

### Meaning of a Centralised State

A centralised state is a state in which power and authority were concentrated in the hands of a single ruler. Rulers of centralised states could be kings or queens. They ruled with the aid of subordinate officials who occupied different positions in the state. Examples of centralised states included:

- i. Hausa State
- ii. Kanem-Bornu
- iii. Nupe Kingdom
- iv. Oyo Empire
- v. Igala Kingdom
- vi. Benin Empire
- vii. Niger Delta States
- viii. Calabar.

### Characteristics of a Centralised State

The following were the characteristics of a centralised state:

1. Power and authority were concentrated in the hands of a single ruler.
2. There was the existence of hierarchical structure in the administration of the states.
3. There were some forms of checks and balances
4. There was a standing army.
5. There was a system of tribute collection.
6. Centralised states were ruled by kings or queens.
7. There was a justice system.

## The Political Organisation of Hausa States

Two major systems of government emerged in Hausaland in the pre-colonial period. They are as follows:

- i. the Sarauta system
- ii. the Emirate system.

### The Sarauta System

This system of government was also known as the kingship system in Hausaland. This was the traditional system of government in Hausaland before the outbreak of the Uthman Dan Fodio jihad of 1804. This system of government was under the administration of the Habe Rulers with the title Sarkin. The system collapsed as a result of the outbreak of the Fulani jihad led by Uthman Dan Fodio.

### The Emirate System

This system of government was highly centralised. The success of the Fulani jihad resulted in the emergence of the emirate system of government in Hausaland in 1805. It was a system of government headed by an Emir who was both a religious and a political leader. One of the outcomes of the Fulani jihad, also known as the Sokoto Jihad, was the emergence of a theocratic form of government in Hausaland. Theocracy is a form of government ruled by divine laws. The jihad brought about the Sokoto Caliphate which was administered in accordance with Islamic principles and traditions. The Sokoto Caliphate was highly centralised and hierarchical. It comprised the supreme headquarters, district and village administration.

The Sokoto Caliphate was divided into two, namely:

- i. Eastern Part: It had its headquarters in Sokoto with Sultan as the Caliph
- ii. Western Part: It had its headquarters in Gwandu and was headed by an Emir.

All other Hausa states were headed by Emirs who were accountable to either the Sultan of Sokoto or the Emir of Gwandu. Aside the Emirs, there were other hierarchical officials who worked with the Emirs in the administration of the states. The most important ones were:

1. Waziri: He was the head of all officials in the emirate.
2. Galadima: He was in charge of the capital.
3. Dogari: He was the head of the police.

4. Alkali Judges: They administered laws in the emirate.

### The Political Organisation of Kanem-Bornu

The political organisation of Kanem-Bornu was centralised and hierarchical. Kanem-Bornu had two dynasties, namely:

1. Seifawa Dynasty: It was headed by a Mai. It was the longest dynasty in West Africa which lasted for about 1000 years. The dynasty collapsed in the 19th century.
2. Shehu Dynasty: It was headed by a Shehu. The dynasty emerged in the 19th century following the assistance El-Kanemi gave to the Mai during the Fulani invasion. He later toppled the government which sought his assistance. Having taken over the government, he took the title Shehu, which means religious and political leadership; hence, the emergence of the Shehu dynasty in Kanem-Bornu.

### The Political Organisation of Oyo Empire

Oyo empire was founded by Oranmiyan, the last son of Oduduwa. It was a centralised state. The government of Oyo Empire revolved around four major organs, namely.

1. The Alaafin: He was the head of the empire. He was a political and spiritual leader of the empire. His salutation was Kabiyesi Igbakeji Orisa meaning 'Second to the God'.
2. The Oyomesi: They were the kingmakers. It was a council made up of seven high chiefs headed by the Basorun, also known as the prime minister. The council was in a position to check the excesses of the Alaafin
3. The Ogbon: They played religious roles in the empire. They were headed by the Oluwo. They also checked the excesses of the Oyomesi.
4. The Eso: It was the military arm of the government. It was headed by Aare-Ona-Kanranfo- the field marshal or generalissimo.

Also, there were other palace officials who also played important roles in the administration of the empire such as the Ilaris.

### The Political Organisation of Igala Kingdom

The Igala Kingdom is located in the present-day Kogi State of the north-central geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The kingdom was founded by the Igala people with its headquarters at Idah. It started as a confederal state of nine independent villages, which became known as the Igala Mela. It later transformed into a centralised state. It is known as the kingdom of Idah. The kingdom was first headed by Attah Ayagba. Attah was and is still the title of the ruler of the kingdom. Attah simply means father. The Attah was the political and spiritual leader of the kingdom. The government of Attah was assisted by the council of states. This was made up of nine chiefs who advised the king on the effective administration of the kingdom.

### The Political Organisation of Benin Empire

The empire was a centralised state. The system of succession to the throne of Benin Kingdom was primogeniture. Primogeniture is the system in which the eldest son of the king succeeds him at his demise. Two major dynasties emerged in Benin in the pre-colonial period, namely:

1. Ogo Dynasty: Ogo dynasty was the first dynasty to emerge in Benin. The dynasty was headed by a king known as Ogo. The first Ogo was Ogo Obagodo or Igodo. At this initial period, the kingdom was known as Igodomigodo. The last Ogo was Ogo Owodo. Following the political crises that led to the demise of the Ogo dynasty, there was a Republican period during which two administrators, namely Evi and Ogiamwen, ruled.
2. Eweka Dynasty: Another political crises occurred which led to the request for a king from Ile-Ife. This subsequently led to the release of Oranmiyan who later ruled over Benin and gave birth to a son called Eweka who pioneered the Eweka dynasty with the title 'Oba of Benin.'

There were other officials who worked with Oba of the kingdom and empire, namely.

1. Uzama: These were kingmakers. They consisted of seven high chiefs headed by Iyase, also known as the prime minister.
2. Eghaevbo n'Ore: They were also known as town chiefs. They were chiefs heading different quarters in the kingdom.
3. Eghaevbo n'Ogbe: They were palace chiefs divided into three associations or Otu, namely Ibwe, Iwebo, and Iweguae.
4. Edaiken: He was the least member of the Uzama and the heir apparent to the throne. He was in charge of a quarter in Benin, known as Uselu, where he ruled as Edaiken before ascending to the throne of Benin after the death of his father.