoro since it lost important provinces, which produced grains and iron tools.

(b) Disputes in the ruling family

Members of the ruling family sometimes quarrelled over kingship succession. A good example of disputes and conflicts over succession occurred during the rule of Omukama Kyebambe Nyamatukura III. One of his sons called Kaboyo Omuhanga rebelled against his father and established the Toro kingdom.

(c) Limited king's control over regional chiefs

Provincial chiefs had a certain degree of independence from *Omukama*. For example, they could raise their own provincial armies. This was dangerous to the unity of the Bunyoro Kingdom because some of the leaders used this opportunity to build armies and to revolt against the central government.

### The Buganda Kingdom

The Buganda Kingdom was situated in the southwest of modern Uganda. It started as a small political unit in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and began to expand from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It reached its peak in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The Buganda Kingdom was one of the highly centralised states in East Africa. The title of the king was *Kabaka*. It came into existence after the collapse of the Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom. By the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Buganda became one of the strongest and largest kingdoms in the interlacustrine region. It increased its size by conquering and controlling small neighbouring kingdoms. The conquered territories were placed under the leadership of chiefs called *Batongole*. These were responsible to the *Kabaka* as a territorial leader.

### Political organisation of the Buganda Kingdom

The organisation of the Buganda Kingdom was among the best political systems in the interlacustrine region. At the top of the leadership structure there was the

*Kabaka*. He was an overall political leader and the final decision maker. Below him was an administrative hierarchy with a number of chiefs. The chiefs helped him to spread his authority throughout the kingdom. *Kabaka* governed his kingdom with the assistance of his advisory council called *Lukiiko*. The council was made up of the prime minister called *Katikiro*, the treasury general called *Omwanika*, and the chief justice called *Mugema*. Members of the *Lukiiko* were appointed by *Kabaka*. The *Lukiiko* did not make laws; it only gave advice to *Kabaka*.

### Factors for the rise of the Buganda Kingdom

The following were the factors for the rise and growth of the Buganda Kingdom:

(a) Development of agriculture

Buganda evolved at an area with good climate and fertile soils; the area favoured agriculture. People grew banana as the main food crop. The kingdom produced surplus food that favoured the growth of population. Food security enabled people to concentrate on productive duties, which led to the development of the kingdom. There was also a clear division of labour among the Baganda. While women concentrated on food production, men performed other duties including warfare to expand the size of the kingdom.

(b) Formation of a strong and stable army

At its peak, Buganda had one of the strongest armies in pre-colonial African societies. This enabled the Baganda to strengthen and expand their kingdom. The army was also used to protect the wealth of the society and to conquer neighbouring societies.

(c) Clear system of leadership succession

Buganda's administration was centralised. *Kabaka* and his subordinate leaders allowed the practice of the hereditary system. In this system, leadership passed from the father to the son. This helped to prevent and resolve disputes over succession. The situation was different in the Bunyoro and Ankole states where succession disputes were common.

(d) Control of trade

Buganda participated in the East and Central African long-distance trade. This trade enabled *Kabaka* to collect tributes that were used to strengthen his kingdom. Furthermore, trade provided the kingdom with commodities like guns.

(e) Strong link between the state and clans

The political system of Buganda reduced conflicts and maintained peace

within the state. *Kabaka* married wives from several different clans. The marriage alliance from different clans helped him to bind the state and clans, which created unity and harmony within the kingdom.

(f) Religious beliefs and practices

Religious beliefs and practices contributed to the growth and expansion of the Buganda Kingdom. The Baganda practised ancestral worship. As a clan head, *Kabaka* was a spiritual leader who presided over religious functions, and he was regarded as a semi-divine person. As a spiritual leader, *Kabaka* was surrounded by religious leaders from different clans. Thus, religion was one of the pillars that encouraged socio-political unity and maintained power relations within the kingdom.

(g) Development of iron technology

Iron was used to produce weapons and tools that enabled Buganda to conquer weak empires as well as to engage in production activities. Both led Buganda to surplus food production.

### Factors for the decline of the Buganda Kingdom

The following were the factors for the decline of the Buganda Kingdom:

(a) Establishment of colonialism

The establishment of colonial rule undermined political power and authority of *Kabaka*. The Buganda agreement of 1900 allowed British governors to control Buganda. Under this agreement, *Kabaka Mwanga* unwillingly submitted to British control and became part of the British Protectorate. As part of the British protectorate, the kingdom was no longer free, which greatly reduced the power of *Kabaka*. This led to the decline of the kingdom.

(b) Religious differences and conflicts

There were three conflicting religious groups, namely Christianity, Islam, and the indigenous religion. These conflicts occurred during the second half of the 19th century. These groups divided the Buganda Kingdom into conflicting religious ideologies. Buganda gradually lost its internal unity and stability as a socio-political entity. This led to its eventual decline.

(c) Introduction of a colonial economy

The introduction of a peasant economy by British colonial officials changed the production system in Buganda and brought in the disintegration of the kingdom. People started to produce cash crops, which reduced the production of food crops. As a result, there was a food shortage; the food available could not sufficiently feed the entire population in the kingdom.

d) Conflicting administrative interests

Since Buganda was ruled by many *Batongole*, some of the provincial chiefs made efforts to gain absolute power and authority over their subjects. These efforts resulted in administrative misunderstandings and conflicts between *Batongole* and *Kabaka*. This brought the whole kingdom into administrative problems that finally led to its downfall.

**Exercise 1**

1. What was the title of the leader of the Bunyoro Kingdom?
2. List the factors for the rise of the Bunyoro Kingdom.
3. Outline the factors for the fall of the Buganda Kingdom.

**Western Sudanic states**

The earliest centralised states in the western Sudanic zone were Ghana, Mali, and Songhay (Figure 7.2). This section focuses on the factors that led to the rise and decline of these states.

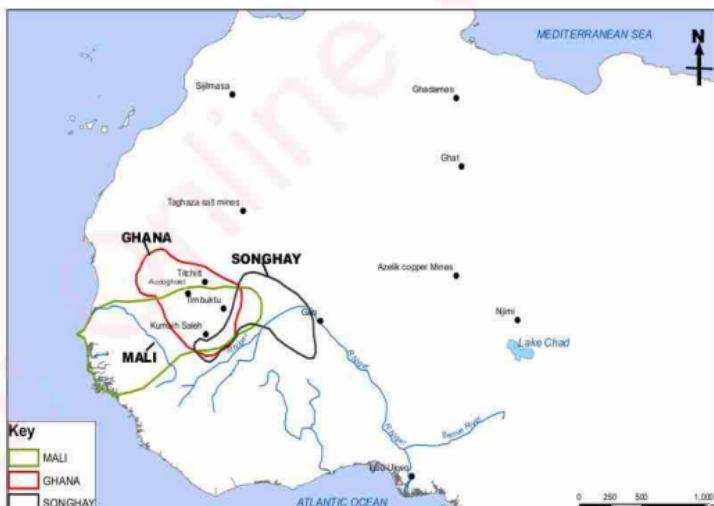


Figure 7.2 Western Sudanic states

## The Ghana Empire

The empire of Ghana was located in the southern border region of modern-day Mauritania and Mali, between the bend of the Niger and Senegal rivers. This empire rose in the 5<sup>th</sup> century after several small states were brought together through war. The founders of the empire were the Soninke people whose first leader was Tunka Manin. The capital of the Ghana Empire was Kumbi Saleh and the title of the king was *Tunka* or *Ghana*. The towns located near Ghana were Walata, Awdaghust (sometimes known as Audoghast), Timbuktu, Tichitt, and Jenne.

