

# CENTRAL AFRICA LEVEL 1



CENTRAL AFRICAN EMPIRES



# WELCOME TO CENTRAL AFRICA LEVEL 1, LESSON 1: CENTRAL AFRICAN EMPIRES

IN THIS LESSON, YOU WILL LEARN ABOUT:

- KANEM-BORNU
- THE STATES OF HAUSALAND
- INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS THROUGHOUT THE AREA

## OBJECTIVES

BY THE END OF THIS LESSON, YOU WILL UNDERSTAND:

1. WHO FOUNDED KANEM-BORNU
2. THE MEANING OF THE TERM "MAI"
3. THE LIFESTYLE OF KANEM-BORNU
4. THE HIGHEST POSITIONS OF GOVERNMENT IN KANEM-BORNU
5. WHAT A CITY-STATE IS
6. THE MOST FAMOUS CITY-STATES OF HAUSALAND
7. THE COUNCIL MEMBERS OF EACH HAUSA STATE
8. THE RELIGIOUS BELIEFS OF THIS AREA OF AFRICA

In the early ninth century central Africa was home to many different civilisations.

The largest empire in the region was **Kanem-Bornu**, which flourished across modern-day Niger, Chad and southern Libya for nearly 1000 years.



**Mai Dugu** was the first king of Kanem-Bornu, living around 800 AD. He founded the **Dugawa Dynasty** which ruled the empire for nearly 300 years as the kingship was passed down the generations. Each ruler of the empire was given the title “Mai” to signify their position.



The people of this kingdom wore leathers and skins made from various animals. **Clothing made from leopardskin and even crocodile skin was common.** The royal family wore silk and wool. Farming was of great importance in Kanem-Bornu, as paid workers would grow **millet, beans and wheat** for the empire. Business was also important, as the empire exchanged goods such as horses, fabrics and copper with other regions of Africa.



The highest governmental positions in Kanem-Bornu were held by two women; the **Queen Mother** and the **Queen Sister**. Each of these women had their own court and officers at their disposal.



The highest position for men were the **provincial governors**. These men were responsible for the north, south, east, and west portions of the empire respectively. Although there was a divine ruler, they did not exercise absolute power over the empire, and would consult the entire government before making most decisions.



Many city-states also existed throughout the **Hausaland** region of Central Africa. These were established societies that existed as cities in the same geographical area but did not form a single unified nation. Each city-state had differing customs and systems, but shared a common culture and language. The majority of these city-states existed in modern-day northern Nigeria and southern Niger.





These city-states flourished from the 11th century. Walls enclosed multiple self-sufficient communities where business, industry and agriculture took place. The largest cities were the capitals of the surrounding territories, with some cities governing hundreds of villages at a time.



The most famous city-states of Hausaland were:

- Zazzau
- Katsina
- Gobir
- Kano

At their height, these states had populations of over 100,000 people.



Each Hausa State was typically governed by a Council of Ministers. This included:

- A king
- A deputy or heir
- A commander-in-chief
- A minister of finance
- A chief of prisons
- The head of the royal bodyguard
- The chief of police.



Specific housing quarters were made for the council, and industrial quarters were built for saddlers and shoemakers. Schools were abundant throughout the city-states and students also had their own quarters similar to the universities of today.



As business was often done with the Arabs of North Africa and the Malians of West Africa, Islam began to spread through Central Africa. Originally assimilated in the courts of the royal families, eventually the masses of Kanem-Bornu and the Hausa States began to adopt this religion. Mosques were built throughout the region and it was not uncommon for rulers to travel to Mecca, the Muslim holy land. Documents from these regions would often be written in Arabic, as this was advantageous when it came to trade relations.

