



SOC 206

African social Institutions

Course Manual

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African Social Institutions

SOC 206



University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre
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Vice-Chancellor's Message

The Distance Learning Centre is building on a solid tradition of over two decades of service in the provision of External Studies Programme and now Distance Learning Education in Nigeria and beyond. The Distance Learning mode to which we are committed is providing access to many deserving Nigerians in having access to higher education especially those who by the nature of their engagement do not have the luxury of full time education. Recently, it is contributing in no small measure to providing places for teeming Nigerian youths who for one reason or the other could not get admission into the conventional universities.

These course materials have been written by writers specially trained in ODL course delivery. The writers have made great efforts to provide up to date information, knowledge and skills in the different disciplines and ensure that the materials are user-friendly.

In addition to provision of course materials in print and e-format, a lot of Information Technology input has also gone into the deployment of course materials. Most of them can be downloaded from the DLC website and are available in audio format which you can also download into your mobile phones, iPod, MP3 among other devices to allow you listen to the audio study sessions. Some of the study session materials have been scripted and are being broadcast on the university's Diamond Radio FM 101.1, while others have been delivered and captured in audio-visual format in a classroom environment for use by our students. Detailed information on availability and access is available on the website. We will continue in our efforts to provide and review course materials for our courses.

However, for you to take advantage of these formats, you will need to improve on your I.T. skills and develop requisite distance learning Culture. It is well known that, for efficient and effective provision of Distance learning education, availability of appropriate and relevant course materials is a *sine qua non*. So also, is the availability of multiple plat form for the convenience of our students. It is in fulfillment of this, that series of course materials are being written to enable our students study at their own pace and convenience.

It is our hope that you will put these course materials to the best use.



Prof. Isaac Adewole

Vice-Chancellor

Foreword

As part of its vision of providing education for “Liberty and Development” for Nigerians and the International Community, the University of Ibadan, Distance Learning Centre has recently embarked on a vigorous repositioning agenda which aimed at embracing a holistic and all encompassing approach to the delivery of its Open Distance Learning (ODL) programmes. Thus we are committed to global best practices in distance learning provision. Apart from providing an efficient administrative and academic support for our students, we are committed to providing educational resource materials for the use of our students. We are convinced that, without an up-to-date, learner-friendly and distance learning compliant course materials, there cannot be any basis to lay claim to being a provider of distance learning education. Indeed, availability of appropriate course materials in multiple formats is the hub of any distance learning provision worldwide.

In view of the above, we are vigorously pursuing as a matter of priority, the provision of credible, learner-friendly and interactive course materials for all our courses. We commissioned the authoring of, and review of course materials to teams of experts and their outputs were subjected to rigorous peer review to ensure standard. The approach not only emphasizes cognitive knowledge, but also skills and humane values which are at the core of education, even in an ICT age.

The development of the materials which is on-going also had input from experienced editors and illustrators who have ensured that they are accurate, current and learner-friendly. They are specially written with distance learners in mind. This is very important because, distance learning involves non-residential students who can often feel isolated from the community of learners.

It is important to note that, for a distance learner to excel there is the need to source and read relevant materials apart from this course material. Therefore, adequate supplementary reading materials as well as other information sources are suggested in the course materials.

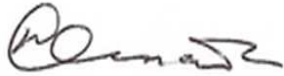
Apart from the responsibility for you to read this course material with others, you are also advised to seek assistance from your course facilitators especially academic advisors during your study even before the interactive session which is by design for revision. Your academic advisors will assist you using convenient technology including Google Hang Out, You Tube, Talk Fusion, etc. but you have to take advantage of these. It is also going to be of immense advantage if you complete assignments as at when due so as to have necessary feedbacks as a guide.

The implication of the above is that, a distance learner has a responsibility to develop requisite distance learning culture which includes diligent and disciplined self-study, seeking available administrative and academic support and acquisition of basic information technology skills. This is why you are encouraged to develop your computer skills by availing yourself the opportunity of training that the Centre’s provide and put these into use.

In conclusion, it is envisaged that the course materials would also be useful for the regular students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria who are faced with a dearth of high quality textbooks. We are therefore, delighted to present these titles to both our distance learning students and the university's regular students. We are confident that the materials will be an invaluable resource to all.

We would like to thank all our authors, reviewers and production staff for the high quality of work.

Best wishes.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Bayo Okunade', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Professor Bayo Okunade

Director

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Unit 1 African Social Institutions

Expected duration: 1 week or 2 contact hours

Introduction

Welcome to SOC 206 class. This course will give you an insight into diverse ways behaviours are organised in the Africa towards the maintenance of the society. This course will equip you with the knowledge of Africa, its people and the means they have developed to meet their needs and ensure continuity among their race. In this unit, you will be learning about the concept of social institutions. Emphasis will be placed on the meaning of social institution, the various forms of indigenous social institution in African context and functions of social institutions.

Learning Outcomes for Unit 1

At the end of the lecture, students should be able to:

- 1.1 Define and use correctly all of the key words printed in **bold**. (SAQs 1.1, 1.2, 1.4)
- 1.2 Explain the importance of social institutions in a society (SAQs1.2)
- 1.3 Identify major types of social institutions (SAQs 1.3)
- 1.4 Mention the basic functions of at least three (3) social institutions (SAQs1.4)

1.1 Meaning, types and Function of Social Institutions

1.1.1 The People of Africa

In sociology, the word '**people**' refers to a collectivity or group of individuals. The people of Africa are a group of persons of African descent. They have diverse ethnic affiliations, differing cultures and numerous languages. For example, we have the 'Oromos' in Ethiopia and Kenya; the 'Hutus' and 'Tutsis' in Burundi and Rwanda; the 'Igbos', 'Yorubas' and 'Hausas' in Nigeria; the 'Madinkas' in The Gambia; the 'Zulus' in South Africa and so on.



Fig. 1.1 A figure showing an African man and woman (picture from google.com)

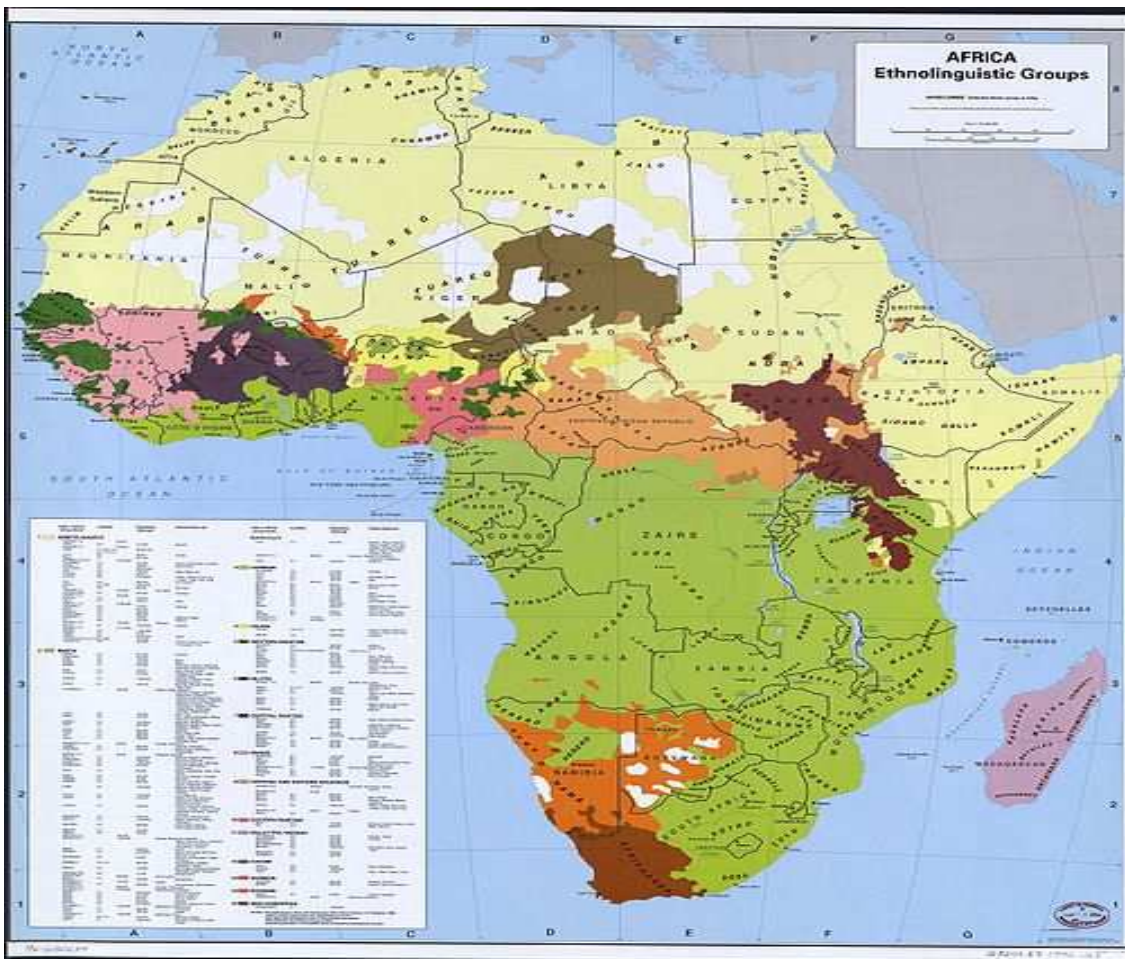


Fig 1.2 A Map of African Continent showing ethnic groups (map from Wikipedia)

1.1.2 The Meaning of Social Institutions

Social institutions are the **organised** means through which a society develops to meet its **basic needs**. They are organised ways of doing things. Social institutions are generally agreed upon by members of a society. By agreeing on these things, members of each society use these to order their lives and enhance communal interactions.

A social institution is one of the complex and integrated social norms organised around the preservation of **social values**. It is a system of organization that works to meet basic social needs and connects individual members of society to the larger culture. According to Eitzen and Baca-Zinn (2001), social institutions are social arrangements that channel behaviour in prescribed ways in important areas of social life. Anthony Giddens (1984) defined social institutions as “...the more enduring features of social life”. Social institutions serve as regulatory agencies, channelling behaviour in culturally prescribed ways. Although social institutions are distinct aspects of culture, they are elements of culture.

Box 1.1: Feature of societies

A distinctive feature of societies is the existence of a number of institutions. Social Institutions are the organized ways each society develop to meet their basic needs

1.1.3 Different Forms Of Social Institutions In Africa

The social institutions in Africa and other countries of the world are many. There are five basic social institutions on which society revolves. These are the **marriage** and **family** institutions, **economic** institutions and **religious** institutions. Others are the **educational** institutions and **political** institutions. A sixth one that will also be treated in this course is a **legal** institution. These are by no means all the social institutions present in societies. Social institutions **vary** from country to country and from place to place. The needs and factors peculiar to each society dictate the institutions that will be formed. Each institution has various functions it performs in the society. Let us use the family institution and the economic institution as examples. The reproduction and care of the young are served by the institutions of marriage and family. Marriage and family also prescribe behaviors expected of husband/father, wife/mother, child and so on. The marriage and family institution is also required to regulate and control sexual behaviours in the society. The economic institutions regulate how the resources in the society are sourced and used. It regulates trade and transactions among its members. It provides methods for the production of goods and services and methods of the distribution of goods and services amongst others.

- Do you think that Social institutions vary from country to country and from place to place place to place? In one sentence support your answer.
- Yes, Social institutions vary from country to country and from place to place because the needs and factors peculiar to each society dictate the institutions that will be formed.

1.1.4 Function Of Social Institutions

You have read a little about some functions the family and economic institutions perform. We will now touch on the functions of the other four social institutions mentioned in the section above.

The educational institution is dedicated to **teaching skills** and **knowledge** to members of a society. It also serves as a means of transmitting culture and also as a means of preparing individuals for occupational roles. Also, it serves as a means of socialising the members of a society.

Religion as a social institution performs the function of providing **solutions** to **unexplainable occurrences** in the society. It also serves as a means of controlling the natural world. Furthermore, religion plays a role in curbing behavioural excesses among members of the society and also, like the educational institution, serves as an instrument of socialization in the society.

The political institutions and legal institutions are embedded in government. One of the major functions of these institutions is the **maintenance of law and order** in the society. Another function they perform is to protect the society from external threats and protect members of the society.

Activity 1.1

Take a moment to reflect on what you have read so far. Based on your learning experience about Africa and social institutions, mention five distinct ethnic groups in Africa and five different types of social institutions you know.

Activity 1.1 Feedback

Five distinct ethnic groups in Africa are the Madinkas in The Gambia, The Tutsis in Rwanda and Burundi, the Oromos in Ethiopia, The Igbos in Nigeria and the Hausas in Nigeria.

Summary of Unit 1

In Unit 1, you have learned that:

1. The people of Africa are a group of persons of African descent.
2. Social institutions are social arrangements that channel behaviour in prescribed ways in important areas of social life.
3. There are five major types of social institutions.
4. Social institutions have basic functions they perform in society.

Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 1

Now that you have completed this study session, you can assess how well you have achieved its Learning Outcomes by answering these questions. You can check your answers with the Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions at the end of this Module.

SAQ 1.1 (tests learning outcome 1.1)

How can you correctly define social institutions?

SAQ 1.2 (tests learning outcome 1.2)

In your own view why do you think social institutions are important?

SAQ 1.3 (tests learning outcome 1.3)

There are five major types of social institutions. What are they?

SAQ 1.4 (tests learning outcome 1.4)

What are the basic functions of three of the social institutions?

Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 1

SAQ 1.1:

Social institutions are social arrangements that channel behaviour in prescribed ways in important areas of social life. They give an understanding of how societies are maintained.

SAQ 1.2:

They ensure the preservation of social values.

They are structured to meet the basic needs of a group of people.

SAQ 1.3:

The five major types of social institution in all societies are the family, education, religion, economic and political institutions.