### Factors for the rise of the Ghana Empire

The following were the factors which led to the rise of the Ghana Empire.

(a) Good geographical position

Ghana was at the intersection of many Trans-Saharan Trade routes. It played an intermediary's role in this trade. All trade goods from the South, North, and East passed through Ghana. Its position also encouraged agricultural production, which ensured sufficient food to feed people.

(b) Availability of gold

Ghana produced a lot of gold, which was the main item of trade and a form of currency. Trade in gold made the empire politically strong and economically rich.

(c) Efficient administrative system

The empire of Ghana was divided into provinces. The king appointed provincial chiefs in each province. Those chiefs provided support to the king in their respective areas. In this way, he managed to control the entire kingdom.

(d) Military strength

The king of Ghana established a strong permanent army of about 200,000 men. The army had the duty of fighting weak chiefdoms and defending the kingdom from external attacks.

(e) Development of iron technology

Iron technology produced farming tools. Such tools helped to improve agricultural activities to increase food production and to enhance food security. Food security led to population growth, which strengthened the empire. Weapons made of iron also improved military power, and state security led to the expansion of the territory.

### Factors for the decline of the Ghana Empire

The Ghana Empire declined and eventually collapsed in the 11<sup>th</sup> century due to the following factors.

(a) Attacks by Almoravids

Ghana was frequently attacked by the Almoravids from North Africa from 1076 to 1077. These attacks aimed at reclaiming Awdaghust, which was a major source of salt and gold. These attacks weakened the empire and led to its decline.

(b) Dissatisfaction of traders

Gold traders in Ghana were complaining about the king's monopoly of gold trade and heavy taxes, making trading activities unprofitable; accordingly, many traders diverged their activities to other growing states such as Mali. This weakened the kingdom and contributed to its decline.

(c) Dissatisfaction of vassal states

Different vassal states refused to pay tributes while others declared themselves independent of the kingdom. This weakened the kingdom and contributed to the decline.

(d) Vastness of the empire

The Ghana Empire was too large; hence, it was difficult to control.

### The Mali Empire

The Mali Empire rose after the decline of the Ghana Empire. It began as a small Mandinka kingdom at the upper bend of River Niger. Between the 11<sup>th</sup> century and 12<sup>th</sup> century, Sundiata Keita and some of the rulers of Mali brought a number of Malinke chiefdoms under their control. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Sundiata led a Malinke army against the Sumanguru of Sosso whom he defeated in a battle at Kirina near modern Bamako. With the defeat of Sumanguru, Sundiata took control of all the Soninke people. Sundiata built up a large empire of Mali with its capital located at Niani. The title of kings of Mali was *Mansa*. The most famous ruler of the Empire was *Mansa Kankan Musa*.

### Factors for the rise of the Mali Empire

The following were the factors that led to the rise of the Mali Empire:

(a) Strong standing army

Mansa Musa kept a large standing army under a battalion of commanders.

The army was used to protect the empire from outside attacks. It was also

used to patrol trading routes and to ensure that district chiefs paid tribute to the king.

(b) The role of Islam

Mansa Musa used Islam as a state religion. He used Islam as a unifying factor and commanded respect among his people. Islamic laws (*Sharia*) were used to control the behaviour and attitudes of people. This brought discipline and unity among them.

(c) Development of agriculture

Mali had a rich agricultural land. The fertile land enabled people to produce a wide variety of grains and other crops. They also kept livestock such as cattle, goats, and sheep. Farming and cattle keeping ensured the people with enough food. This led to population increase.

(d) Control of gold mines and trade routes

The empire controlled gold mines at Bambuk, Bundu, and Wangara. It also controlled gold trade routes passing through its territory. Because of this trade, Niani, Jenne, Timbuktu, and Gao developed into major commercial centres in the empire. Gold trade linked the empire with Morocco, Tripoli, and Egypt. It also attracted traders from Europe and the Middle East. This development was a major stimulus for the rise of Mali.

(e) Strong leadership

Sundiata Keita and Mansa Musa were good leaders. They divided the empire into provinces and appointed leaders in charge of each province. They did not want to exercise total power. They left the administration of the region to loyal chiefs whom they appreciated. This leadership style promoted loyalty and mutual understanding between the king and his vassals.

### Factors for the decline of the Mali Empire

The Mali empire started to decline in the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Several factors led to the decline of the empire of Mali. These are described below:

(a) Internal struggles for succession

The empire faced many succession conflicts and struggles. These struggles created divisions and separations, which weakened the state.

(b) Attacks from trade competitors

The Mosi kingdom from the South and the Tuaregs from the North attacked the Mali Empire to get control of the Trans-Saharan Trade routes as well

as items of trade such as gold, slaves, and salt. These attacks weakened the empire and led to its collapse.

(c) The rise of the Songhay Empire

The empire of Songhay was created by Sunni Ali. His soldiers attacked and destroyed Jenne and plundered its wealth. This weakened the Mali Empire because Jenne was the backbone of its economy. The attack and plunder contributed to the decline of the Mali Empire.

### The Songhay Empire

The Songhay Empire was the largest empire in the western Sudanic states. Gao was the capital city of the empire. This city was also one of the great centres of trade during the Trans-Saharan Trade. The title of the king was *Sunni*. Under the leadership of *Sunni Ali*, Gao conquered neighbouring kingdoms. By the 15<sup>th</sup> century, it had become the centre of a vast empire called Songhay. Another prominent leader of the Songhay Empire, apart from *Sunni Ali*, was *Askia Mohamed*.

### Factors for the rise of the Songhay Empire

The following factors led to the rise of the Songhay Empire:

(a) Control of trade routes

Some of the important Trans-Saharan Trade routes passed through Gao. Gao used this opportunity to tax traders who passed by. The wealth collected from taxes enabled the empire to create and support a large permanent army.

(b) Strong leadership of *Sunni Ali* and *Askia Mohamed*

*Sunni Ali* and *Askia Mohamed* led to the successful expansion of the empire. By the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, the empire had expanded to cover the whole area between Kebbi in the East and Jenne in the West. In the North, the empire had reached Timbuktu while, in the South, it had reached Hombori.

