

**FORM II TERM II 2023**  
**HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT LESSON NOTES**

**UNIT 6: ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN SOCIETIES.**

Despite the high amount of decentralization of African communities in the 19th c , there existed a few who were centralized. For example

- i. Buganda,
- ii. Ethiopia,
- iii. Buganda,
- iv. Asante,
- v. Mandinka,
- vi. Ndebele and
- vii. Shona among others.

**THE BAGANDA.**

These were a Bantu speaking people of the Buganda kingdom in Uganda. The Buganda Chiefdom had emerged as early as 140 AD as a subject state of Bunyoro- Kitara Kingdom

**Origin of Buganda kingdom.**

The kingdom was crystallized around the counties of Busiro, Kyadondo and Mawakota.

Traditions also state that the first king and creator of Buganda kingdom was Kintu who came from the east around Mount Elgon region. It is believed he entered Buganda with 13 clans.

Other theories attribute Buganda's origin to the Luo. That Kimera Kato, a brother of Isingoma Rukidi Mpunga the founder of the luo-babito dynasty in Bunyoro was the founder of Buganda.

It is also probable that Buganda might have been one of the many kingdoms founded by the bachwezi- the demi-gods.

Other clans of Buganda are believed to have come from the ssese islands.

***Factors that led to the growth of a strong Buganda Kingdom.***

- i. Good strong and able leaders like Kkyabagu, junju and Suna etc. who propelled it to prosperity by uniting the people and restructuring the existing administration system.
- ii. Buganda Was small and a compact kingdom and therefore easy to manage. Other kingdoms like Bunyoro-Kitara were too large with a class system.
- iii. Its strategic location in a defensible position in the lake region was of great advantage over her rivals Toro and Bunyoro. She lay next to Lake Victoria giving her defence, communication and transport advantage. On the east were small states of Toro and Ankole who posed no threat.
- iv. Good climate and fertile soils in the region. This enabled successful growing of Bananas, their staple crop.
- v. The contacts with the Waswahili enabled her to gain riches and weapons/guns.
- vi. The kingdom had a strong loyal army to defend it from her warring neighbors. The Kabaka even possessed a royal navy that kept guard over Lake Victoria.
- vii. Existence of a centralized government making the kingdom cohesive.
- viii. The ganda traditions allowing the kabaka to marry from every clan as means of ensuring unity.
- ix. System of labour organization. The tradition demanded that farming be done by women while the men were involved in other activities such as politics, carpentry, war, bark cloth making and smithing

- x. The wars of conquest which finally led to her expansion.

### ***How Buganda kingdom was governed.***

- Buganda kingdom had a highly centralized monarchy under the kabaka who enjoyed absolute powers. His position was hereditary.
- The Kabaka's Court was the nerve centre of the Baganda community. All symbols of Royal authority were kept in the court. E.g. the throne (Namulondo), royal Drums, spears and stools.
- The kabaka was the political leader of the Baganda kingdom.

### **Functions of Kabaka**

- i. He was the Head of the traditional religion –*lubale*/ he was the chief priest.
  - ii. He was the judicial head and the final court of appeal/he was the supreme judge.
  - iii. He was the commander-in- -chief of the armed forces
  - iv. He appointed senior government officials and dismissed them when need arose.
  - v. He controlled trade.
- The capital of the kingdom was at Mengo, where the palace, *Lubiri*, was situated.
  - The kabaka appointed senior government officials and dismissed them when need arose. For example, he appointed the
    - i. *Katikiro*, i.e. prime minister,
    - ii. *Omulamuzi* and
    - iii. *Omuwanika*
    - iv. chief justice
    - v. Treasurer respectively who assisted him in administration.
    - vi. He also appointed *mugema* (the senior most chief among the Bataka),
    - vii. *Musenero* (the chief Butler) and
    - viii. *Mfumbiro* (the chief baker)

### ***DUTIES OF KATI KIRO***

- i. The katikiro was in charge of organizing tax collecting and public works.
  - ii. He planned wars in the Kabaka's name.
  - iii. He had to protect the kabaka during war.
  - iv. He was responsible of informing the kabaka of the decisions he made on court issues.
- Below him were *omulamuzi* (chief justice) and *omuwani ka* (treasurer) who were directly responsible to the kabaka.
  - The *Bataka* were minor chiefs in charge of clans, guarded land, collected taxes, carried out conscription to the army and presented the page boys to the kabaka.
  - Peasants served under chief and were to fight in wars. Slaves (*badus*) served the king chiefs in their homesteads. Pages and *bagalagala* (sons of chiefs and other nobles) served the kabaka too.
  - To ensure unity the kabaka married from principal clans.