SAQ 1.4:

The functions of social institutions are:

Marriage and family Institution: The marriage and family institution is required to regulate and control sexual behaviours in the society.

Educational Institution: This institution is dedicated to teaching skills and knowledge to members of a society.

Religious Institution: This institution performs the function of providing solutions to unexplainable occurrences in the society.

SAQ 1.4:

The usefulness of social institutions in the society relate to the functions or roles they perform in the society.

Unit 2 Marriage And Family Institutions I

Expected duration: 1 week or 2 contact hours

Introduction

In the last unit, you learnt about the meaning of social institutions and the major types of social institution in Africa. In this unit and the next you will be learning about the marriage and family systems as a form of social institution in Africa. Marriage and family institutions are major social institutions in Africa. Marriage and family are closely related concepts. Marriage is one important step that leads to family formation. In this unit, particular attention will be placed on the concepts of marriage and family, the types of marriage and family and the role of marriage and family in African societies.

Learning Outcomes for Unit 2

At the end of the lecture, students should be able to:

- 2.1 Define and use correctly all of the key words printed in **bold**. (SAQs 2.1, 2.2)
- 2.2 Explain the concept of divorce in marriage (SAQ 2.1, SAQ 2.2).
- 2.3 list and explain at least 2 the types of marriage (SAQ 2.3)
- 2.4 Describe the role of bride price and dowry in marriage (SAQ 2.1, SAQ 2.4)

2.1 The Concept of Marriage

2.1.1 Meaning of marriage

Marriage is a **system** by which a society recognises the **right** of a **man** and a **woman** to live together and have a stable **sexual relationship**. Marriage is diverse throughout the world. Although marriage has some common qualities, it differs from one society to the other. Marriage brings about new rights, new roles and new social relationships. In every marriage, there are three important prerequisites. Firstly, the families of intending couples are involved; secondly, there is the payment of a bride price and thirdly, there is a form of religious undertone to marriage ceremonies.

In most societies in Africa, **parental consent** to a marriage partner is very essential. In contracting indigenous African marriages, the decision of the intending couples' larger families supersedes the decision of the couples themselves. The family has a say over who their son or daughter marries with regards to age, religious affiliations, ethnic groups and so on. Every African community has '**rules of incest**' or incest taboos. That is, rules discouraging intermarriages between close relatives. For instance, it is a taboo for a father to marry or have sexual intercourse

with his daughter. The same goes for mother to son, brother to sister and sometimes, cousins to cousins. However, these restrictions vary from societies to societies. For some societies in Africa, there is an exception to the rule. Some royal families members may be allowed to intermarry or have sexual intercourse so as to preserve the royal blood from been contaminated if no royal equal can be found. For example, part of a king's coronation is to sleep with his mother. In another society, an heir to the throne or a king who does not yet have a wife may be required to marry his sister if there are no eligible ladies that fit the royal status. Among the Ashantis in Ghana, marriages between cousins are allowed.

Box 2.1: What is marriage?

Marriage is a system by which a society recognises the right of a man and a woman to live together and have a stable sexual relationship. It also enforces a system of taboos which ensures that certain people do not mate or marry. For example, parents are not expected to have sexual intercourse with children; brothers are not expected to have sexual intercourse with sisters.

2.1.2 Payment of Bride price and Dowry

An essential step to be taken in contracting a marriage between a man and a woman is the payment of **bride price** by the man's family to the woman's family. This comes in form of paying a certain **amount of money** and some listed items to the bride-to-be's family. On the other hand, the money or properties a woman carry from her father's home to her husband's house is referred to as a 'dowry'. **Bride price** and **dowry** are significant in African marriages, although the requirements vary from society to society. For instance, among the Turkana of northern Kenya in East Africa, bride price is paid in cattle. The number of cattle to be collected from an eligible suitor depends on how rich he is. It should be noted that sometimes, the bride's family may write off the bride price a groom is supposed to pay. This kind of marriage may be referred to as 'gift marriage'.

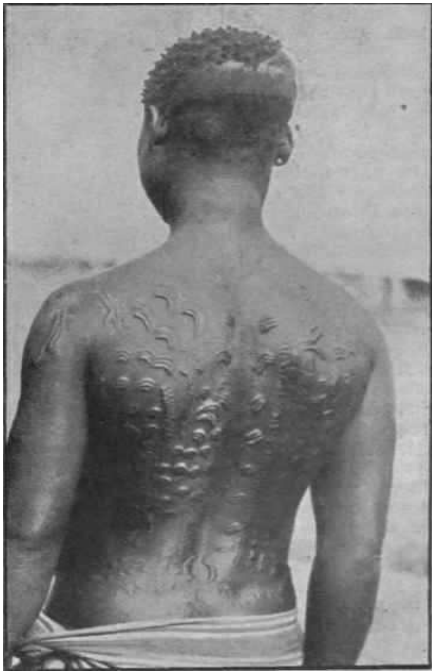


Fig .2.1 A congo girl in traditionally approved tatoo. Her suitor will have to pay many goats and cattle, in addition to other gifts to marry her (Picture from Google).

Box 2.2: Solemnisation of a marriage

Most marriages are considered to have been completed after some form of religious rights. For Christian couple, the final solemnisation of a marriage will be done in the church, for Muslims, it will be done in the mosque. Some other people may choose to solemnise theirs in the traditional way in which libations will be poured to the ancestors of the couples.

2.1.3 Endogamy and Exogamy

Can you remember what we discussed earlier about incest taboos? They are a form of rules restricting certain members of society from mating or marrying. It ensures that marriages are far enough outside the family. The practice of marrying outside one's group is termed **exogamy** while **endogamy** is defined as the practice of marrying within the group. In reality, most marriages are **exogamous** in some respects and endogamous in others. In West African societies, marriages are not permitted among relatives. In this respect, they are **exogamous**. On the other hand, Africans always tend to marry members of their own social group. For example, individuals tend to marry a person from the same ethnic group, religious sect, social class and so on.



Fig. 2.2 A traditional marriage in Africa (Picture from Google).

2.2 Different Kinds of Marriage

Generally, the number of spouses an individual in a marriage has is used to determine the kind of marriage it is. There are rules in every country which govern how many persons a man or a woman may marry. The following are some of the forms of marriage a society may have:

2.2.1 Monogamy

Monogamy is a major form of marriage. This is the marriage of one man to one woman at a time. Individuals who separate from or divorce their spouses and remarries another in their place are referred to as serial monogamists.

2.2.2 Polygamy

Polygamy is another major kind of marriage. It is a plurality of marriage. It is a form of marriage in which a person is married to many spouses. It is very common in African societies. There are two variants of polygamy namely **polygyny** and **polyandry**. Polygyny is the marriage in which a man marries more than one wife while polyandry is a marriage in which a woman is married to many men. For instance, in Nigeria and South Africa, men are allowed, traditionally, to marry more than one wife.



Fig. 2.3 Jacob Zuma of South Africa during his traditional wedding ceremony to his third wife (picture from Google)

There is another form of polygamy called 'group marriage. This is a combination of polygyny and polyandry. In this case, groups of men and women enjoy more or less equal conjugal rights over one another.

- Every culture has its tradition of paying a certain amount of money and some listed items to the bride-to-be's family. Do you know the amount that is paid family in your culture?
- Your response here is dependent on what is obtainable in your culture which is likely to vary from other cultures. If you are not sure. It would be good if you found out.

2.2.3 Levirate And Sororate

These two are also referred to as affinal marriages. An affine is a relative by marriage. In the levirate form of marriage, a man is required to marry the wife or wives of his deceased brother. It is closely related to another form of marriage known as widow inheritance. At times, a man may marry his father's widow or widows, other than his mother or those widows who are senior to his mother. The man may be older than some of the wives or be in the same age group. Levirate is more easily constituted in polygynous societies than in monogamous ones. If a living brother is already married to one wife that is permitted to marry by law, he may outrightly refuse to marry his deceased brother's wife or wives. Levirate marriage is common among the Luo people in Kenya and in Uganda. This kind of marriage is also commonly practised in Nigeria, however, it is gradually fading out.

In sororate, a widower is required to marry the unmarried sister of his deceased wife. To put it in another way, a woman who is not already married is required to marry her deceased sister's husband. Sororate is common where a considerable bride-price has been paid and the wife's family feel obliged to provide another mate for their son-in-law. These two forms of marriages are practised after a primary marriage has been terminated by death of one of the spouses.

2.2.4 Ghost Marriage

This is a form of marriage that requires a living brother to take a wife on behalf of a dead bachelor to raise off springs in the name of the dead person. The Nuer people practise this form of marriage.

Box 2.3 Duration Of Marriage

Marriages are universally conceived as a permanent tie, but the society provides a means, whether easy or difficult, of terminating unsuccessful marriages. This is known as **divorce**. No society encourages divorce but in practice, it is recognised that certain conditions make it better to terminate a marriage than have it continue as a failure and perhaps, as a discouragement to those approaching marriage. Among the Bagandas of East Africa, a man may divorce his wife at will, sending her back to her family and demand the return of the bride price. The Baganda women cannot divorce her husband, however, if she is badly treated, she may run away and claim the aid from of her clansmen. This kind of situation is very common in African societies but now-a-days, spouses in a marriage have equal rights to divorce. Barrenness, impotence, incompatibility, infidelity or adultery and economic incapability are some reasons why couples may decide to terminate their marriage.

Summary of Unit 2

In Unit 2, you have learned that:

1. Marriage is one important step that leads to family formation. Families are brought into existence through marriage and children are a basic feature of a family.
2. There are different types of marriage and family.
3. There are rules of incest that restrict members of the family from marrying a close kin.
4. There are guidelines for marriage dissolution for unsuccessful marriages.
5. Kinship is a key aspect of the marriage and family institutions in Africa.

Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 2

Now that you have completed this study session, you can assess how well you have achieved its Learning Outcomes by answering these questions. You can check your answers with the Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions at the end of this Module.

SAQ 2.1 (tests learning outcome 2.1)

How can you define the following terms “marriage, ghost marriage”?

SAQ 2.2 (tests learning outcome 2.2)

In simple sentences and using a specific example, explain the concept of divorce in marriage.

SAQ 2.3 (tests learning outcome 2.3. 2.1)

Mention and explain two major types of marriage

SAQ 2.4 (tests learning outcome 2.4, 2.1)

The payment of bride price or dowry is a common phenomena in African marriage. Describe the role of bride price and dowry in marriage.

Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 2

SAQ 2.1:

Marriage is a system by which a society recognises the right of a man and a woman to live together and have a stable sexual relationship.

Ghost marriage is a form of marriage in which a living brother marries a woman on behalf of his dead brother, who died as a bachelor, in order to raise off springs in his name.

SAQ 2.2:

Divorce is the means the society provides for terminating unsuccessful marriages. An example is among the Bagandas of East Africa. In this case a man may divorce his wife at will, sending her back to her family and demand the return of the bride price.

SAQ 2.3:

Monogamy and Polygamy

There are other types of marriages that are not so prominent but are practised in some parts of Africa. Some kinds of marriage are more prevalent in some societies while some are fading away.

SAQ 2.4:

The payment of bride price is an essential step to be taken in contracting a marriage between a man and a woman by the man's family to the woman's family. This can be in form of paying a certain **amount of money** and some listed items to the bride-to-be's family. On the other hand, the money or properties a woman carry from her father's home to her husband's house is referred to as a 'dowry'.

Unit 3 Marriage And Family Institutions II

Expected duration: 1 week or 2 contact hours

Introduction

In the last unit, we began a discussion about marriage and family social institution. We paid particular look at the marriage institution. We discussed the meaning and types of marriages in Africa. In this unit, we will look at the other part: the family institution. You will be learning about the family systems as a form of social institution in Africa. Remember, marriage and family institutions go together and you cannot have one without the other Marriage is one important step that leads to family formation. We all come from one family or the other. Look back into your own experiences. Before any of your siblings, relatives, friends or colleagues is eligible to move to their suitors' homes, they would have done one form of ceremonial activities or the other which would involve families of the intending couples. In this unit, particular attention will be placed on the concepts of family, the types family and the role of family in African societies.

Learning Outcomes for Unit 3

At the end of the lecture, students should be able to:

- 3.1 Define and use correctly all of the key words printed in **bold**. (SAQs 3.1, 3.2)
- 3.2 Describe the link between marriage and family (SAQ 3.3)
- 3.3 Differentiate the Monogamous extended joint family from the polygamous extended family (SAQ 3.4)
- 3.4 differentiate the Nuclear family from the extended family?(SAQ 3.5)

3.1 The concept of family

3.1.1 Meaning and types of Family

The **family** is a basic unit of social organisation in African societies and other countries of the world. Nearly all societies in history have been based on family groups. Just as societies differs, so do family systems. Families are brought into existence through marriage and children are a basic feature of a family. The family provides a platform for the reproduction and rearing of new members of the society so as the preserve the continuity of the society. A closely related term to family is **kinship**. In one sense, kinship is determined by biological factors. One is related to one's father and mother by virtue of one's birth; one's father and mother are related by virtue of marriage, living together and procreating children; children of the same parents are related as a result of being born by the same parents. However, kinship goes beyond this.

There are various ways of describing families through kinship ties. In this unit, we will restrict ourselves to three major types. These are the nuclear family, extended family and clans or sibs. In the next section, we will discuss these kinship groupings in details.