(c) The role of Islam

Another important factor was the adoption of Islam as a state religion. Rulers used Islam to unify people and to justify wars of conquest (Jihads). In addition, they used Islam to justify the enslavement of non-believers.

(d) The strength of the army

*Sunni Ali* had a strong army that helped him to protect and expand the empire. His army was comprised of well-armed horse riding forces that were used to conquer and defend the kingdom.

(e) Development of agriculture and industry

Increased agricultural production assured the civilians and soldiers of sufficient food. Industries produced tools that led to an increase in the production of different goods and weapons. All these activities were vital to the growth of the empire.

**Factors for the decline of the Songhay Empire**

The Songhay Empire reached the pinnacle of its power in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. Thereafter, it started to decline. The following were the reasons that led to the decline of the Songhay Empire:

(a) Succession disputes after the death of Askia Mohamed

The death of Askia Mohamed created some misunderstandings in the ruling family. After his death, a period of weak and unskilful leadership followed. This led to frequent unrests which in turn undermined the stability of the Songhay Empire.

(b) Resistance to heavy tributes

Peasants and artisans resisted the heavy tributes demanded by the king. They disobeyed the king and refused to implement decisions made by him. This weakened the empire.

(c) Change of trade routes

During the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the direction of trade routes shifted towards the Atlantic coast where European merchants had established themselves. This shift resulted in the decline of the Trans-Saharan Trade, which was the backbone of the Songhay Empire.

(d) The Moroccan invasion in the 16<sup>th</sup> century

The Sultan of Morocco wanted to monopolize the West African gold trade. His army attacked and conquered the Songhay Empire. This invasion weakened the Songhay Empire and led to its collapse.

**Exercise 2**

1. List five factors for the rise of western Sudanic states.
2. Outline five factors for the fall of western Sudanic states.

### The Forest states of West Africa

In pre-colonial times, a number of states also developed in the forest zone of West Africa. The most important forest states were Asante, Oyo, Dahomey, Benin, and Ife, as shown in Figure 7.3. This section examines four states, namely Asante, Ife, Benin, and Oyo. Most of these states were found by the Yoruba people. State formation among the Yoruba began in the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

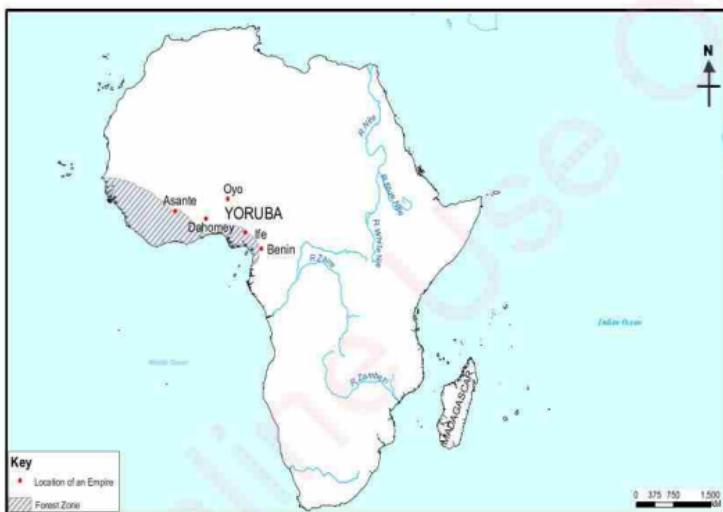


Figure 7.3 Location of the Forest states

### The Asante Kingdom

The Asante Kingdom was founded by the Oyoko people, one of the Akan clans, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Oyoko first founded five small chiefdoms which later on united into one powerful kingdom of Asante. Those chiefdoms were Kumasi, Nsuta, Kokofu, Bwakai, and Dwaben. By 1670, Kumasi was the greatest and most powerful. Obiri Yeboa was the first ruler of the Asante Kingdom. He made Kumasi the unifying centre of the Asante Kingdom. He also made Kumasi the capital of the kingdom. The title of the king of the Asante Kingdom was *Asantehene*.

## Factors for the rise of the Asante Kingdom

The following were the reasons for the rise of the Asante Kingdom:

(a) Soil fertility

The Asante Kingdom evolved from an area that was endowed with soil fertility. This fertility supported agriculture, which was the main economic activity in the kingdom. The development of agriculture ensured the availability of sufficient food for the people, rulers, and soldiers. The Asante people cultivated crops such as grains, palm, and millet.

(b) Military strength

The kingdom developed a strong military force which was formed by a well disciplined army equipped with modern weapons such as guns. These were obtained from the Trans-Saharan Trade and the Atlantic Slave Trade. The army fought wars of conquest and expanded the size of the kingdom. It also ensured peace and security in the kingdom.

(c) Participation in the long-distance trade

The kingdom actively participated in the West African long-distance trade and established trading centres along the Atlantic coast. Trade was mainly based on the export of slaves and gold from the forest region. The kingdom imported beads, clothes, and firearms. As mentioned above, such firearms were used for security and warfare. In some cases, warfare generated slaves who were important commodities of trade. The wealth collected from this trade was therefore used to strengthen the kingdom.

(d) Strong leadership

The rise and growth of the Asante Kingdom benefited from the strong leadership of *Asantehene* Obiri Yeboa, Osei Tutu and Opokwu Ware. Yeboa unified the rulers of Nsuta, Kokofu, Bwekai, and Dwaben states into a single Oyoko clan. This ensured unity among the people of the kingdom. Obiri Yeboa used this unity to conquer the surrounding states. Those states recognized Yeboa as the *Asantehene* of Asante. He died in the late 1670s, but he laid down the foundation of the Asante Kingdom. Osei Tutu replaced Obiri Yeboa. He became a key factor for the growth of the kingdom. Osei Tutu was a charismatic, strong and courageous leader. He expanded and built a highly centralised kingdom. He used the Golden Stool as a symbol of unity, which was respected by all Asante people. He introduced a royal lineage family that Asante rulers were to come from descendants of Obiri Yeboa and Osei Tutu. He also established Kumasi as the capital of the

empire. He introduced a traditional annual religious festival known as *Odwira*. Also he demanded payment of tribute from every adult member of the empire. Therefore, all these measures helped to strengthen political unity and economy of the empire.

(e) Military conquest of neighbouring states

Osei Tutu and his successors successfully conquered neighbouring states. Osei Tutu created a federation that conquered Denkyira and other Akan states. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century, he controlled most goldfields of the Forest zone. His successors, Opukwu Ware, and others expanded the boundaries of Asante, covering areas from the coast to the Savannah in the North.