There was a Lukiko( *Parliament* ) which performed the following functions

- i. Advised the kabaka and
- ii. Was the final court. It comprised 69 members who were nominated by the kabaka (positions were not hereditary).
- iii. It made laws and
- iv. Debated issues concerning the kingdom.
- v. It also directed tax collection and

- vi. Planned expenditure,
- vii. It acted as the final court of appeal, and
- viii. It represented the needs of the people to the kabaka.
- ix. It helped the kabaka in general administration. It checked the activities of government.

### **POLITICAL ORGANIZATION.**

- The kingdom was divided into counties (*Ssaza*) and sub-counties.
- Each county was under *Ssaza* chiefs whose position was hereditary initially before the kabaka began to appoint them as a means of making them accountable.
- Each *Ssaza* was divided into a *gombolola* headed by a *gombolola* chief, who maintained law and order and collected taxes.
- The *gombololas* were further divided into smaller sub-divisions called *miluka* each under a *miluka* chief. The *miluka* was divided into *kisoko*.
- The smallest administrative unit among the Baganda was the village council
- *The Abatongole* appointed by the kabaka, governed the vassal states

### **Social organization of the Baganda.**

- The kingdom was divided in social classes with the royal family occupying the top of the hierarchy, then ruling class, the chiefs who ruled over the peasants or commoners known as *bakopi*. At the bottom of the social class were the slaves (*Badu*) who were acquired mainly through raids on neighbouring communities such as *Busoga*, *Toro* and *Bunyoro*.
- The Baganda believed in the existence of many gods some of whom included;
  - i. ***Katonda***, God the creator whose home was in heaven. The prayers to him were done every morning and were conducted by the head of the homestead.
  - ii. ***Kibuuka***, God of war and thunder.
  - iii. ***Mukasa***, goddess of fertility who was worshipped in order to bless the nation with more children, livestock and a bumper harvest.
  - iv. ***Kiwanuka***, god of lightning.
  - v. ***Nawagenyi***, goddess of Drought.
- The community also believed in the existence of ancestral spirits whose main responsibility was to maintain discipline in the clans since the spirits were believed to restrict their influence to close relatives. *Balubaale* were the spirits of people who had supernatural powers and were consulted through prophets or mediums.
- The Baganda had religious leaders, led by the kabaka, then the mediums, prophets, and medicine people.
- There also existed sorcerers called *Balopo* who were feared since they could cause harm to people.
- The Baganda religion however was greatly undermined by the influx of the *Waswahili* and Arab Muslims into the community in the 19th c.
- The Baganda society was polygamous. For example, the kabaka was required to marry from all clans to maintain links in the society.
- There was division of labour according to sex. Women tilled the land while men engaged in warfare, built houses, and made clothes from bark-cloth.
- As a form of rite of passage, the Baganda went through formal education that trained them in their rites.

### **Economic organization.**

- i. Buganda's economy was based on agriculture and the production of the staple food bananas (matoke).
- ii. The baganda also kept large herds of livestock. The bahima herded Kabaka's herds. From the livestock, they obtained milk and meat to supplement their diet.
- iii. The baganda conducted raids on their neighbours like the Buddu, Busoga and Kyaggwe through which they acquired slaves, livestock and ivory.
- iv. There was division of labour, women worked in fields while men were involved in construction of roads, bark cloth making, smithing and war.
- v. The kingdom was deeply involved in local, regional and international trade. They exchanged bark cloth and beans for cattle from their neighbours. She exchanged slaves and hides for guns, glassware and cotton cloth from coastal traders.
- vi. The baganda practiced iron working, producing hoes for cultivation and weapons for defence. Some of these items formed their trade items. Rich iron deposits were also acquired by waging wars against their neighbours.
- vii. Handcraft was an important activity and included basketry and pottery.
- viii. The textile industry consisted of bark cloth manufacture.
- ix. Salt mining was an important activity.
- x. Fishing on Lake Victoria
- xi. The baganda also engaged in some hunting activities to acquire ivory.