3.1.2 The Nuclear Family

The nuclear family is a kinship grouping made up of a married couple and their unmarried children. There are two variants of this type of family and individuals normally belong to the two types. An individual will belong to a nuclear family in which he or she is reared. This is called **the family of orientation**. An individual will also belong to another type of nuclear family referred to as **the family of procreation**. This is the one in which the individual functions in as a parent. The nuclear family ceases to exist with the death of the parents. The diagram bellow illustrates what a nuclear family is:

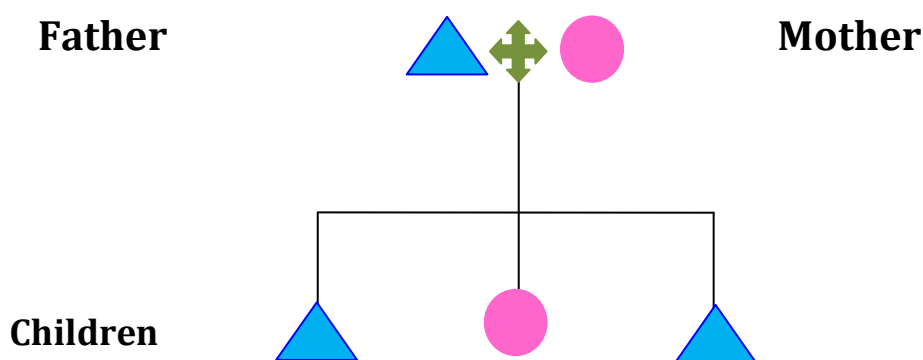


Fig. 3.1 A typical Nuclear Family.

Key:

Man - 

Marries - 

Woman - 

and they produced three children,

two boys - 

and one girl - 

3.1.3 Extended Family

The extended family is the major form of kinship grouping in Africa. It may be in form of monogamous extended joint family or a polygamous extended family. **The monogamous extended family** consist of two or more nuclear families (see diagram 2.5) linked through parent-child or siblings relationships. This type of family is often characterised by common

residence and accompanied by shared socio-economic obligations. In a **patrilocal** society (that is, a society in which decent is traced through men alone), the male offspring at marriage continues to reside in the family dwelling, together with their wives and children.

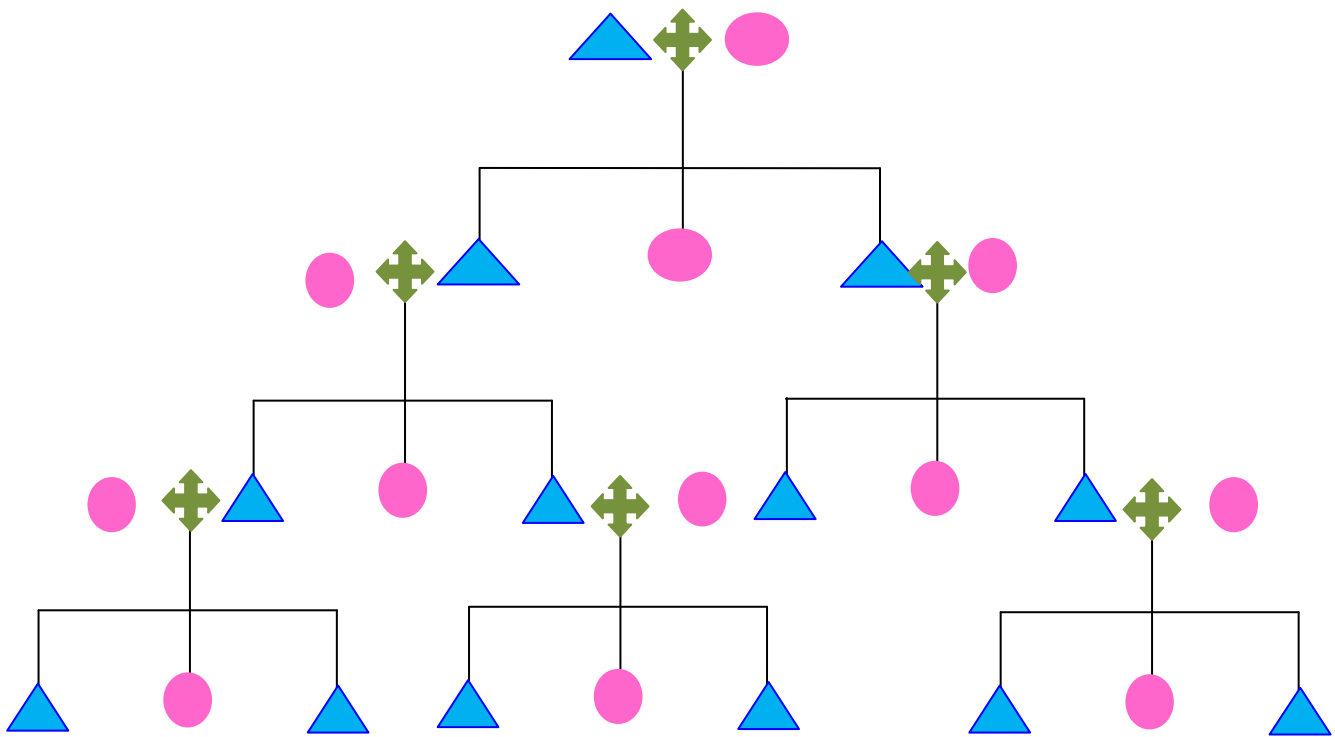


Fig. 3.2 Diagram of a typical monogamous extended family.

The polygamous extended family could either be polygynous or polyandrous. A polygynous extended family consists of an adult male, his two or more wives and their children (see figure 2.6). This type of family is commonly found among most tribes in Nigeria, for examples the Yorubas in Western Nigeria and the Gwoza people in Borno State in Northern Nigeria. This type of family is also predominant among Muslims compared to Christians. The polyandrous extended family is a reverse of the polygynous type. It is composed of an adult female, her two or more husbands and their children.

- Yemi is the fifth child of the third wife. Her father Chief Kolapowole owns a large compound in the middle of the village that houses his four wives. From your understanding of types of family, what category does Yemi's family fall into? And why that choice?

- Yemi comes from a polygamous extended family because in this situation, her father is the adult male with his four wives and children who all live in the same compound.

3.1.4 Clans or Sibs

The clan is an extension of the extended family. In this type of family, kinship alone, rather than kinship and residence, is the determining factor of family affiliation. Members may live in different communities or in different parts of the country. Clans are of two types: patrilineal (tracing one's descent to one's father. The individual belongs to the father's clan) and matrilineal (tracing one's descent through one's mother. The individuals belong to the mother's clan). Clans are not affected by either marriage or residence nor is their instance of dual clan membership. Clans are often very large groupings that include individuals who may not actually come in contact with one another. Clans essentially include one's relatives, either near or far, from the same community. Clans are held together by common history. To illustrate this concept, see Box 3.1

Box 3.1: Illustration for Clans and Sibs

Let us use an individual from a particular area in Ilaje, Ondo State, Nigeria, as an example. His or her clan's people will be all those who can trace their lineage to the same ancestors in that area or compound. Among the Yorubas, clan members are referred to as **Molebi** or **Idile** (meaning compound). Those who cannot trace their origins to these common ancestors are referred to as strangers.

Activity 3.1

In this chapter, you have learnt about marriage and family institutions in Africa. Specifically, you learnt about the various types of family and their importance or roles they perform in the society. Based on what you have learnt, on the types of family you have learnt about how would you describe the kind of family you directly grew up in?

Activity 3.1 Feedback

Basically, there are two types of family; nuclear and extended family. The description of your family will depend on the size and the people who make up the kind of family you grew up in.

Summary of Unit 3

In Unit 3, you have learned that:

1. Marriage is one important step that leads to family formation. Families are brought into existence through marriage and children are a basic feature of a family.
2. There are different types of family. Nuclear and Extended Family are examples of types of family
5. Kinship is a key aspect of the marriage and family institutions in Africa.

Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 3

Now that you have completed this study session, you can assess how well you have achieved its Learning Outcomes by answering these questions. You can check your answers with the Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions at the end of this Module

SAQ 3.1 (tests learning outcome 3.1)

Family is an important part of the society. How can you define the term “family”?

SAQ 3.2 (tests learning outcome 3.1)

Marriage is a starting point for the family. Do you support the above statement?

SAQ 3.3 (tests learning outcome 3.2)

How can you differentiate the Monogamous extended joint family from the polygamous extended family?

SAQ 3.4 (tests learning outcome 3.1)

What are the features that differentiate the Nuclear family from the extended family?

Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 3

SAQ 3.1:

The **family** is a basic unit of social organisation in African societies and other countries of the world. Nearly all societies in history have been based on family groups. The family provides a platform for the reproduction and rearing of new members of the society so as to preserve the continuity of the society.

SAQ 3.2:

Yes, this is so because, Families are brought into existence through marriage and children who are products of a marriage grow up in turn get married and start their homes. In other words, marriages are the beginning of the circle of families.

SAQ 3.3:

The monogamous extended family consist of two or more nuclear linked through parent-child or siblings relationships. This type of family is often characterised by common residence and accompanied by shared socio-economic obligations.

A polygynous extended family consists of an adult male, his two or more wives and their children. This type of family is commonly found among most tribes in Nigeria, for examples the Yorubas in Western Nigeria and the Gwoza people in Borno State in Northern Nigeria. This type of family is also predominant among Muslims compared to Christians.

SAQ 3.4:

The nuclear family is a kinship grouping made up of a married couple and their unmarried children.

The extended family is larger than the nuclear family and is the major form of kinship grouping in Africa.

Unit 4 Economic Institutions I

Expected duration: 1 week or 2 contact hours

Introduction

All societies have economic systems. Every society has access to natural resources in form of land, water, plants, animals and minerals. Apart from having these resources, every society also has a system for determining who has access to those resources. There are rules governing access to resources in the environment or community, rules for transforming these resources into useful and necessary other items (through labour) and rules for distributing goods and services. Some economic systems require the use of money while others do not. In simple and subsistence economies, access to and distribution of resources are done through simple and less structured means. However, in advanced societies, access to /and distribution of resources require a high level of structure and technology. In this unit you will be learn about economic institutions in Africa.

Learning Outcomes for Unit 4

At the end of the lecture, students should be able to:

- 4.1 Define and use correctly all of the key words printed in **bold. (SAQs 4.1, 4.2, 4.3)**
- 4.2 Identify the divisions of labour and explain how it is a feature of the economic institutions.
(SAQs 4.1, 4.2)
- 4.3 Discuss pastoralism and cattle rearing in Africa, especially in east and west Africa **(SAQ 4.3).**
- 4.4 Explain the role of land in African indigenous societies **(SAQ 4.4)**



Fig. 4.1 The Dantokpa Market in Cotonou, Benin. It is one of the most important retailing areas in Benin, covering over 20 hectares.

4.1 The Meaning of Economic Institution and division of labour

4.1.1 What is Economic Institution

The economic institutions deal with the gathering and the reallocation of resources in the society. It is a medium by which members of the society interact with their environment. Among primitive and peasant societies in Africa, their economic system was largely subsistence. They depended on hunting for animals, gathering of fruits and vegetables. At some point, they were into rearing of animals and practised subsistence farming which were dependent on simple technologies. Among these primitive people, many of the goods they consume are produced by the people themselves. They produced their own foods, shelter and clothing. There were no form of large production of goods and redistribution of these goods. As time went by, more advanced technologies and means of production were developed. Goods were produced in large quantity and this necessitated redistribution and exchange. Although the organisation of production or work differ from society to society, division of labour, specialisation and forced labour are crucial and typical features of all economic systems and institutions.

4.1.2 Division of Labour by Sex

In every society and in Africa in particular, division of labour is normally done by sex (that is, gender) and age. Based on sex, different tasks are assigned to men and women. In African societies, particularly in traditional settings, young girls are assigned chores that will prepare them for women's work. For instance, girls are required to assist their mothers in doing domestic work like cooking, washing of clothes, taking care of their younger ones, petty-trading and so on. As for the boys, they are assigned tasks that will prepare them for men's work such as grass cutting, assisting their fathers in doing repairs in the home, security work for the family and the likes.



Fig. 4.2 Women and children fetching water from a small reservoir in Ghana

(Photo by Sanjini de Silva)

A regular pattern of roles or tasks assignment to males and females is that men are often assigned strenuous tasks while women are often assigned lighter tasks. For instance, it is men that normally go hunting, herding large animals and clearing the fields for farming whereas women do the cooking, fetch of water and gather vegetables and fruits for the family. The reason for the differentiation in the tasks performed by men and women, especially in primitive societies, could be due to the fact that men are perceived to be stronger than women biologically. Besides, women go through a lot of stress doing child delivery thereby depleting their energy. It should be noted, however, that assigning tasks by gender may not be strictly adhered to as some women are often seen performing male related tasks while men may also perform female related task.

4.1.3 Division of Labour by Age

It is not all societies that base their division of labour on sex. Some use age as the basis for assigning tasks and roles to their members. Assignment of tasks and other responsibilities based on age set or age group is a common phenomenon in Africa. For example, among the Nyakyusa, a pastoral society in south-eastern Africa, Monica Wilson reported that boys from six to eleven years herd the cattle for their parents' village. Also, age sets are used to recruit men into military work and other security assignments, building of roads, farming and harvesting of farm produce and so on.



Fig. 4.3 Young Farmers.

4.1.4 Specialisation of Labour

Specialisation of labour began when society members started to produce food. Increase in productivity gave men in the society some free time away from subsistence activities and they could, therefore, devote time to developing and perfecting particular skills or crafts such as pottery, house building, basket weaving and the likes. In exchange for their products or services, these individuals were given foods or other gifts. An entire village or neighbourhood may specialise in a particular product or service which they then sell to their neighbours or other people. Today, however, specialisation of labour is more advanced than these. Specialisation of labour has brought about progress in human communities. It has brought about advance in health and medical matters, increase in farm yields and so on. However, overspecialisation may be dangerous because specialised individuals may become useless outside their field of specialisation or skills in their specialisation area may become obsolete. For instance, an individual who specialises in constructing rat traps 10 or 15 years ago will be rendered jobless in this current time due to the development of faster and less dangerous rat trap devices.

4.1.5 Forced Labour

Forced labour was unknown when societies were still practicing hunting and gathering and horticultural economy. However, forced labour became prominent when economies of societies became agriculturally based and industrialised. For instance, in feudal societies, a landowner of an estate often demanded a certain percentage of a serf's harvest or demanded that the serf work for him for a certain numbers of days for using his (landowner) estate for farm work. In some parts of Africa, a commoner is forced to work on the farm plots owned by the state and by the temple apart from his own farm plot. In the past, in west Africa, and in Africa in general, powerful kings and chiefs demanded forced labour from their subjects and servants. In this modern age, forced labour is practised indirectly which sometimes comes in form of tax payment. It is mandatory for every working member of a society to pay a certain percent of his or her earnings to the government.