(f) The influence of traditions

With the onset of Osei Tutu's administration, Okomfo Anokye, a traditional priest, made Osei Tutu the occupant of the Golden Stool. This action strengthened the Asante Kingdom in different ways. Osei Tutu now became a religious and political leader. He became a link between the people and the gods. The Golden Stool replaced all previous symbols of authority. It became the symbol of unity and soul of the people of Asante.

### Factors for the fall of the Asante Kingdom

By the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Asante Kingdom had begun to decline. This was due to a number of factors.

(a) British imperial activities

The British frequently attacked the kingdom between 1871 and 1901. This undermined peace and security of the kingdom as well as trading activities in the region. The imperial activities affected the prosperity of the Asante Kingdom. Consequently, the kingdom declined.

(b) The abolition of the slave trade

From around the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the British led a campaign to abolish the slave trade. This campaign eventually led to the end of the slave trade in West Africa which ruined most of the forest states, including the Asante Kingdom. This is because the power of these states depended on the slave trade. With the abolition of the slave trade, the Asante Kingdom lost important sources of revenues hence it declined.

(c) Increased size of the kingdom

In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the size of the Asante Kingdom grew bigger. This growth partly caused the decline of the Asante. The conquered territories of Gonja, Kong, Bonchiku, Baule, and Anyi gradually rebelled against the central government in Kumasi and developed into self-governing states.

## The Ife Empire

This was a Yoruba state which was formed around the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Its founder was Oduduwa, whose origin is explained by two myths. The first myth is that of creation. According to this myth, Oduduwa was brought on the earth from heaven by his father, Olorun, who was regarded as the supreme God of the Yoruba. The second myth claims that Oduduwa came to Ife from east of the region.

### The rise of the Ife Empire

The Ife Empire rose because of the following factors:

(a) Good climatic condition

The Ife Empire was located in an area with good climatic conditions. These enabled its people to produce surplus food. Accordingly, it was possible for the empire to support rulers and officials who were not directly engaged in productive activities.

(b) Collection of revenues

Ife rulers managed to collect taxes from traders and tributes from peasants. The people of Ife had trade links with Sahel people, who were famous for copper and salt mining. The empire collected tax from copper and salt traders from the Sahel. In addition, it collected tributes from its peasants who exchanged their food and kola nuts with copper and salt from the Sahel region.

(c) Good leadership

Good leadership of Oduduwa was another important factor for the rise and growth of this state. He managed to unite his people and formed a strong and well-organized state. In addition, Oduduwa was highly respected by his subjects partly because he was regarded as the son of Olorun.

### The fall of the Ife Empire

Ife Empire declined following the growing influence of the Oyo Empire in the Yorubaland. The Oyo Empire invaded Ibadan, an important town in the Yorubaland, which was by then controlled by Ife. After the invasion, Ife lost control of Ibadan and became weak. Later, Oyo invaded Ife and settled on its territory. This marked the total collapse of Ife.

## The Benin Empire

Benin was found in the southern part of Ife near the Niger Delta. It was located deep into the forest. The area occupied by the empire is modern southwestern Nigeria. Therefore, the present-day country of Benin has no connection with the

ancient Benin Empire. The state was developed by Edo-speaking people in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The kings (*oba*) of Benin claimed to have descended from Oduduwa, the founding ancestor of the Yoruba. The first *Oba* of Benin was Oranmiyan, the son of Oduduwa, who is said to have been brought to Benin by the early inhabitants in order to solve conflicts among the chiefs. By the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Benin had grown into a huge centralised state enclosed with a wall. When Europeans came to Benin, they described it as *the Great City of Benin* for its size and elaborate buildings.

### Factors for the rise of the Benin Empire

(a) Strong leadership

The empire had some strong leaders such as Ewuare, also known as Ewuare the Great. He was the one who turned the city-state of Benin into an empire. Under his leadership, the empire was well organized and strengthened. *Oba* Ewuare appointed his royal district chiefs who ensured the stability of the empire. He established a good *oba* succession system, whereby his oldest son was recognized officially as the heir of the empire.

(b) Strong army

The leaders of Benin built up a powerful army in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century. The army defended the state against external threats. It ensured peace, security, and stability within the state. It also facilitated the expansion of territory by conquering weaker states.

(c) Involvement in trade

The *oba* of Benin and some of the people in the empire participated in trade with the Portuguese. They took trade items such as ivory, gums, pepper and cotton cloth from Benin to the coast. They sold those goods to Portuguese traders. In addition, Benin artists made saltcellars, ivory carvings, and bangles, which were sold to the Europeans.

### The decline of the Benin Empire

The empire declined in the 18<sup>th</sup> century due to a number of factors. Some of them are described below:

(a) Civil wars and dynastic disputes

The Benin Empire was later faced with civil wars and dynastic disputes. These disputes were sometimes caused by conflicts over succession. The disputes eventually resulted in wars, which weakened the state. Internal disputes were, therefore, one of the important factors for the decline of the Benin Empire.

(b) The slave trade

The *obas* sold their people and war captives to the Portuguese as slaves. Despite the fact that the slave trade was one of the sources of Benin's wealth, it had negative effects on the production capacity of the empire. This was because the slave trade removed productive people from their respective areas. This caused a shortage of labour. In the end, this led to the decline of the state.

(c) British invasion

British troops invaded Benin in 1897 and looted brass, bronze, and copper sculptures, which were symbols of power in the empire. The invasion also resulted in the signing of several treaties with the people of the Niger Delta. These treaties declared the whole region of the Niger Delta as the British protectorate. With this declaration, Benin lost its independence and autonomy. This marked its decline.

### The Oyo Empire

The Oyo Empire was established in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Like other Forest states, it originated from the Ife Empire. The founders of the Oyo Empire are believed to have been descendants of Oduduwa, the founder of the Yoruba states. Unlike other Forest states in the Yorubaland, which were situated to the south, Oyo was located north of the tropical forests in the Savannah. It occupied the southwestern corner of the present day Nigeria. The title of the ruler of the Oyo state was *Alaafin*.

### Factors for the rise of the Oyo Empire

The following were the factors for the rise of the Oyo Empire.

(a) Invasion by the Bariba and Nupe

The Oyo Empire rose because of the invasion of the Ife Empire by the Bariba and Nupe. This invasion caused the people to move from the Ife Empire into Oyo Ile (Old Oyo). In Oyo Ife, they established outlying towns that formed the new Oyo Empire.

(b) Military strength

The rulers of Oyo built a centralised state using a standing army. In addition, the empire was located in a tsetse fly-free zone; this made the use of horses possible. During this period, horses were important for the efficiency of the army, since soldiers used them during warfare.

(c) Involvement in trade

The empire participated in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and in other trade

interactions with its neighbours. It gained access to the trade after invading the coastal kingdom of Allada. The empire was one of the sole protectors of the trade between the coast and Hausa land, which benefited the empire largely. Through this trade, the Oyo rulers managed to collect a lot of tributes and taxes from villages and towns as well as from transit traders. These revenues benefited rulers and the state in general.