## **SHONA.**

The Shona were a Bantu-speaking people who comprised the Rozwi, Kore kore, Zezuru and Manyika sub-groups. The first stone buildings in Zimbabwe are believed to have been the work of the Shona. Their capital was at Mapungubwe, south of the confluence of the Limpopo and Shashi rivers. About 1450 AD, the Rozwi Groups gained dominance and established a centralized political system. They established the Mwene Mutapa Empire which ruled until the time of the Ngoni invasion in the 1830s.

### **Political organization of the Mwene Mutapa Empire.**

The emperor was the head of the state and government. Succession of authority was hereditary. Important emperors included Chikura, Nyatsimba, Mutota and Matope.

Religion played a role in government and united people. The emperor was a semi-divine religious leader, a military leader and the chief priest. He was the only one who could communicate with the spirits of the ancestors. It was believed that when Mwene Mutapa died, he became a Mudzimu and automatically qualified to be worshipped as a national ancestral spirit.

The ancestral spirits (Vadzimu) communicated people's problems to god. Religion also influenced laws.

The priests were used as spies and link between the emperor and the people.

Another unifying factor in the kingdom was the royal fire. It was from the continuous fire that each vassal chief carried a flame to his chiefdom that he kept burning as a symbol of national unity.

The empire was divided into provinces namely Guruhaswa, Mbire, Utere, Banua, and Manyika each headed by a lesser chief. The most important chiefs in the empire sent their sons, with tribute in form of cattle, gold, slaves and ivory, each year to pay homage to the Mwene Mutapa as goodwill ambassadors

There was a standing army of warriors which was used for defence and expansion of the kingdom. Revenue from trade was used to run the army and sustain the empire.

The position of importance held by Mwene Mutapa led to the creation of a complex Style of administration around him.

The government officials included the court steward, treasurer, commander-in-chief of the army and Mbokurumme (king's sister-in-law). Others were the queen mother, the emperor's sister and nine principal wives, the doorkeeper and the chief cook and head drummer. At the lower level were the lesser chiefs who paid tribute to the king by providing cattle, labour and agricultural produce.

### **Economic organization of the Shona.**

The Shona country enjoyed ample rainfall with fertile soils thus enabling them to engage in the following economic activities;

- i. The Shona were mixed farmers who cultivated crops and reared animals. Among the agricultural produce were corn, millet, ground nuts, beans, watermelons, tomatoes, fruits and cabbages.
- ii. The Shona practiced trade, specifically long distance trade between them and the Arabs and Waswahili at Sofala. They gave Gold and ivory for cotton cloths, glassware, copper items, guns, daggers and knives.
- iii. They were skillful hunters. They hunted elephants for their ivory which was in great demand. They also gathered wild honey and wild fruits to supplement their diet.
- iv. The Shona were skilled craftsmen who made articles like spears, hoes and knives. Others were goldsmiths who used gold to decorate. They also practiced cloth making from wild cotton and bark fibres.

### **Social organization of the Shona**

- i. Among the Shona, Mwene Mutapa was regarded as a divine king and was therefore venerated.
- ii. When he was well, the nation was also well.
- iii. The Shona religion was based on the Mwari cult.
- iv. They believed in the all powerful God, Mwari/Murungu. His worship was done through several priests who were mainly produced by the Rozwi clan.
- v. The priests presided over religious functions in sacred places of worship, shrines where sacrifices were offered.
- vi. The Shona believed in ancestral spirits. They had two kinds of spirits, *Vadzimu* or family spirits and *Mhondoro* or clan spirits. The spirits communicated through an intermediary, *Svikiro*, a departed family or clan spirit.
- vii. The Shona had a national spirit *Chamiruka* who settled clan disputes and also protected the people against injustice in the government.
- viii. The Shona had a kinship system which was patrilineal (inheritance through the father).
- ix. The Shona were divided into clans whose names were coined from animals like leopard, monkey, elephant etc. it was a taboo to consume meat from such animals.
- x. They were a polygamous community which was viewed as a means to enable the family to have enough members to provide labour.
- xi. The Shona lived in stone buildings. Their skill in masonry is associated with the ruins of Mapungubwe found in Zimbabwe.