Fig.3.4. Slavery, a form of forced labour. Slaves working in a cotton field (Picture from Google)

Box 4.1: Rearing of Livestock

African indigenous economy involves the rearing of livestock, the relation between people and livestock, food production and so on. Livestock in Africa has various uses of which the most important are those of food and production of young ones which have monetary values. Livestock in pastoral Africa includes animals such as horses, camels, goats and sheep and less important ones like chicken.

4.2 African indigenous economies

4.2.1 Pastoralism and Cattle (rearing) in Africa (East And West Africa)

Pastoral societies are those who practice subsistence agriculture by grazing livestock. The most important criterion in the definition of pastoral people is the organization of their social life around the needs of their herds of cattle. Pastoral economies are based on domestication of herds of animals, however, members of these societies get their own agricultural products through trade or through their own agricultural cultivation. Pastoralists raise and care for livestock like cows, camels, goats, sheep and so on. Pastoral economic system is mobile in nature. It requires moving the herds in search of fresh pasture and water. Pastoralism is found in many variations in Africa.



Fig. 3.5 A Kenyan Man From Maasai Community Rearing His Herds Of Cattle (Picture From Google).

4.2.2 Pastoral Technology

The technology of pastoralism is simple and is largely dependent on rearing of animals. On the level of subsistence, pastoralists are merely farmers who specialize in herding animals. Normally, this specialization includes a good deal of specialized knowledge about animal husbandry, pasture, and land transportation technology, exceeding that of their farming neighbours, but not

dramatically. Contrariwise, although many pastoralists also farm, they are generally not experts. Few pastoral people subsist entirely on animal products.

- There is a tribe in Nigeria popularly known for livestock and pastoral farming. Who do you think they are?
- They are called the Fulanis. They are popularly known for cattle rearing in Nigeria. They roam around mostly the Southern part of Nigeria seeking greener pasture for their livestock

4.2.3 Social Organization

Virtually all pastoral societies are built around patrilineal kinship groups. The minimal functional unit of such societies is usually a co-residential patrilineal unit of varying dimensions dependent on ecological variables and political history. The sexual division of labour is sharply marked in pastoralist societies. First of all, men are often largely responsible for herding larger stock such as cattle, whereas women engage in handicrafts, food production and processing, small-stock herding (goats and sheep) and the milking of livestock at camps. The division of labour is underlined by the grossly disproportionate emphasis on masculinity in these societies. Herding large animals is rough, dangerous, and uncomfortable and a cult of masculinity is perhaps functional even without considering warfare. The more complex pastoral societies support a certain variety of specialized roles besides the basic male herdsman and female craft/food processing ones.

4.3 Land in indigenous African societies

Land is a critical factor in natural and human-managed production systems in Africa. It influences the level of natural capital, social and economic development. These resources are just as important at the household level as they are at national and global levels. In Uganda, for example, land constitutes between 50-60 percent of the asset endowment of the poorest households.

Land in Africa is used for many activities such as agriculture, forestry and animal husbandry. Other uses of land are for mining and oil extraction. It is critical in providing shelter and other essential goods and services. It is also an important means of earning a livelihood. Land is critical to all aspects of human well-being. It provides food and health and it underlies many social and cultural systems. Access to land and the resources it offers is at the core of enhancing opportunities and choices, particularly for those who depend more directly on it.

Summary of Unit 4

In Unit 4, you have learned that:

1. Economic institutions deal with the gathering and reallocation of resources in the society and that there are various modes of exchange in collecting and reallocating these resources.
2. African indigenous economy involves the rearing of livestock, food production and so on.
3. Pastoral economies are based on domestication of herds of animals, however, members of these societies get their own agricultural products through trade or through their own agricultural cultivation.
4. Land is critical to all aspects of human well-being in Africa. It serves as a source of livelihood, it provides food and health and it underlies many social and cultural systems.
5. Market is a medium through which goods and services are distributed in the society.

Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 4

Now that you have completed this unit, assess how well you have achieved its learning outcomes by answering these questions.

SAQ 4.1 (tests learning outcome 4.1)

How can you describe economic institutions in peasant African societies?

SAQ 4.2 (tests learning outcome 4.2)

Division of labour is a feature of economic societies. List and explain three types of division of labour that exists.

SAQ 4.3 (tests learning outcome 4.3)

Briefly explain the concept of pastoralism and cattle rearing in the African economy

SAQ 4.4 (tests learning outcome 4.4)

Land is a critical and important production systems in Africa. What is the usefulness of land in African indigenous societies?

Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 1

SAQ 4.1:

Among primitive and peasant societies in Africa, their economic system was largely subsistence. They depended on hunting for animals, gathering of fruits and vegetables. At some point, they were into rearing of animals and practised subsistence farming which were dependent on simple technologies. Among these primitive people, many of the goods they consume are produced by the people themselves. They produced their own foods, shelter and clothing. There were no form of large production of goods and redistribution of these goods

SAQ 4.2:

Division of Labour by Sex:

Based on sex, different tasks are assigned to men and women. In African societies, particularly in traditional settings, young girls are assigned chores that will prepare them for women's work. For instance, girls are required to assist their mothers in doing domestic work like cooking, washing of clothes, taking care of their younger ones, petty-trading and so on. As for the boys, they are assigned tasks that will prepare them for men's work such as grass cutting, assisting their fathers in doing repairs in the home, security work for the family and the likes.

Division of Labour by Age:

Assignment of tasks and other responsibilities based on age set or age group is a common phenomenon in Africa. For example, among the Nyakyusa, a pastoral society in south-eastern Africa, Monica Wilson reported that boys from six to eleven years herd the cattle for their parents' village. Also, age sets are used to recruit men into military work and other security assignments, building of roads, farming and harvesting of farm produce and so on.

Forced Labour:

In some parts of Africa, a commoner is forced to work on the farm plots owned by the state and by the temple apart from his own farm plot. In the past, in west Africa, and in Africa in general, powerful kings and chiefs demanded forced labour from their subjects and servants. Forced labour was unknown when societies were still practicing hunting and gathering and horticultural economy. In feudal societies, a landowner of an estate often demanded a certain percentage of a serf's harvest or demanded that the serf work for him for a certain number of days for using his (landowner) estate for farm work.

SAQ 4.3

Pastoral economies are based on domestication of herds of animals, however, members of these societies get their own agricultural products through trade or through their own agricultural cultivation. Pastoralists raise and care for livestock like cows, camels, goats, sheep and so on. Pastoral economic system is mobile in nature. It requires moving the herds in search of fresh pasture and water. Pastoralism is found in many variations in Africa.

Land in Africa is used for many activities such as agriculture, forestry and animal husbandry. Other uses of land are for mining and oil extraction. It is critical in providing shelter and other essential goods and services. It is also an important means of earning a livelihood. Land is critical to all aspects of human well-being. It provides food and health and it underlies many social and cultural systems. Access to land and the resources it offers is at the core of enhancing opportunities and choices, particularly for those who depend more directly on it.

SAQ 4.4

Land in Africa is used for many activities such as agriculture, forestry and animal husbandry. Other uses of land are for mining and oil extraction. It is critical in providing shelter and other essential goods and services. It is also an important means of earning a livelihood. Land is critical to all aspects of human well-being. It provides food and health and it underlies many social and cultural systems. Access to land and the resources it offers is at the core of enhancing opportunities and choices, particularly for those who depend more directly on it.

Unit 5 Economic Institutions II

Expected duration: 1 week or 2 contact hours

Introduction

All societies have economic systems. Every society has access to natural resources in form of land, water, plants, animals and minerals. Apart from having these resources, every society also has a system for determining who has access to those resources. There are rules governing access to resources in the environment or community, rules for transforming these resources into useful and necessary other items (through labour) and rules for distributing goods and services. Some

economic systems require the use of money while others do not. In simple and subsistence economies, access to and distribution of resources are done through simple and less structured means. However, in advanced societies, access to /and distribution of resources require a high level of structure and technology. In this unit we will continue our discussion about economic institutions in Africa.

Learning Outcomes for Unit 5

At the end of the lecture, students should be able to:

- 5.1 Define and use correctly all of the key words printed in **bold**. (SAQs 5.1, 5.2)
- 5.2 List and explain the systems through which goods and services are exchanged and distributed (**SAQ 5.1, SAQ 5.2**).
- 5.3 Discuss the concept of Market exchange (**SAQ 5.1, SAQ 5.3**)

5.1 Markets in Africa

Market is a medium through which goods and services are distributed in the society. It is a medium by which goods and services are distributed in the society. Before we go into the discussion on the concept of market, let us look at two other modes of exchange of goods and services in the society. The first system through which goods and services are exchanged or distributed is referred to as **reciprocity** and the second one is known as **redistribution**.

5.1.1 Reciprocity

Reciprocity means giving and taking without the use of money. This could be in form of gift giving or barter. It could also be in form of cheating. **Reciprocity** is divided into three forms namely general reciprocity, balanced reciprocity and negative reciprocity. Generalised reciprocity is a form of gift giving without any immediate return or conscious thought of one. For example, you are a student. Your parents invest in your feeding, clothing, education and the likes. They are doing this, not necessarily because they expect you to reciprocate later, rather, because, in their old age, you may be in the position to care for them too. A child who fails to care for his or her parents may be called a lot of bad names but there are no legal obligations on the child to care for his or her parents.

Box 5.1: Types of Reciprocity

Reciprocity is divided into three forms namely general reciprocity, balanced reciprocity and negative reciprocity.

Balanced reciprocity is more short term in its expectations of return than general reciprocity. In this form of reciprocity, the giving is often motivated by a need for something else. To illustrate this, let us use farm work as an example. A farmer may offer his services to his kinsman or neighbour in exchange for a kind of animal the other is rearing. This exchange may not be immediate but a time of pay back is fixed. Also, farmers who volunteer to assist their colleagues in ploughing his field may be reciprocated with sumptuous meals and an agreed portion of the harvest. If your friend did his or her birthday and you bought a gift for him or her, it is usual to expect something from such a person when you are doing yours. You will expect the person to give you something valuable just as you have given him or her. This is a kind of balanced reciprocity.

Negative reciprocity is an attempt to take advantage of another person for one's benefit. It has to do with giving something of far lesser value than what one wants to receive from another person. It is based on the principle of trying to get the better end of the deal. For instance, if someone wants to force or cajole you into exchanging your plasma television for a low grade china phone, that will be a kind of negative reciprocity.

5.1.2 Redistribution

Redistribution is the **mode of exchange** in which all the goods and services, as well as money, in society is given to a **centralised government** who disperses them out. Goods are given to a central authority and then given back to the people in a new pattern. For example, governments use the tax paid by the citizens of the country to build hospitals and construct roads for them. The process of redistribution involves two distinct stages: an inward flow of goods and services to a social centre followed by an outward dispersal of these goods and services to the society. Although redistribution is found in some form in all societies, it is most common in societies with political hierarchy.



Fig. 3.6 A market scene in Ghana, West Africa

5.1.3 Market Exchange

Now we are back to our discussion on markets. Market exchange is the third method of distributing goods and services in the society. A market is a form of social relation in which the parties participate in exchange. Market exchange is a mixture of redistribution and reciprocity. In market exchange, there is competitive buying and selling of goods whose value is based on the laws of supply and demand. Although the parties can exchange goods and services through barter, most markets rely on sellers selling their products or services (including labour) in exchange for cash from buyers. You can say that market is the process by which the prices of goods and services are established. Market exchange requires peace in the market area. As consumers move freely from one seller to another, their safety and protection must be guaranteed.

Activity 5.1

Define what you understand by redistribution.

Activity 5.1 Feedback

Redistribution is the mode of exchange in which all the goods and services, as well as money, in society are given to a centralised government who then give back the goods and services to the people in a new pattern.

Summary of Unit 5

In Unit 5, you have learned that:

1. Market is a medium through which goods and services are distributed in the society.
2. There are three modes of exchange for the distribution of goods and services in the society

Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 5

Now that you have completed this unit, assess how well you have achieved its learning outcomes by answering these questions.

SAQ 5.1 (tests learning outcome 5.1)

What do you understand by markets in Africa?

SAQ 5.2 (tests learning outcome 5.2)

List and explain two systems through which goods and services are exchanged and distributed

SAQ 5.3 (tests learning outcome 5.3)

What do you understand by market exchange?

Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 5

SAQ 5.1:

A market is a form of social relation in which the parties participate in exchange. It is a medium through which goods and services are distributed in the society.

SAQ 5.2: Reciprocity and Redistribution

Redistribution is the mode of exchange in which all the goods and services, as well as money, in society is given to a centralised government who disperses them out. Goods are given to a central authority and then given back to the people in a new pattern. For example, government use the tax paid by the citizens of the country to build hospitals and construct roads for them.

Reciprocity means giving and taking without the use of money. This could be in form of gift giving or barter. It could also be in form of cheating.

SAQ 5.3:

Market exchange is the third method of distributing goods and services in the society. A market is a form of social relation in which the parties participate in exchange. Market exchange is a mixture of redistribution and reciprocity. In market exchange, there is competitive buying and selling of goods whose value is based on the laws of supply and demand. Although the parties can exchange goods and services through barter, most markets rely on sellers selling their products or services (including labour) in exchange for cash from buyers.

Unit 6 Educational Institutions

Expected duration: 1 week or 2 contact hours

Introduction

So far, you have learnt about the meaning of social institutions and two of the major types of social institutions in the last units. You will recall that in unit two, you learnt something about the marriage and family institutions and in the last unit, you learnt about economic institutions. In this unit you will learn about another important social institution in human societies. This institution is called the educational institution. Go through the unit carefully and attempt the self assessment questions at the end of the unit.