(d) Strong and organized leadership

The empire had strong leaders like *Alaafin Oronipoto* and *Abiodun*. They managed to organize the state well and stabilize its economy. These leaders were chosen by the council of seven chiefs (*Oyo Mesi*) from the lineage that traced its origin to *Oduduwas* or *Oduduwas*' son, *Oronyan*. *Oyo Mesi* was headed by the *Basorun*. The system of checks and balance also ensured the presence of good leaders. *Oyo Mesi* also had the ability to force the *Alaafin* to renounce the throne and commit suicide when he did not perform well.

### The fall of the Oyo Empire

The Oyo Empire collapsed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The following were some of the reasons for its decline.

(a) Leadership problems

The decline of the Oyo Empire started when some of its leaders failed to rule the state effectively. Some of them lacked wisdom and went contrary to established norms of leading the empire. One of such leaders was *Aole* (also known as *Awole*) who took the throne in 1789. *Aole* ordered the attack of *Apomu*, one of the towns of *Ife*, against the oath he had taken. Since *Ife* was regarded as the ancestral home of the people of *Oyo*, the action caused embarrassment and chaos to the empire. Following this incidence, the king was forced to commit suicide. Leaders who followed *Aole* brought more problems, which caused some of the chiefdoms to break away from the empire. *Egba* was one of the broke away chiefdoms that got its independence in 1797.

(b) The fall of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

The abolition of the slave trade along the coast of West Africa in 1807 ruined the economic foundation of the empire. This was the case because *Oyo* greatly depended on selling slaves as the source of revenues for its own development. With the abolition of the slave trade, the *Oyo Empire* lost this important source of revenues; it thus declined.

(c) The weakening of the Oyo army

Internal conflicts weakened the Oyo army and undermined its ability to handle subsequent military challenges. For example, when Oyo was invaded by Benin in 1783 and Nupe in 1791, the army was too weak to resist; accordingly, the empire declined.

(d) The disintegration of the central authority

Due to internal conflicts, some of the chiefdoms stopped paying tributes. This deprived the central government of revenues. For example, Dahomey, under king Ghezo, refused to pay tribute in 1817. One year later, this chiefdom seized its independence.

(e) Conflicts between the council of chiefs (*Oyo Mesi*) and kings

It has been observed that the council of chiefs played an important role in the rise and growth of the Oyo Empire by electing the king and oversetting his leadership. However, by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, conflicts of interests developed between the council and kings. For example, there was a conflict between Gaha, who was the leader (*Basorun*) of the council of chiefs, and the *Alafins* between 1754 and 1770. As a result, the leader of chiefs (*Basorum*) was involved in the murder of four kings during his reign in the council. These conflicts affected the stability of the state and led to its fall.

### Exercise 3

1. What was the title given to the kings of the following empires?

- (a) The Benin Empire
- (b) The Oyo Empire
- (c) The Asante Empire

2. Briefly explain four factors for the rise of Forest states.

3. State four factors for the fall of Forest states.

## Central African kingdoms

Pre-colonial Central African kingdoms included the Kongo, Mwenemutapa, Luba, Lunda, Malavi, and Lozi. This section presents four of these kingdoms, namely Kongo, Mwenemutapa, Luba, and Lunda. Some of these kingdoms are shown in Figure 7.4.

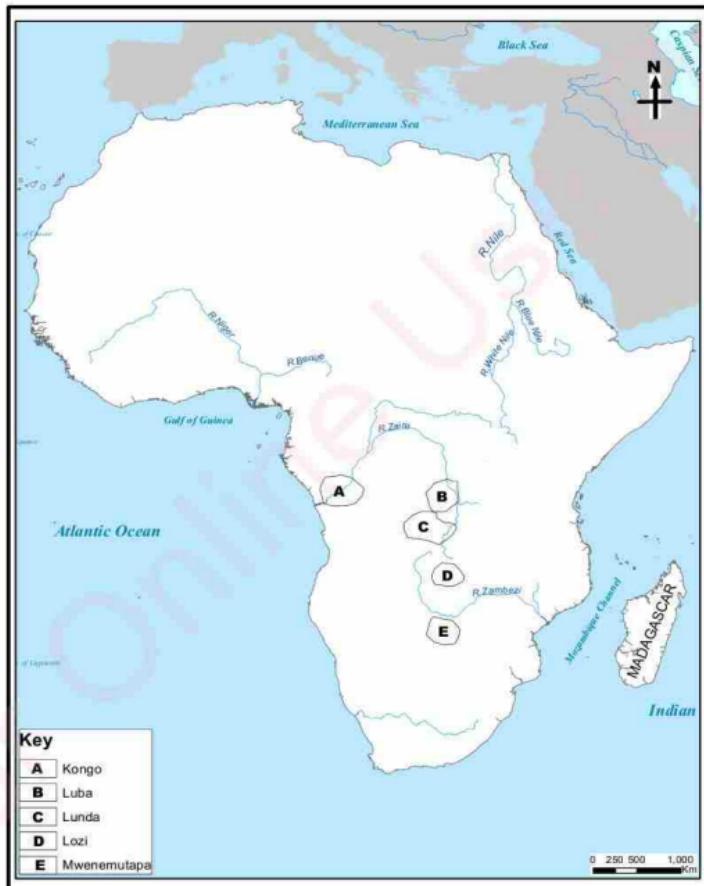


Figure 7.4 Some of the centralised states in pre-colonial Central Africa

## The Kongo Kingdom

The Kongo Kingdom was one of the most important kingdoms in Central Africa. It started towards the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. By 1482, when the Portuguese arrived, the kingdom was highly centralised. The title of the king was known as *Mani Kongo*. The capital of the kingdom was called *Mbanza*. The Portuguese later called the capital *San Salvador*. The first *Mani Kongo* of the kingdom was Nzinga Nkuwu.

### Factors for the rise of the Kongo Kingdom

The following are the factors for the rise of Kongo Kingdom:

(a) Development of arts and crafts

The Bakongo were highly developed in arts and crafts. They were skilled metal workers, potters, and weavers. Fine clothes woven from the fibre of raffia palm were widely traded along the Atlantic coast. They were exchanged for salt and seashells, which were used as local currency.

(b) Frequent movement of people

People frequently moved in and out of the Kongo Kingdom. This led to the emergence of new villages with different clans. Those clans needed a political organisation to unite them. The Kongo state provided strong centralised leadership of those clans.

(c) Religious beliefs

The power and authority of the king partly depended on religious beliefs. The *Mani Kongo* was considered by his people a semi-god. He used spiritual powers to unite the people in his kingdom. These powers made all provinces to pay tributes to the king. The tributes helped him to strengthen the central government.