### **The Asante**

The Asante are one of the Akan-speaking peoples who occupy the southern part of Ghana, west Africa. By the middle 18th c, the Asante/Ashanti had established the most dominant state in modern Ghana.

#### **Origin of the Asante Kingdom**

The empire developed in the 1670's. It was formed as a result of competition for gold fields in the Akan forestland. In the 1500's: Akan peoples came into contact with Portuguese traders.

Wealthy owners of the Akan gold mines began to trade gold for Benin slaves with the Portuguese.

In the 1670's, Osei Tutu was a military leader and head of the Oyoko clan of the Akan peoples. He took control over a trade center near Kumasi and established this as his capital city. This happened after his maternal uncle Obiri Yeboa, the leader of the Oyoko clan was killed during war.

A company of Akwamu troops are believed to have been instrumental in facilitating Osei Tutu's rise to power. He conquered the neighboring chiefdoms and took control of their trade. He took the title of ASANTEHENE. He collected taxes from the chiefdoms on profits from the gold mines. He built a standing

army by demanding that chiefdoms provide soldiers. He sought the support of religious leaders throughout the region. For example, a priest of the shrine of the war god (Otutu called *Anokye* in Akwapim played a role in ensuring that Osei Tutu became the Asantehene.). He established the “GOLDEN STOOL” as a symbol of his rightful rule.

The Golden Stool

Akan peoples become Asante (Ashanti)

By 1700, Osei Tutu controlled most of the gold fields of the Akan forestland

Osei Tutu was succeeded by Opoku Ware (1717-1750). During his rule, he will extend the Asante kingdom to include most of what is today present-day Ghana. The new city-states now included Kumasi, Juaben, Bekmai, Mampon, Kokofu and Nsula.

Opoku Ware will participate in the slave trade with the Europeans, selling war captives and growing very wealthy.

Asante were one of the last great kingdoms to fall to the Europeans in the late 19th century.

### **Factors that led to the rise and growth of the Asante Empire.**

- i. The Asante had a strong economy based on agriculture. Both food and cash crops like Kola nuts were cultivated. This helped to increase the population.
- ii. The Asante had capable political leaders they included Obiri Yeboa (1670-1678), Osei Tutu (1680-1717) who unified the people through the Golden stool that he created and Opoku Ware (1720-1750).
- iii. The several city-states that emerged around Kumasi supported each other. Most of them were related by the fact that they originated from the same Oyoko clan.
- iv. The growth of the Trans- Atlantic slave trade brought a lot of wealth to the Asante people. The wealth was instrumental in the prosperity of the Kingdom.
- v. The centralized political system under the Asantehene provided stability.
- vi. The Odwira festival that was held annually helped to make the state more cohesive.
- vii. The Asante were brave and proud people, and the need to free themselves from the oppressive rule of Denkyira, their former masters, motivated them to create a strong state.

### **Political organization.**

The Asante had a centralized political system. The Nucleus of the Asante Empire was five citystates of Kumasi, Dwaben, Bekwai, Kokofu and Nsula.

The empire comprised of three parts, namely Kumasi (Metropolitan Asante), Amatoos states and Provincial Asante. Each part had its own system of administration though the three cooperated in some areas. Kumasi was directly ruled by the Asantehene and was recognized as *Kumasihene*.

### **Metropolitan Asante**

These were the five states that lay 35 miles around Kumasi and which recognized the Asantehene as the supreme authority. The government of the metropolitan Asante consisted the confederacy council made of the Kings (*Omanhene*) of the various states and presided over by the Asantehene.

The Asante Union provides a good example of a federal system of government. All the states within the metropolitan Asante paid tax to the Asantehene which was used to pay for the administration and form an army.

Each of the five states had its own state council that made important decisions. Each also had its own Black stool that symbolized their power over the state.

The Omanhenes were expected to

- i. Give the right of declaring war on another Omanhene,
- ii. attended the annual Odwira festival (to pay allegiance to Asantehene, settle disputes and honor the dead),
- iii. Grant own subjects the right to appeal to the high court set up for the union of the capital and
- iv. Recognize the right of Asantehene to impose national levies.

Neither the Asantehene nor the Omanhene enjoyed dictatorial powers.