Learning Outcomes for Unit 6

At the end of the lecture, students should be able to:

- 6.1 Define and use correctly all of the key words printed in **bold**. (SAQs 6.1)
- 6.2 Discuss the role of education as a socialization agent. (SAQs 6.2)
- 6.3 State the effects of education on social life (SAQs 6.3)
- 6.4 Identify the problems of the educational institution (SAQs 6.4)

6.1 The meaning and Function of Educational Institutions

6.1.1 What is an Educational Institution?

The educational institution is the social structure concerned with the formal transmission of **knowledge**. It has been defined by Kendall (2006) as “...the social institution responsible for the systematic transmission of knowledge, skills, and cultural values within a formally organised structure”. Education, as a process of learning, is as old as human society. It includes teaching formal knowledge such as reading and writing as well as teaching other things such as morals, values, and ethics which could be informal in nature. Education, generally, prepares people, both young and old, to fit into the society. Education is a means by which every society prepares its young people for a place in adult life and teaches them societal values. It serves the beneficial purpose of educating children and getting them ready to be productive adults in the society. In primitive societies, and in indigenous African societies, education takes place at home – with the parents and family members. However, in modern societies, education now takes place in schools. That is, education can either be **formal** or **informal**. **Informal** education takes place at home, in the family while the **informal** education takes place in the school environment.



Fig.6.1 School Children in Ghana, Africa (Picture from Google)

6.1.1 Functions of Education

Education is an important agent of socialization and encourages social integration, especially in countries with diverse populations. Through schools, students from a variety of cultural backgrounds come into contact with the mainstream culture. This is not only done by teaching knowledge through books but also teaching the society's culture, including moral values, ethics, politics, religious beliefs, habits, and norms. Furthermore, education provides occupational training. Before now, some centuries back, most jobs and training were passed on from father to son. However, today, most jobs require at least a secondary school education, and many professions require a first degree or post-graduate degree. In addition, education serves as a means of social control or the regulation of deviant behaviour. For example, going to school everyday keep young people off the streets and from crime.

6.2 Education as a Socialization Agent

Education plays a large part in the socialization of children into society. Socialization aims to make the child learn and conform to established norms, behavioural patterns and societal values. In simple societies, it is done in form of training children in the appropriate forms of behaviour and skills required by all members of that society. That is, it is the preparation of children for particular roles in society.

In modern societies, education is the most important agent of socialization after the family. Schools are the first impersonal and collective environment that a child encounters. Whereas

schools official function is the transmission of knowledge, they also promote certain values: honesty, respect and norms such as not cheating during tests or examination and punctuality. Children also learn to deal with authority figures other than their parents and with peers.

6.2.1 The Effect of Education on Social Life

One of the effect of education on social life is the promotion and reaffirmation of culture. Africans believe strongly in according respect to elders, and to whomever respect is due. Adherence to cultural expectations promotes peace among members of the society. For instance, a Yoruba boy is schooled, informally, to prostrate while greeting an elder while a Yoruba girl is expected to kneel down while greeting an elderly person. However, both young and old, depending on the person's gender, are expected to prostrate (or kneel, as the case may be) to greet a king irrespective of the age of the king. Failure to do this may call for sanctions.



Fig.6.2 This picture shows a man prostrating himself to a king. (google images)

Yoruba people, from Nigeria are schooled to prostrate for elders and kings.

Another effect of education on social life is the modification of behaviour. Members of the society who are predisposed to behaving in an unacceptable manner in the society are corrected and counselled both through informal and formal means. A good example of how this is done, informally, is the use of proverbs. Proverbs abound in Africa and these proverbs serve various purposes. One aspect of proverbs is the corrective aspect. For instance, there is a Yoruba proverb that says “ Isé ni oògùn isé” (Work is the antidote for poverty). This proverb is used to caution those who are lazy in their work and/or do not want to work.

Box 6.1:

Education involves systematic, formal transmission of skills, knowledge, and other aspects of culture. Education has a preventive effect. For instance, in our society, there are a lot of infectious diseases that are preventable but because of low awareness and illiteracy, a quite a number of people are getting infected. However, with right advocacy and education, the prevalence of these disease diseases are reduced. Through education, people are aware of how to prevent themselves from contacting diseases. A good example is HIV/AIDs. People now know what they can do or should not do to prevent getting infected with HIV/AIDs.



Fig. 6.3 Rwanda - Kibileze - Theogene Niyongana gives a lecture on HIV and AIDS to a group of people waiting to be tested for the virus at Kibayi Health Centre. By addressing their status, sufferers learn how to increase their life expectancy (picture from google).

Additionally, education has an intellectual effect on social life. It helps members of a society to think alike and solve their problems as seem appropriate.

Formal schooling helps members of society to upgrade their status. Those who are born into poor homes, through formal schooling, can change their economic status. A high economic status makes members of society show a level of deference to such a person and inspire those who have not succeeded yet.

- Bisi grew up with her grandmother who taught her several things she knew how to do well. As a little girl Grandma taught her how to read and write, how to talk to elders and how to clean the house. Bisi never went to a structured school but she communicates with other members of the community very well and she is acknowledged as one of the most well

brought up child in the community. Do you consider Bisi as educated. If so what kind of education has she received.

- It has been said that education, generally, prepares people, both young and old, to fit into the society. So far Bisi has shown the characteristics of an educated person. The kind of education she received from her grandmother is referred to as informal education

6.3 Problems of Educational Institutions

Education, as a social institution, has certain problems. One of the major problems of formal education in our society is **unequal education** for young people and adolescents. The vast majority of the children in Africa, whose parents cannot afford school fees in private schools, attend public schools. The quality of education at public and private schools varies greatly in Africa. Private schools tend to have more modern facilities, smaller classes and expose their pupils and students to international standard of education in order to boost their IQs and performance. This is not the case with public schools. Public schools often do not have teaching facilities, the number of pupils or students per class is normally large and there is minimal or no exposure to international standards. Hence, those who attend private schools have a better advantage over those who attended public schools.

Another problem of the educational institution is what is referred to as **credentialism**. This has to do with overemphasis on degrees in giving jobs or conferring social status. In our society, it is common to find a job advertisement for an unskilled work that is not connected to any academic requirement, like laundry, requesting for a secondary school certificate result. Since credentials are highly valued, individuals may go to any length to get these degrees either by cheating their way through schools or by forging non existing certificates. There have been instances in which some political leaders were discovered to have used forged certificates to get nominated and elected into a position only to be discovered after rigorous probes.

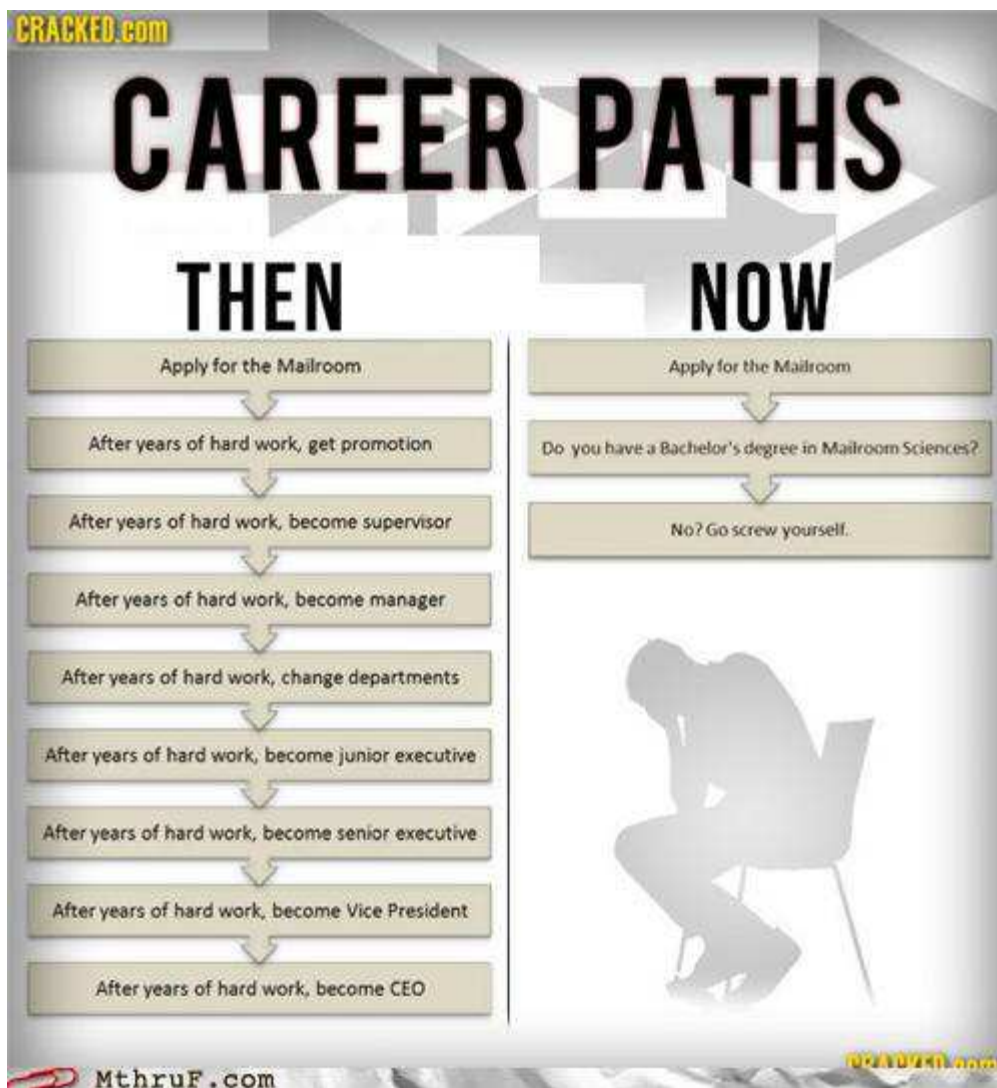


Fig. 6.4 A picture illustrating credentialism (picture from google)

Activity 6.1

What are the two forms education can take?

Activity 6.1 Feedback

The two forms of education are formal and informal education. The formal education takes place in the school environment while the informal education takes place at home, in one's family.

Summary of Unit 6

In Unit 6, you have learned that:

1. The educational institution is the social structure concerned with the formal transmission of knowledge and it can either be in a formal form or an informal form.
2. Education plays certain important functions or roles in the society.
3. Education is an agent of socialisation.

4. Education has some effects on social life
5. Unequal education and credentialism are two of the problems facing the educational institution in Africa

Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 6

Now that you have completed this study session, you can assess how well you have achieved its Learning Outcomes by answering these questions. The answer to each question comes immediately after the question.

SAQ 6.1 (tests learning outcome 6.1)

What do you understand by the concept of educational institution and what are the various forms education can take

SAQ 6.2 (tests learning outcome 6.2)

How would you describe the role of education as an agent of socialization?

SAQ 6.3 (tests learning outcome 6.3)

The educational institution has effect on social life. What do you think are some of these effects?

SAQ 6.4 (tests learning outcome 6.4)

Like every institution, education is plagued with problems. Discuss two problems of education in Africa

Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 6

SAQ 6.1:

According to the definition given by Kendall in 2006, education is the social institution responsible for the systematic transmission of knowledge, skills, and cultural values within a formally organised structure. It is a means by which every society prepares its young people for a place in adult life and teaches them societal values. It serves the beneficial purpose of educating children and getting them ready to be productive adults in the society.

Education can either be formal or informal. Informal education takes place at home, in the family while the informal education takes place in the school environment.

SAQ 6.2

Socialization aims to make the child learn and conform to established norms, behavioural patterns and societal values. In simple societies, it is done in form of training children in the appropriate forms of behaviour and skills required by all members of that society. That is, it is the preparation of children for particular roles in society.

Schools are the first impersonal and collective environment that a child encounters. Whereas schools official function is the transmission of knowledge, they also promote certain values:

honesty, respect and norms such as not cheating during tests or examination and punctuality. Children also learn to deal with authority figures other than their parents and with peers.

SAQ 6.3

One of the effects of education on social life is the promotion and reaffirmation of culture. Africans believe strongly in according respect to elders, and to whoever respect is due. Adherence to cultural expectations promotes peace among members of the society. For instance, a Yoruba boy is schooled, informally, to prostrate while greeting an elder while a Yoruba girl is expected to kneel down while greeting an elderly person.

Education has a preventive effect. For instance, in our society, there are a lot of infectious diseases that are preventable but because of low awareness and illiteracy, a lot of people are getting infected. However, with right advocacy and education, the prevalence of these disease diseases are reduced. Through education, people are aware of how to prevent themselves from contacting diseases.

Another effect of education on social life is the modification of behaviour. Members of the society who are predisposed to behaving in an unacceptable manner in the society are corrected and counselled both through informal and formal means.

SAQ 6.4

One of the major problems of formal education in our society is unequal education for young people and adolescents. The vast majority of the children in Africa, whose parents cannot afford school fees in private schools, attend public schools.

Another problem of the educational institution is what is referred to as **credentialism**. This has to do with overemphasis on degrees in giving jobs or conferring social status. In our society, it is common to find a job advertisement for an unskilled work that is not connected to any academic requirement, like laundry, requesting for a secondary school certificate result.

Unit 7 Religious Institutions

Expected duration: 1 week or 2 contact hours

Introduction

The topic you will be learning in this unit is a familiar one, just like the others you have learnt in the preceding chapters. As the unit title indicates, our focus in this unit will be on religion. Do you know what religion is? I guess you do because you possibly belong to a religious affiliation. However, you will be learning about religion from a sociological perspective. Religion is an important aspect of African societies. Though religion takes different forms and is expressed in different ways, it is a universal institution. That is, it is found in all human societies. In this chapter, you will learn about the meaning of religion, its elements, African traditional religions, religious practitioners amongst others. Go through the unit carefully and acquaint yourself with the basic terms related to the concept of religion.