(d) Monopoly of trade

The king of Kongo monopolized trade in the kingdom, including the slave trade. He introduced taxes to traders passing through the kingdom. He also introduced tributaries to the vassal states. The taxes and tributes were used to strengthen and consolidate his kingdom.

(e) Favourable climatic conditions

The Kongo Kingdom was located in a heavy forest region. The area had sufficient rainfall and fertile soil that supported the development of agriculture. Agriculture, in turn, provided sufficient food to feed the growing population in the kingdom.

(f) Population increase

As people increased in number, it became necessary for them to organise themselves under a strong political authority. This is because there was a need to ensure law and order in society and security against external threat.

### Factors for the decline of the Kongo Kingdom

The Kongo Kingdom declined in the 17<sup>th</sup> century due to the following reasons:

(a) Introduction of Christianity

Christianity was introduced by Portuguese Catholic priests. The priests taught Bakongo Christians that Jesus Christ is the only king of the Earth. This meant that *Mani Kongo* Nzinga Nkuwu was not the king. This teaching encouraged the Bakongo christians to stop being loyal to Nzinga Nkuwu. This brought divisions and conflicts between christians and traditionalists. Consequently, Nzinga Nkuwu and his son Mpantzua Kitima abandoned christianity. However, his mother and son Nzinga Mbemba remained christians. This division weakened the kingdom.

(b) Resistance from provincial governors

Divisions in the royal family convinced the provincial governors to declare independence. They refused to pay tribute to the central authority at Mbanza (San Salvador). This forced *Mani Kongo* to find other means of getting revenues for the government. He established trading relations with the Portuguese in which he was further weakened.

(c) Introduction of the slave trade by the Portuguese

The Portuguese initiated and promoted local wars in order to increase the supply of slaves. However, Nzinga Nkuwu did not want the slave trade to take place in his kingdom. Differences in attitude towards the slave trade brought the king into conflicts with the Portuguese slave traders. These conflicts undermined *Mani Kongo*'s power and led to the fall of the kingdom by the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

### The Mwenemutapa Kingdom

The Mwenemutapa Kingdom was founded around the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It was located in the north of Mashonaland in present-day Zimbabwe. The name *Zimbabwe* comes from the Shona language; it means stone buildings known as Great Zimbabwe. The buildings were built by the Mashona people, but they are now ruined. The founder of the Mwenemutapa kingdom was Nyatsimba Mutota, who belonged to the Karanga clan of the Mashona ethnic group. The capital of Mwenemutapa was called great Zimbabwe. Under the leadership of Nyatsimba

Mutota, the Mwenemutapa Kingdom fought wars and conquered the Tonga and Tawara of the Zambezi Valley. Mutota's victories enabled him to acquire the title *Mwenemutapa*, which meant master of the conquered land. Mutota died in 1450 and his throne was inherited by his son Matope, who also died in 1480. After Matope's death, there were succession disputes until 1490 when Changamire took over.

### Factors for the rise of the Mwenemutapa Kingdom

The kingdom of Mwenemutapa rose and grew powerful due to the following reasons:

(a) Trading activities

The Mwenemutapa Kingdom was famous in gold, copper, and ivory. These items attracted many Swahili, Portuguese and Arab traders to visit the kingdom for trading purposes. Mwenemutapa levied duties on all imported goods into the kingdom. The wealth obtained through these levies was used to consolidate the kingdom.

(b) The rise of ambitious leaders

Mwenemutapa rose and grew because of ambitious leaders who were eager to expand the empire. Among these were *Nyatsimba Mutota* and his son Matope, and Changamire. They wanted land on which their people could settle, graze livestock and grow crops. He raided from Great Zimbabwe to Dande, then from the Zambezi to Limpopo, and from the Kalahari Desert to the Indian Ocean.

(c) Role of indigenous religion

The Mashona worshipped a supreme god called *Mwari*. Their powerful god could only be approached through priests called *Svikiro*. This powerful religious system made people obey their kings. The *Mwari* cult was an important spiritual institution that helped the rise and growth of the Mwenemutapa Kingdom.

(d) Strong and well-equipped army

The creation of a strong and well-equipped army helped Mwenemutapa to maintain control over his people. The strength of the army enabled the king to gain the allegiance of village headmen. This ensured that local village headmen paid regular tribute to the king.

### Factors for the fall of the Mwenemutapa Kingdom

The Mwenemutapa Kingdom began to decline towards the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The reasons for its decline included the following:

(a) Resistance against payment of tributes

Some of the clans such as Uteve, Barwe, and Manyika started refusing to pay tribute to the king. This weakened the kingdom since it lost one of the most important sources of revenue.

(b) The arrival of Portuguese

The participation of the Portuguese merchants in gold trade from Mwenemutapa in the Indian Ocean trade partly caused the decline of the kingdom. Between 1502 and 1507 CE, the Portuguese attacked and seized Kilwa and Sofala, which were trading centres for gold from Mwenemutapa. The conquest of these centres caused a decline in the volume of gold from the Mwenemutapa Kingdom. Consequently, this led to the fall of the economy of Mwenemutapa. Hence, Mwenemutapa began to lose its strength and eventually declined. Having conquered Kilwa and Sofala, the Portuguese attacked the Mwenemutapa Kingdom in order to be in control of the gold mines. This invasion enabled the Portuguese to overthrow the king of Mwenemutapa and put their appointee on the throne. As a result, the Mwenemutapa Kingdom declined in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

### The Luba Kingdom

The Luba Kingdom was among the important centralised states in Central Africa. It was located on the upper Lualaba River valley around Lake Kisale in the southeast of the present-day Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). By 1300 CE, people in the Lake Kisale region had organized themselves in many farming and trading chiefdoms. These chiefdoms united into a single centralised kingdom between 1300 CE and 1400 CE under a dynasty called Nkongolo. Later, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Nkongolo dynasty was overthrown by Ilunga Kalala, a heroic hunter who was believed to possess magical powers. Ilunga Kalala introduced the Ilunga dynasty, which centralised the government's power and expanded the kingdom to the west of Lake Kisale.

### Factors for the rise of the Luba Kingdom

Several factors contributed to the emergence and expansion of the Luba Kingdom.

(a) Geographical location of the kingdom

The kingdom was located in a favourable environment. The area favoured agricultural production because of its fertile soil and sufficient rainfall. This environment supported the production of cereal crops. Moreover, woodlands had many animals, including elephants, which were hunted for ivory. All these activities encouraged the development of the state.