The kingdom had an army that was divided into several wings. Though overall leadership of the army was provided by the Asantehene, each Omanhene command his own forces. The Asantehene was deputized by *Mamphohene* who automatically take over army leadership whenever the Asantehene was unavailable. Among the Asante, there was compulsory military service for all able-bodied men in the empire (a system borrowed from the Akwamu).

The Asantehene established a national festival called the *Odwira festival* during which all the Omanhene assembled in Kumasi to show their loyalty to the Asantehene, to honor the dead and to solve disputes amongst themselves. It also enhanced unity amongst the Asante states.

The golden stool, an idea invented by a priest called Okomfo Anokye (he claimed it came from the sky in 1695) during the reign of Osei Tutu, made the office of the Asantehene acceptable. It was a source of unity as it bound together the Asante states since they all recognized its sacredness.

### **Provincial Asante**

It comprised all the states conquered by the Asante in the 18th century (subject states). Such people were represented in the army and paid taxes to the Asantehene. Osei Tutu appointed two consuls who resided in each subject state to supervise their affairs. An efficient bureaucracy was established in each of the provincial Asante states with the Asantehene appointing senior officials directly himself

### **Social organization.**

- i. The Kingdom was composed of many communities who spoke the Akan language.
- ii. The clans that made up the Akan speakers included the Akyem, Kwahu, the Fante, the Wassa, the Assin and the Akwapem. All these communities shared the same social institutions like the forty-day calendar, same marriage and naming rites
- iii. The basic social unit was the clan
- iv. They had a matrilineal system of inheritance. The birthright of each family passed through the mother from one generation to the other.
- v. They practiced polygamy marriage due to wealth and comfort in society and prohibited inter clan (paternal and maternal clans) marriages
- vi. The Odwira festival helped unite the society besides the golden stool.
- vii. The Asante was socially stratified into social classes e.g. the rulers, rich, peasant farmers and slaves. The Asantehene and his family comprised the royal family together with the Omanhene.
- viii. The slaves among the Asante were majorly war captives. Some of the female slaves could be elevated to concubines and later become entitled to some rights.
- ix. They believed in magic and superstition and also worshipped gods and goddesses i.e. they were polytheists. Their supreme creator was Nyame (Nyambe).
- x. They believed in their ancestors as mediators between the people and God (gods).
- xi. The Odwira festival was held annually to honour ancestors and solves my disputes. They offered sacrifices to their gods/ancestors including human sacrifices
- xii. The Asante hence was considered semi-divine being and highly regarded

- xiii. Creative arts like dancing music, sculpture were highly respected in society.

### **Economic organization of the Asante**

Being located in an area rich in terms of land fertility forest resources, mineral resources and rainfall, the Asante

### **Empire thrived economically in the following ways.**

- i. Being located at the point of convergence of the trans-Atlantic trade routes, the Asante people participated in the trade providing gold, slaves and ivory in exchange for cotton, cloth, guns and gunpowder. They also provided middlemen and porters during the trade.
- ii. The Asante practiced agriculture, growing crops like yams, vegetables and fruits. They also kept livestock like cattle.
- iii. The community practiced gathering of Kola nuts and hunting for game meat from the forest to supplement their diet.
- iv. They practiced iron working and made crafts such as baskets and pots
- v. The Asante community however became a victim of the same economic wars it waged against her neighbours especially the Fante and Denkyira. In 1873, the British came to the aid of the Fante thus greatly weakening the Asante power.

### **Reasons for the collapse of the Asante Empire.**

- i. The type of political organization in the kingdom did not encourage cohesion. Some states in the provincial Asante had no attachment to the golden stool/were semi-independent/ condition of a state within a state.
- ii. Leadership struggle between the Asante and dwaben; a neighboring rival of Asante's state.
- iii. Civil wars /Constant rebellions from the conquered states /wars with other tribes e.g. war with the afante.
- iv. British interference in the Asante affairs through the 19th c. they had a burning desire to destroy the Asante empire and colonize the region.. they even supported dwaben in her war against Asantehene
- v. Periodic interference with trade and trade routes as a result of wars weakened the financial position of the empire i.e. Abolition of slave trade as a major source of income.
- vi. The Anglo-Asante wars which the British won led to final destruction of the empire.