Learning Outcomes for Unit 7

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- 7.1 Define and use correctly all of the key words printed in **bold**. (SAQs 7.1, SAQ 7.2)
- 7.2 Explain how religion is a social institution. (SAQ 7.2)
- 7.3 Identify the characteristics of religion (SAQs 7.3).
- 7.4 Mention and explain the various types of religious practitioners.
- 7.5 Discuss the meaning of African traditional religion and their world of spirits (SAQs 7.5,7.6).
- 7.6 Describe aspects of the Yoruba religion (SAQs 7.4).
- 7.7 Explain what is meant by the religion of the oppressed (SAQs 7.2).

7.1 The meaning, characteristics and practitioners of Religion

7.1.1 What is religion?

What is religion? There is no singular definition for what scholars and lay persons see as religion. However, for this study, Kendall (2006) definition of religion will be used. According to him, “religion is a system of beliefs, symbols, and rituals, based on some sacred or supernatural realm, that guides human behavior, gives meaning to life, and unites believers into a community”. Religions are mainly categorized by their beliefs and gods. There are three main types of beliefs namely monotheism, polytheism and atheism. **Monotheism** is the belief in only one God.

Christianity, Judaism, and Islam are three good examples of religion that belief in only one God. **Polytheism** is the belief in the plurality of gods. Hinduism and Buddhism are examples of religions with belief in many gods. **Atheism** is the belief that there is no God.

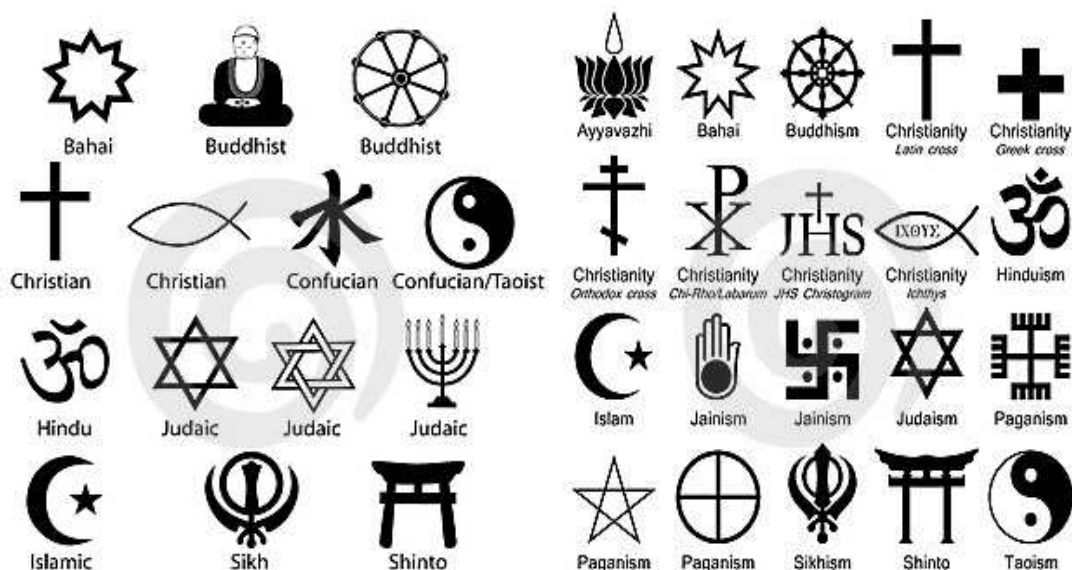


Fig.7.1 Religious Symbols (from Google)

Box 7.1: Religion as a Social Institution

The five religions mentioned above, in the examples, are also the major types of religions in the world. As a social institution, religion is a pattern of social action organised around the beliefs and practices that people develop to answer questions about the meaning of existence. As an institution, religion persists over time and has an organizational structure into which members are socialized. Religion help to integrate members of the society into the values of the society and helps to bind people together in times of crises or confusion as well as in times of celebration or festivities.

7.1.2 The Characteristics of Religion

Religion has some elements embedded in it. One of the characteristics of religion is the concept **belief**. Beliefs are set of doctrines that define a group's assent to the basic questions of life, conduct, and salvation. They are propositions which members of society believe to be true and are culturally instituted. Beliefs have two dimensions, namely, the **sacred** and the **profane**. The sacred is believed to have supernatural qualities. It is seen as 'divine' and therefore, must be treated with reverence. The profane is that which is seen as secular, common or ordinary. Another element of religion is **ritual**. Rituals are a set of actions often believed to have symbolic value prescribed by religion and performed at regular intervals for the purpose of reinforcing beliefs,

traditions and practices. It is a kind of routine that reinforces faith. Through rituals, beliefs are explained, taught, and made real through ceremonies.

7.1.3 Religious practitioners.

In this section, we will only consider three popular types of religious practitioners in indigenous African religion. These are **shamans**, **priests** and **prophets**. Shamans and priests can be said to be religious specialists in a given society who have a connection to the deities who control the supernatural. A shaman is an individual practitioner whose unusual powers are personal in nature. He is not a part of an organised religion and is in direct contact with the spirit world, usually through a trance state. He usually owes no formal obligation to any faction within the community itself for his/her position. On the other hand, a priest or priestess is a religious leader who is part of an organised religion. A form of priests' initiation and ceremonial activities are carried out for them before their inductions as members of an established religious organization. Be-that-as-it-may, different religions have different terms for these individuals. They could be known as rabbis, ministers, mullahs or imams. As for a prophet or prophetess, he/she is an individual who receives divine revelation concerning a society or an individual concerning certain things that needs to be done or certain steps to be taken to achieve an outcome.

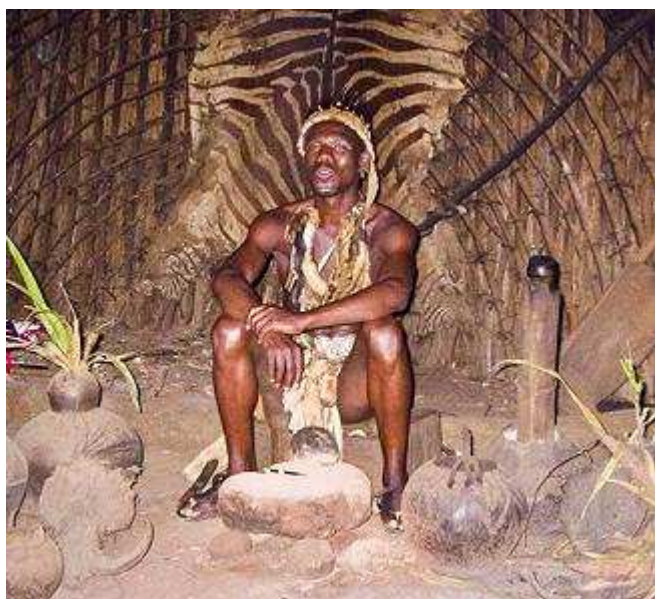


Fig 7.2 A Zulu Shaman (google images)

7.2 African Traditional Religions

Africans have their own traditional religions and each religious expression is unique to the community or society where it is being practised. The traditional religions of Africa embody the indigenous beliefs and practices of African societies that predate the modern period. Generally,

the people of Africa believe in and worship one supreme deity. Although the Supreme Being or the high God is not in the same form in their beliefs, he is also not worshipped with the same vigour among the different societies. For instance, the Yorubas, in Nigeria, belief in a Supreme God called Olódùmarè. He is believed to have created the world and gave the first humans their present habitation; the Nyoro people of Kenya call God Ruhanga while the Sereer People of Senegal and the Gambia believe in a universal Supreme Deity called Roog.



Fig 7.2 A religious festival in Burkina Faso

(google images)

One peculiar feature of African religion is that it is based mainly on oral transmission. Rituals, shrines and festivals are also inherent in traditional African religion. While western religion depends on missionaries to spread their beliefs among other nations, African indigenous beliefs are not propagated this way. Indigenous African religious beliefs are unique to the people and are preserved and passed down orally among the people from generations to generations. Another main feature of African indigenous religion is magic, witchcraft and sorcery. These three are different but related. It is important aspects of beliefs about the interactions between the natural and the supernatural. People associated with these practice are believed to have the skills manipulate the relations between the two worlds.

7.3 Types of Spiritual Forces and Worship Practices (African World of Spirits)

Though religious practices are different from culture to culture, there are similarities among them. Scholars use some terms to designate these frequently found features. The categories and subcategories are many, however, the more common ones will be discussed in this study. One of these common belief and practice is **Mana**. Mana is believed to be an impersonal power running through everything, but which accumulates in special objects, such as statues, or special human skills. It is a belief in a supernatural power or influence. The term originally came from a widespread Polynesian belief. Another common practice and belief is **fetishism**. Fetishism is a belief that there is power in inanimate objects. This may involve touching, worshipping, praying to and even whipping the objects. **Animism** is another common practice. Animism is the view that the natural world is animated or moved by spirits. For instance, the flowing river, the blowing wind, plants and trees are seen as inhabited by spirits.



Fig 7.3 African world of spirits

(google images)

In addition, **Animal Spirits'** worship practices are done in some African countries. This practice involves animal worship. For example, lizards are revered in Madagascar, an African country located in the south eastern part of the continent while in some parts of West Africa, leopards are revered. One of the most well-known types of animal worship is **totemism** which is a mystical

relationship of kinship unit or clan with a plant or animal or some natural phenomena. Sometimes the totem is ritually eaten, other times there is a taboo against killing it.

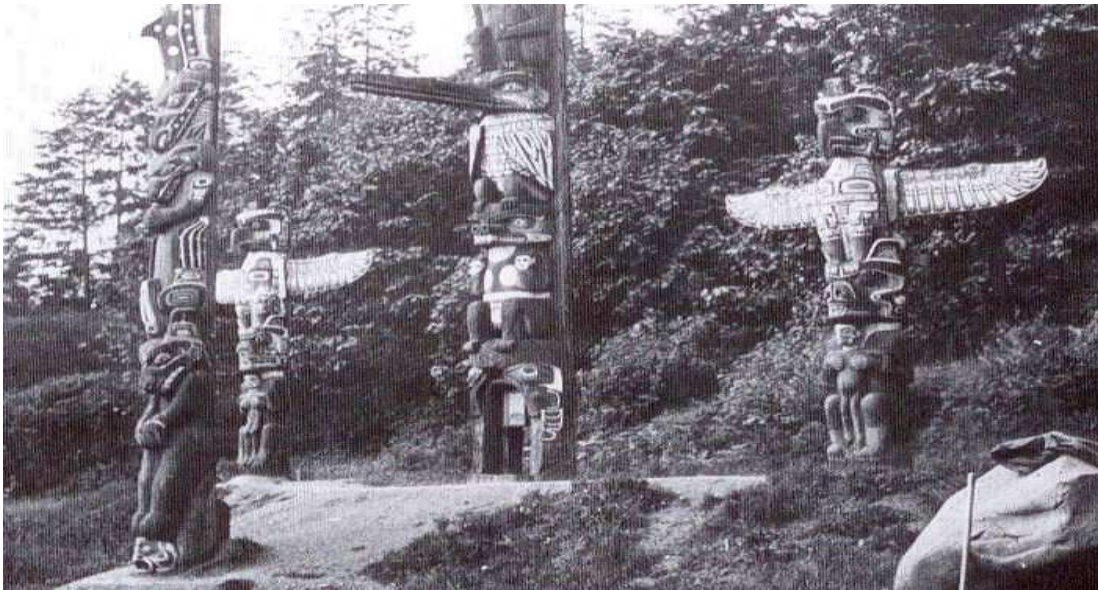


Fig 7.4 A picture of Totem poles taken in 1928

(google images)

Another religious practice and belief system among Africans is **ancestral spirit**. You can also refer to it as ancestors' worship. A belief in ancestral spirits rests on the conviction that the spirit parts of humans, after departing from the body, continue to exist in some form. Rituals are made to these spirits, especially spirits of important or influential people, to give to tribute and/or make appeasement to them by their living descendants. Those who believe in the worship of the spirits of their ancestors believe that the spirits have emotions, feelings, and appetites like living people and they must be treated well to assure their continued good will and assistance to the living. This is done through what is called **ancestor veneration**. Another variant of believe in the spirits of the dead is **spiritism**. This has to do with communication with the dead through a medium.

7.4 Aspects of Yoruba religion

The Yoruba people are located in the western part of Africa and they have one of the largest ethnic groups in Sub-Saharan Africa. The religion of the Yoruba people connotes their indigenous beliefs religious which has been passed down form one generation to the other through oral history. It is worthy of note that Yoruba religion is diverse and has no single founder. Apart from the belief in the supreme God which they call Olódùmarè, they also belief in some lesser gods or dieties which they see as subordinate to the supreme being. In Yoruba belief system, Olódùmarè has total control and power over the universe and no one can question him.



Fig 7.5 Obàtálá's Priests (Picture from Google)

Apart from Olódùmarè, the Yoruba belief in and worship other divinities, called òrìsà in the Yoruba language. These divinities are believed to have control over specific elements in nature. One of these divinities is Obàtálá who they believed was sent by Olódùmarè to create the world. Obàtálá created humans out of earth while Olódùmarè gave the breath of life to them. Tradition has it that following his return to heaven, Obàtálá 's immediate descendants began to maintain a shrine for the very structure in which they themselves were created from - clay, and where God, first gave men and women his greatest gift, the breath of life. Thereafter, members of the family were (and still are) installed as priests, responsible for remembering the intricate and poetic commemorative ceremonies of their ancestor, Obàtálá.



Fig 7.6 Obàtálá worshippers (Picture from Google).

Other divinities indigenous Yoruba people also belief in and worship are Òrúnmìlà, believed to be the god of knowledge; Ògún, the god of iron; Sàngó, the god of thunder; Yemoja and Òsun, mothers or gods of fertility who are associated with water, amongst others. Another important component of the Yoruba religion is the belief in Irúnmolès who are spirits or entities sent by the Olódùmarè to complete given tasks. All these deities or divinities have peculiar shrines, rituals and festival periods assigned to their worship.