(b) Development of iron and copper technology

Another important reason for the rise and expansion of the Luba Kingdom was the development of technology in iron and copper. Iron and copper were not mined in the Luba region, but they were imported from the north. Yet, peasants around Lake Kisale developed knowledge and skills in metalworking. They processed iron to make tools such as hoes and axes for agricultural production. They also made iron weapons, which were used to strengthen the army. Copper was imported from the present-day Zambia and Congo border (the Copper belt). The people around Lake Kisale used copper to forge items such as fine wire for rings, bracelets, and necklaces. They also cast copper into cross-like ingots. All these items were exchanged for other goods from neighbouring societies. Consequently, wealth increased in the area leading to state formation and expansion.

(c) Fishing

Fishing was another factor for the emergence of the Luba Kingdom. The land was endowed with lakes and rivers that were rich in fish. The people of Luba developed important tools used in fishing. Such tools included fishing nets, harpoons, and dugout canoes. They also developed different methods of drying fish. A substantial amount of fish was sold to other societies in the region and beyond. The wealth obtained from this trade was used to develop and expand the kingdom.

(d) Good leadership

Good leadership also facilitated the emergence and expansion of the Luba Kingdom. The Luba Kings developed a well-organized structure of leadership. They appointed provincial governors who were often from the royal family. These governors were responsible for collecting tributes from the chiefs under them. Moreover, the central court was dominated by the royal family. Although the kingdom had a small standing army, it was backed by the powerful mystical and religious authority of the kings.

### Factors for the decline of the Luba Kingdom

After flourishing for some time, the Luba Kingdom eventually declined in the 1450s. The disintegration was mainly due to two factors:

(a) The slave trade

The introduction of the slave trade by Arabs and Swahili people from the East African coast contributed to the decline of the Luba Kingdom. Many

people in the kingdom were enslaved and taken to the coast as slaves. This trade disrupted the Luba society leading to the weakening of the kingdom.

(b) Succession conflicts

Succession conflicts among members of the ruling clan also led to the decline of the kingdom. The struggle for power significantly weakened the kingdom. Moreover, these conflicts forced some of the rivals to migrate to the West where they found their own kingdom, the Lunda.

### The Lunda Empire

The Lunda Empire was established by immigrants from the Luba Kingdom in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The Lunda people had no centralised authority apart from having a senior chief. Moreover, they had a smaller population that lived in small villages. They practised farming, fishing, hunting, and trading as their main activities. Equally, their technology, arts and crafts were less developed than those of their neighbours, the Luba Kingdom. Its foundations, as a state, were laid down from 1600 CE. Its growth and power as an empire were most evident in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries when it became one of the largest centralised states in pre-colonial Africa. It occupied the areas now referred to as the Democratic Republic of Congo, north-eastern Angola, and north-western Zambia.

### Factors for the rise of the Lunda Empire

Three main factors led to the initial emergence and later expansion of the Lunda Empire. These are explained below:

(a) Role of immigrants

The most important factor was the contribution of immigrants who were part of the Luba ruling clan and their followers. One of these immigrants, known as Chibunda Ilunga, assumed and legitimized leadership power in the Lunda society by marrying a woman from among the members of the family of the Lunda senior chief. This woman was the Lunda queen called Rweej or Lueji. The children from this marriage and their future generations formed a new Lunda dynasty. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the dynasty took the title of *Mwaant Yaav* or *Mwata Yamvo*, which meant the Lord of Vipers.

The Lunda dynasty united the previously loose and scattered Lunda chiefdoms into a single, centralised, and expanding empire. In general, the Luba immigrants brought highly developed metalworking technology. They

also introduced among the Lunda an idea of centralised religious kingship. This idea laid a firm base for later expansion of the Lunda Empire. However, Lunda religious practices and chiefs were respected and maintained. The chiefs were regarded as guardians of local spirits and owners of the land. However, they were required to pay tribute to the king of the new empire. The king also appointed the *cilool* or *kilolo* in each chiefdom as a royal adviser and a tax-collecting agent. Moreover, the *cilool* was appointed to hold the loyalty of the confederation of the Lunda chieftaincies.

(b) Participation in the long-distance trade

Another factor for the emergence and expansion of the Lunda Empire was participation in the long-distance trade. The Lunda people played a key role in the East and Central African long-distance trade. They mainly supplied ivory and slaves by exchanging them with weapons and textiles from the East African coast by the Arab and Swahili traders. Both weapons and wealth obtained from the trade ensured the rise and expansion of the empire.

(c) Raiding of neighbouring ethnic groups

Raiding of neighbouring ethnic groups also stimulated the rise and expansion of the empire. The Lunda dynasty conquered many neighbouring societies and villages. The dynasty integrated these societies into their empire. Some of the captives were made slaves and used in agricultural production. Others were sold to the Arab and Swahili slave traders.

### The decline of the Lunda Empire

By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Lunda Empire had collapsed completely. There were two main reasons for the collapse of the empire.

(a) Chokwe invasion

First, the empire was invaded by the Chokwe, who were armed with guns. After the attack, the Chokwe established their own kingdom in the once Lunda Empire. Moreover, they introduced their own language and customs. However, the Lunda chiefs and people continued to live in the Lunda heartland, although their previous power was highly eroded.

(b) Partition of Africa

The European partition of Africa, which started in the 1880s, ended the remnants of the Lunda Empire. The area was divided among the Portuguese of Angola, King Leopold II who controlled the Congo Free State, and the

British in the north-western Northern Rhodesia (Zambia). This partition marked the complete disappearance of the Lunda Empire.

### Exercise 4

1. Mention the capitals of each of the following pre-colonial Central African kingdoms:
  - (a) The Mwenemutapa Kingdom
  - (b) The Kongo Kingdom
2. What are the factors for the fall of the following kingdoms?
  - (a) The Luba Kingdom
  - (b) The Lunda Empire

### South African kingdoms

The kingdoms that were established in southern Africa before colonialism included Zulu and Sotho-Tswana. This section presents the Zulu Kingdom as a case study.

### The Zulu Kingdom

The Zulu Kingdom extended from the coast of the Indian Ocean from Tugela River in the south to the Pongola River in the North of today South Africa. The kingdom rose in the 19<sup>th</sup> century under the leadership of Dingiswayo. It lasted from 1800 to 1817. Later on, the kingdom developed into the most powerful state under the leadership of Shaka (Chaka) who was a military leader.

### Factors for the rise of the Zulu Kingdom

The following were the factors that led to the rise of the Zulu Kingdom:

- (a) The centralisation of power under Shaka Zulu  
Shaka took control of areas that enjoyed some freedom and placed them under his direct authority. This had positive results since his skills in organising people strengthened the kingdom.
- (b) The influence of annual cultural festivals (*Incwala*)  
The king introduced annual cultural festivals. These were attended by people from all over the kingdom. They helped to build a sense of belonging, unity, and loyalty to the king.

(c) Control of trade

The king controlled trade and all the ivory collected from the kingdom. To the North, he kept open the trade route to Delagoa Bay where ivory was exchanged with beads and clothes. Trade in ivory and in hides enabled the king to buy guns from the Portuguese. These weapons helped to strengthen the army.