Fig 7.7 Early 20th century Yoruba divination board (Picture from wikipedia)

7.5 The religion of the oppressed

Karl Marx (1818-1883), a German sociologist and political philosopher, championed the view that “religion is the opium of the masses”. This expression is used to explain the fact that religion perpetuates social oppression. It is an instrument used by the elite to secure their control over the poor or less privileged. Marx believes that religion makes people passive, non-resistant and adopt the moral virtues of suffering and hope – just like late Fela Anikulapo Kuti sang in his song “suffering and smiling”. To illustrate this point, let us use slavery as an example. From historical facts, slave owners used religion as a tool of oppression against black slaves. Slaves were required to attend the church belonging to their white owners in town and listen to a white preacher who always admonishes them to be submissive and obedient to their masters, not to steal their masters farm produce or flocks and remain faithful to their owners, no matter what, all these amidst forced labour, dehumanisation and deprived human rights.

Other forms of social oppression, perpetrated by religion, can also be found in issues concerning men’s superiority to women and the belief that some races or castes are superior to others. In all these cases, the oppressed are often moulded into happily accepting their assigned inferior status, or when that’s not possible, they are taught to at least suffer in silence. In summary, religion is like

the two sides of a coin - religion brings some good in a sense but is also capable of be used to perpetuate great social evils, thereby becoming an instrument of harm.

Activity 7.1

How religion is a social institution ?

Activity 7.1 Feedback

Religion is a social institution in that it helps to socialize and integrate members of the society into the values of the society and also helps to bind people together in times of crises or confusion as well as in times of celebration or festivities.

Summary of Unit 7

In Unit 7, you have learned that:

1. Religion is universal and it is an important aspect of African life.
2. Religion is a social institution that help to socialize and integrate individuals into the society and also serve as a binding force in times of crises or celebration.
3. Beliefs and rituals are major components of religion.
4. Shamans, priests and prophets are common religious practitioners in evry religion who serve to mediate between the members of the society and the supernatural world.
5. Traditional, Africans beliefs and practices are varied with deep seated conviction in the existence of spirits who have power over humans.
6. Yoruba religion is the religious beliefs of the Yoruba people. Apart from believing in a supreme being called Olodumare, they also believe in other smaller deities called Orisa and special sprits called Irunmole whom they worship.
7. Although something good is inherent in religion, it can be used as an instrument of social oppression.

Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 7

SAQ 7.1 (tests learning outcome 7.1)

How can you define religion?

SAQ 7.2 (tests learning outcome 7.8)

What do you understand by the religion of the oppressed?

SAQ 7.3 (tests learning outcome 7.3)

Mention two characteristics of religion

SAQ 7.4 (tests learning outcome 7.6)

List three deities in the Yoruba religion

SAQ 7.5 (tests learning outcome 7.5)

What is the name of the Supreme God in Yoruba, Sereer and Nyoro religious beliefs

SAQ 7.6 (tests learning outcome 7.5 and 7.6)

State three religious beliefs and practices among Africans

SAQ 7.7 (tests learning outcome 7.4)

Mention two religious practitioners you know

Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 7**SAQ 7.1**

According to Kendall (2006), “religion is a system of beliefs, symbols, and rituals, based on some sacred or supernatural realm, that guides human behaviour, gives meaning to life, and unites believers into a community”.

SAQ 7.2

Religion of the oppressed is using religion to perpetuate injustice. Also, religion makes people passive and non-resistant. It also adopts the moral virtues of suffering and hope.

SAQ 7.3

Two characteristics of religion are beliefs and rituals.

SAQ 7.4

Obàtálá, Yemoja and Sàngó

SAQ 7.5

The Yorubas call God Olódùmarè, The Sereer People call God Roog while the Nyoro people call God Ruhanga.

SAQ 7.6

Three religious beliefs and practices among Africans are totemism ancestral worship and animism.

SAQ 7.7 Two religious practitioners are shamans and prophets

Unit 8 Political Institutions I

Expected duration: 1 week or 2 contact hours

Introduction

In this unit, you will learn about another way Africans maintain their societies and how behaviours are regulated in the society. One basic way the society is maintained is through the use of power and authority to make members of the society conform to societal expectations. This approach to the maintenance of the society is embedded in the political institutions. Although the political institutions cannot be totally separated from the legal institutions (which we will treat in the next unit), the political institutions, apart from the use of power and authority, also provide a means for making group decisions and administering programmes.

Learning Outcomes for Unit 8

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- 8.1 Define and use correctly all of the key words printed in **bold**. (SAQs 8.1, SAQ 8.2, SAQ 8.3)
- 8.2 Identify indigenous political systems in Africa (SAQ 8.2)
- 8.3 Discuss at least 3 notable kingdoms in the African continent (SAQ 8.2, 8.3).

8.1 The meaning of political institutions and African Political systems

8.1.1 What are Political Organizations?

Political institutions are organizations that provide political representation for people in the society. Political institutions consist of recognized structures, rules and principles of maintaining social order, by a duly authorized machinery, in human communities. The form of political organisation common in pre-colonial Africa is monarchical rule, a political system in which a representative from one family controls the government and power is passed on through that family from generation to generation.

8.1.2 African indigenous political systems – typology and critique

Africans depend on leaders who can coordinate the daily activities of the society. While some leadership positions are hereditary, some others are attained through responsible acts or conduct. It should, however, be noted that leadership roles differ from one society to another. Some African societies have full-time permanent leaders with real authority to make important decisions for their communities while some others have temporary leaders who are constituted as the need arises. In Africa, leaders could either be kings, queens or chiefs. Sometimes there is an advisory board as well but there were no professional administrators. While some African

countries operated as chiefdoms or kingdoms in which members of society are ranked relative to the head, some were run as states. For instance, Baganda and Bunyoro communities in Uganda and ancient Egypt are examples of societies which operated as kingdoms. However, ancient Egypt eventually became a state with stratified social classes in terms of wealth, power and prestige.

In ancient Egypt, the political administration revolved largely around a single figure called Pharaoh. His people believed that he was a living god. This status of divine kingship basically granted pharaoh unlimited power and control over his subjects. Pharaoh's people did not own anything. Everything in the land belonged to Pharaoh. A number of people assisted Pharaoh in his political duties and carried out his decrees. Amongst these were priests and holy men. These priests and holy men were given preferential treatment above other people and were a kind of nobility in their own right. In the early years, the sons of Pharaoh and other close relatives acted as his principal advisers and assistants. The political structure of the ancient Egyptians involved other officials, including viziers, the Prime Minister, army commanders, the principal officers, the Minister of Public Works and tax collectors, who report directly to the Pharaoh. The land was divided into provinces called Nomes. Each nome had a governor appointed by the king, and responsible to the vizier.



Fig. 8.1 Five political regions of Africa (picture from Google)

Just like the Egyptian Pharaohs, most African kings are seen as divine or next to God. In Yoruba land, they are hailed as 'aláse, èkejì òrisà' (the commander, the next to the deity or god). Kings are known to be very powerful and autocratic. In pre-colonial Africa, kings can do and undo. They can forcefully take another man's wife, impose heavy taxation on their subjects, have as many slaves as they desired and promoted the practice of human sacrifices. Historically, African kings have been documented to be major facilitators of the European slave trade. Slavery and wars are endemic aspects of African politics. Before Europeans came to Africa, African kings, elites and merchants have been involved in the enslavement of their own people to increase their wealth and prestige. However, European merchants and royal officials were able to tap into existing routes, markets, and institutions to intensified enslavement in Africa. The incessant wars promoted the importance of the military and made the sale of captives into the slave trade an extension of the politics of regions of Africa. For example, in the area called the Gold Coast, the empire of Asante rose to prominence in the period of the slave trade. Although gold continued to be a major item of export, by the end of the 17th century, the value of slaves made up almost two-thirds of Asante's trade.

8.2 African kingdoms – structures and incorporation in new state

The African continent has a number of pre-colonial kingdoms, headed by kings, queens or chiefs that range in size and influence. Among the popular pre-colonial African kingdoms are the kingdom of Axum, the kingdom of Mali, the Ethiopian kingdom, the Asante kingdom, the Songhay kingdom, the Nupe kingdom, the Benin kingdom and so on. In the following sections, we will discuss some of these kingdoms briefly.

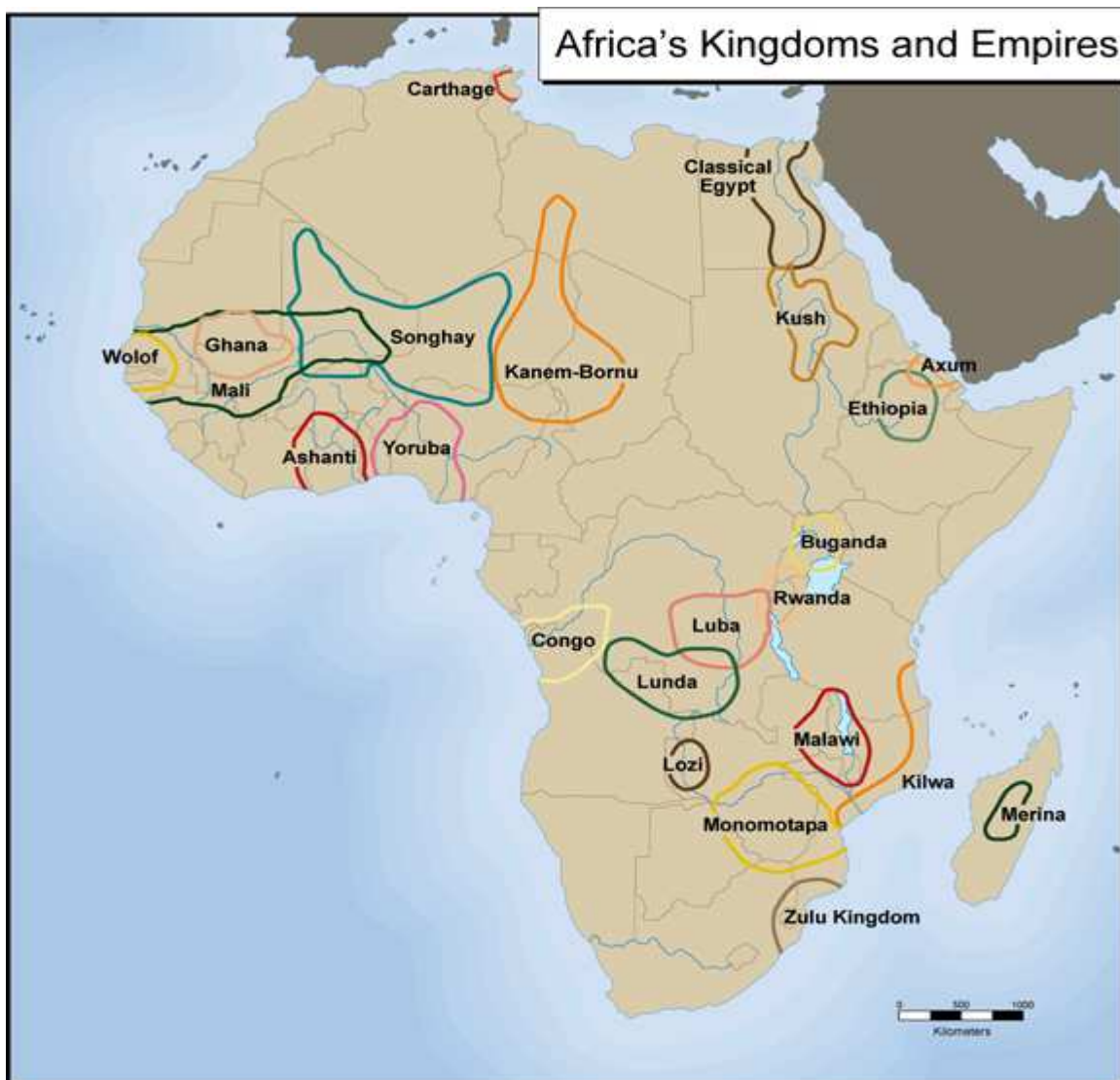


Fig. 8.2 African kingdoms and empires.

8.2.1 Notable Kingdoms in North Africa

The Northern part of the African continent constitutes countries such as Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia and Western Sahara. We will take a brief look at a kingdom in Tunisia.

Husainid Dynasty, Tunisia

The Husainid Dynasty is the former ruling dynasty of Tunisia. The Husainid Dynasty replaced the Muradid Dynasty in 1705. Kings, known as Beys ruled in the kingdom with succession to the throne determined by age, that is, the oldest member of the dynasty becomes Bey. The heir apparent to the Bey held the title Bey al-Mahalla. Since October 2006, the current head of the dynasty is Prince Muhammad Bey – the grandson of Muhammad V an-Nasir.

- Every tribe in a country has a political history that originates from the rise and fall of kingdoms. Do you agree with this?

- This statement is so true because no country just came into existence without a past of the rise and fall of a kingdom or kingdoms. Tribes have stories of their history. Although some stories are quite dramatic others may just be simple.

8.2.2 Notable Kingdoms in West Africa

The history of West Africa consists of the rise and fall of many kingdoms. Prominent among these kingdoms are the Benin kingdom, the Oyo Empire, the Asante (or Ashanti) kingdom, the Nupe kingdom and numerous others. We will now take a brief look at the kingdom of Ghana, a region formally referred to as The Gold Coast and the Oyo Empire in Nigeria.

The Empire of Ghana

The Ghana Empire is one of the earliest known kingdoms in West Africa. Historians believe that the kingdom of Ghana probably began under the leadership of a great king named Dinga Cisse. The Ghana Kingdom was headed by a king who was ably assisted by a council of elders. The kingdom was divided into districts headed by a district leader. The district leaders judiciously guided each of their districts. The Ghana kingdom had laws that people mostly obeyed.