(d) Standing army

Shaka established a permanent and strong army. This meant that soldiers stayed permanently in the military camps. They were well trained, disciplined, well-equipped and ready for any emergency. They were equipped with military techniques such as the use of cow horn formation, short stabbing spears known as *assegai*, spying as well as using smoke signals and shields in battles. They were not allowed to marry during the years of military service. In addition, the soldiers depended on the state for all their upkeep. Shaka also used his standing army to expand his kingdom via wars. He fought many wars to achieve the purpose. Shaka brought all the defeated clans into the Zulu kingdom. In this way, the Zulu kingdom became both bigger and more powerful.

(e) Development of agriculture

Crop production and livestock keeping were the major economic activities in the kingdom. These activities ensured regular and sufficient supply of food, which ensured a population increase. The population needed a well-organised political system to create order and security in the kingdom.

### Factors for the decline of the Zulu Kingdom

The Zulu kingdom started to decline in the 1830s. This decline resulted from the following factors:

(a) The invasion by Boers in the 1830s

The invasion of Zululand by the Boers contributed to the decline of the Zulu kingdom. The Boers moved from the Cape north-eastwards searching for grazing land. Later, they reached Zululand and pushed the Zulu people outside their homeland. These invasions weakened the economic base of the Zulu kingdom since most of their fertile land was taken by the Boers.

(b) Weak leadership of Shaka's successor

Shaka was succeeded by Dingane Kasenzangakhona. However, king Dingane lacked strong leadership qualities and military abilities as commander in chief. This weakness in leadership failed to maintain unity among the Zulu

people and led to the eventual decline of the kingdom.

(c) The British colonisation of South Africa

The British colonisation of Zululand ended the power of African chiefs and established colonial rule. The colonial government controlled the social, economic and political activities of Africans and undermined the autonomy of the kingdom.

### Revision questions

1. Define the following terms:
  - (a) State
  - (b) State organisation
  - (c) Centralised state
  - (d) Non-centralised state
2. Why did centralised states rise in Africa between 1200 CE and 1850 CE?
3. List the characteristics of centralised states.
4. Explain the factors for the rise of the Buganda Kingdom.
5. Write the names of the founders of the following kingdoms:
  - (a) Bunyoro
  - (b) Kongo
  - (c) Asante
  - (d) Zulu
6. Mention the factors that led to the rise of the Ghana Empire.
7. a) Draw a sketch map of West Africa showing the location of the three Sudanic states of Ghana, Mali, and Songhay.  
b) When did Ghana, Mali, and Songhay rise?  
c) Who were the founding leaders of Ghana, Mali, and Songhay?
8. Briefly explain the factors that led to the decline of the Mwenemutapa Kingdom.
9. How did geographical factors lead to the rise and fall of states in Africa?
10. Briefly state the factors for the rise and fall of the Zulu Kingdom.

## Glossary

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <b>Abolition</b>         | Official ending of a law, system or practice   |
| <b>Acheulian</b>         | A type of tools produced from large flakes of stone during the Early Stone Age   |
| <b>Age-set</b>           | A group of people initiated at the same time, mainly in some of the pastoral societies   |
| <b>Agriculture</b>       | The science or practice of crop growing and livestock rearing  |
| <b>Archaeology</b>       | The study of past cultures by examining their remnants found on or under the ground  |
| <b>Archives</b>          | A place or building where historical records are stored for future reference or the records kept in such a place                 |
| <b>Arson</b>             | A crime of intentionally starting a fire in order to damage or destroy something especially buildings                            |
| <b>BCE</b>               | Before Common Era (previously known as BC, meaning Before Christ)  |
| <b>CE</b>                | Common Era (previously known as AD, meaning <i>Anno Domini</i> , that is, after the birth of Christ)                             |
| <b>CC</b>                | Cubic Centimetre   |
| <b>Centralised state</b> | A system of governance or political organisation in which political power is centrally exercised by the chief, king or president |
| <b>Century</b>           | A period of one hundred years  |
| <b>Chief</b>             | The leader of an ethnic group consisting of several clans  |
| <b>Clan</b>              | Several families that have a common ancestor   |
| <b>Commodity</b>         | A product that is bought and sold  |
| <b>Community</b>         | A group of people who relate to one another closely in the day-to-day living   |
| <b>Conflict</b>          | A disagreement that sometimes leads to fighting  |
| <b>Cranial capacity</b>  | The size of brain  |
| <b>Creation</b>          | Making of something new  |
| <b>Cultivation</b>       | Use of land to grow plants or crops  |
| <b>Culture</b>           | A way of life in a given society   |
| <b>Customs</b>           | Traditional ideas and practices in a particular society  |
| <b>Discover</b>          | To find something new either by accident or after searching for it   |

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| <b>Empire</b>                | A group of countries or organisations that are all controlled by one person or government  |
| <b>Evolution</b>             | A gradual change of plants and animals from simple to more complex forms   |
| <b>Excavate</b>              | To dig in the ground, especially in order to find ancient objects  |
| <b>Fossil</b>                | Remains of an ancient plant or animal embedded in rock   |
| <b>Handicraft</b>            | Activities such as basketry, pottery, woodcarving, and leatherwork, which need special artistic knowledge and skills using hands |
| <b>Handloom</b>              | Weaving device operated by hand  |
| <b>Matrilineal society</b>   | A society in which children belong to the mother's clan  |
| <b>Mummification</b>         | Practice of preservation of dead bodies  |
| <b>Museum</b>                | A building in which objects of artistic, cultural, historical or scientific interest are kept and shown to the public            |
| <b>Non-centralised state</b> | A society ruled by a social authority such a council of elders   |
| <b>Patrilineal society</b>   | A society in which children belong to the father's clan  |
| <b>Patriotism</b>            | The love of one's country or nation, and willingness to defend it  |
| <b>Pottery</b>               | The art of using clay to produce pots and other types of earthenware   |
| <b>Rule</b>                  | Control of a group of people by a person, group or system  |
| <b>Shifting</b>              | Moving from one place or position to another   |
| <b>Species</b>               | A group of animals or plants of the same kind  |
| <b>Supreme being</b>         | The supernatural being which is believed to be the source of life  |
| <b>Surplus</b>               | Availability of something in excess  |
| <b>Technology</b>            | The ability to use scientific knowledge to produce tools and services  |
| <b>Tolerance</b>             | Willingness to accept opinions or behaviour that one does not agree with   |
| <b>Treason</b>               | A crime of betraying one's country, especially by attempting to kill or overthrow the sovereign government                       |
| <b>Wealth</b>                | A large amount of money or property that a rich person has   |
| <b>Worship</b>               | To express respect and love for God or a god   |

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