The trade in salt and gold played a remarkable role in the formation of the Ghana Kingdom. Ghana never owned gold mines or salt mines but because it was in the middle of the trade between the salt mines of kingdoms in the north Sahara Desert and the gold mines of kingdoms to the south, Ghana prospered by controlling the trade routes. Ghana traded gold with the kingdoms to the north for salt, then, traded salt with the kingdoms in the south for gold. As trade increased, Ghana's rulers gained power. Ghana's rulers made money by forcing traders to pay taxes. The rulers of Ghana used the wealth from their trade in, especially, these two products, to build a powerful empire.

Additional sources of wealth and trade included wheat, sheep, cattle, honey, leather, cloth, and tassels made from golden thread. As more and more traders braved the Trans-Sahara trade routes, bringing spices and silks to Ghana, and taking gold in trade, the Kingdom of Ghana flourished. Ghana and other West African kingdoms soon became collectively known as The Gold Coast.

The Oyo Kingdom

Our discussion on the Oyo Kingdom will be largely based on the materials compiled by Wikipedia, an internet source. You could go to the site and read a detailed version of the abridged form presented below.

The Oyo kingdom is one of the largest empires in West Africa. Oral history has it that the Oyo kingdom originated through a Yoruba prince named Òrànmiyàn, the son of Òdùduwà. Òrànmiyàn, the first Oba (king) of Oyo, was succeeded by Oba Ajaka, called Aláàfin of Oyo. Ajaka was later deposed because he lacked Yoruba military virtue and allowed his sub-chiefs too much independence. During the 17th century, Oyo began a long stretch of growth, becoming a major empire. The Oyo Empire developed a highly sophisticated political structure to govern its territorial domains. The Aláàfin of Oyo, the king, was the head of the empire and the supreme overlord of the people.

Box 8.1: Origins of Civilization in Africa

Africa is believed to be the cradle of civilizations by historians. Civilization is believed to have originated from Egypt as well as Ethiopia.

The Oyo Empire was not a hereditary monarchy, nor an absolute one. A group or council known as the Oyo Mesi were responsible for selecting the Aláàfin. The Aláàfin was not always directly related to his predecessor, although he has to be a descendant of Òrànmiyàn and to hail from the Ona Isokun ward -which is one of the three royal wards. The Aláàfin of Oyo appointed certain religious and government officials, known as the ilaris, who are usually eunuchs, to either do menial tasks, act as guards or sometimes serve as messengers to the other world via sacrifice. The Oyo Mesi and the Yoruba Ogboni cult kept the Oba's power in check. If the Aláàfin lost favour with the council or his headship is disapproved by the council, comprising of the Oyo Mesis and the Ogboni Members, the Bashòrun, one of the key chiefs in the kingdom, will present the Aláàfin with an empty calabash, or parrot's egg as a sign that he must commit suicide. This was the only way to remove the Aláàfin because he could not be legally deposed.

8.2.3 Notable Kingdoms in East Africa

East Africa is a vast area encompassing the countries of Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Seychelles, and Comoros. East Africa has a rich history of kingdoms. The region is known to be home to one of the earliest known kingdoms in the world known as Nubia kingdom. Other kingdoms that developed in East Africa include Aksum, the Buganda Kingdom, Rwanda and the Swahili coast city-states. For the purpose of our study in this section, we will consider the ancient Rwanda kingdom.



Fig. 8. 3 Map of East Africa (picture from Exploring Africa)

The Rwandan Kingdom

Rwanda has three major ethnic groups namely Bahutu, Batutsi and Batwa. The country has a highly organised and centralised system of administration. The kingdom was presided over by a king referred to as Umwami in Rwandan language. Rwandan kings are mainly selected from the Nyiginya clan within the Tutsi sub-group. The power of the Umwami is nearly absolute, however, he was assisted by three main chiefs namely : a military chief who was responsible for the army; a cattle chief who oversaw all matters pertaining to cattle keeping, grazing and settling related disputes and a land chief who was responsible for agricultural land, produce and related affairs. The chiefs were mainly from the Tutsi group but most often, the chief of land normally comes from the Hutu subgroup. Aside these three chiefs, the queen mother also played a significant role in the administration of the kingdom. The relationship between the king and the rest of the population was unequal. This inequality was sustained by an highly organised system called Ubugabuka (a clientelist kind of relationship between the landed elites and the ordinary subjects with little or no lands). With the exception of wars of conquest and expansion, pre-colonial Rwanda was largely peaceful. However, for about 20 generations, one Tutsi clan, the Nyiginya, dominated the political scene.

8.2.4 Notable Kingdoms in Southern Part of Africa

The southern part of Africa comprises of a number of countries amongst which are Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Swaziland, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mozambique, Angola and the republic of South Africa. We shall take a brief look at the Kingdom of Mutapa in Zimbabwe.



Fig. 8.4 Young maidens in South Africa take part in a colourful cultural festival called reed dance to honour their king and the queen mother (picture from Google)

The Kingdom of Mutapa, Zimbabwe

The Mutapa kingdom stretched between the Zambezi and Limpopo rivers of southern Africa in the modern states of Zimbabwe and Mozambique. The Mutapa kingdom dates back to sometime in the first half of the 15th century. According to oral tradition, the first Mwene (King) was a warrior prince named Nyatsimba Mutota from the Kingdom of Zimbabwe. He was sent to find new sources of salt in the north. Prince Mutota found the salt among the Tavara, a Shona subdivision, who he conquered and then established a capital at Zvongombe by the Zambezi. When Mutota died, he was succeeded by Matope who expanded the kingdom into an empire encompassing most of the lands between Tavara and the Indian Ocean. This expansion weakened the Torwa kingdom, the southern Shona state from which Mutota and his dynasty originated. Mwenemutapa Matope's armies overran the kingdom of the Manyika as well as the coastal kingdoms of Kiteve and

Madanda. By the time the Portuguese arrived on the coast of Mozambique, the Mutapa Kingdom was the premier Shona state in the region.



Fig. 8.5 Map of Southern Africa (picture from Google).

Summary of Unit 8

In Unit 8, you have learned that:

1. Political institutions are organizations that provide political representation for people in the society.
2. The political institutions in African in morchinal in nature. They are operated either as kingdoms or state presided over by a king, queen or chief.
3. In pre-colonial Africa, kings can be very brutal. They actually facilitated the European slave trade due to what they were gaining from it.
4. The African continent has a number of notable pre-colonial kingdoms such as the kingdom of Axum, the kingdom of Mali, the Ethiopian kingdom, the Asante kingdom, the Songhay kingdom, the Nupe kingdom, the Benin kingdom amongst others.

Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 8

SAQ 8.1 (tests learning outcome 8.1)

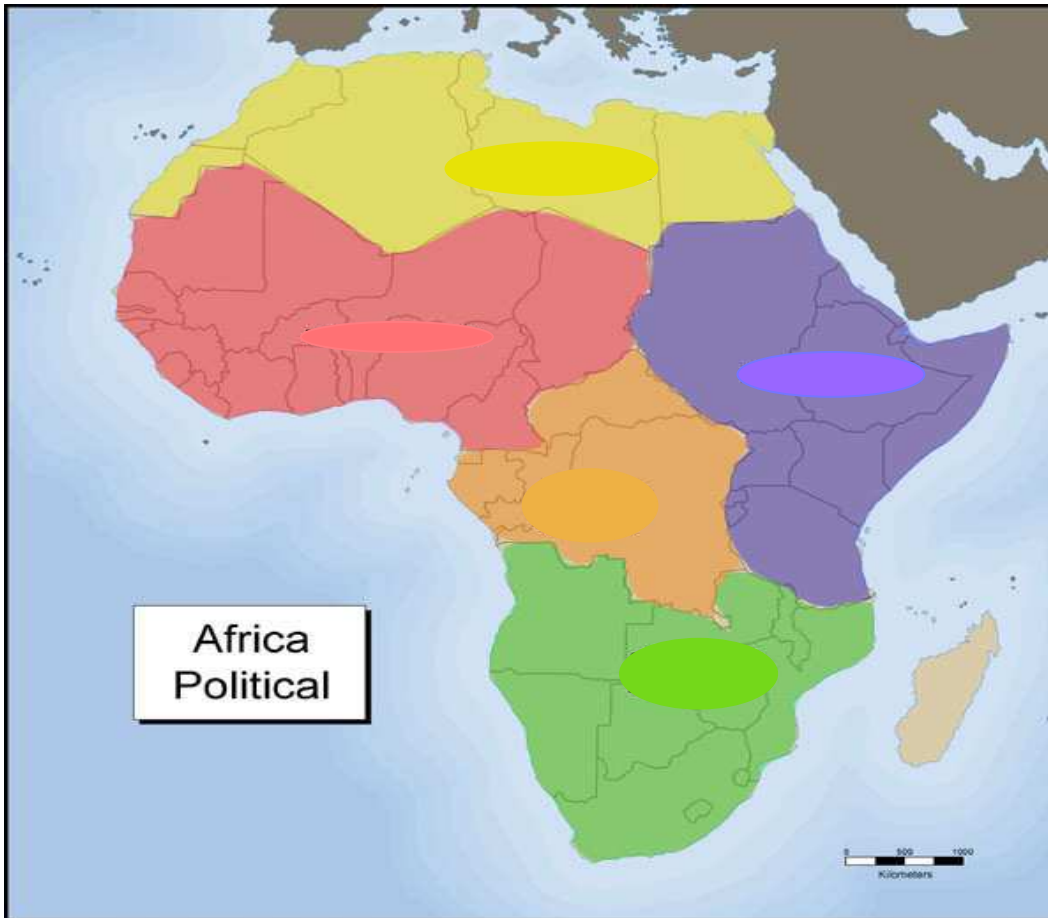
How can you correctly define a political institution?

SAQ 8.2 (tests learning outcome 8.3)

Locate and identify the following African political institutions on the map:

1. Central Africa
2. North Africa
3. East Africa
4. West Africa

5. Southern Africa



SAQ 8.3 (tests learning outcome 8.3)

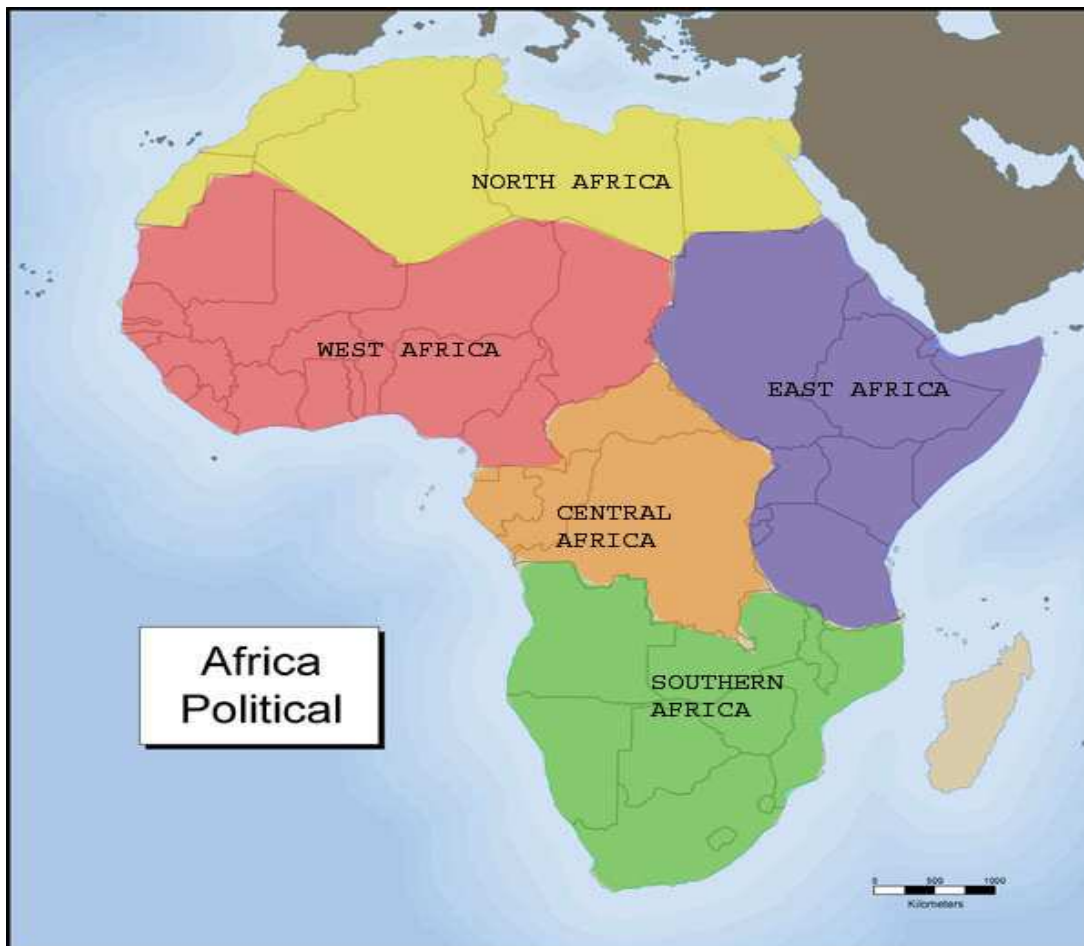
Discuss at least 3 notable kingdoms in the African continent (SAQ 8.2, 8.3).

Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 8

SAQ 8.1

Political institutions are organizations that provide political representation for people in the society.

SAQ 8.2:



SAQ 8.3

The Empire of Ghana

The Ghana Empire is one of the earliest known kingdoms in West Africa. Historians believe that the kingdom of Ghana probably began under the leadership of a great king named Dinga Cisse. The Ghana Kingdom was headed by a king who was ably assisted by a council of elders. The kingdom was divided into districts headed by a district leader. The district leaders judiciously guided each of their districts. The Ghana kingdom had laws that people mostly obeyed.

The trade in salt and gold played a remarkable role in the formation of the Ghana Kingdom. Ghana never owned gold mines or salt mines but because it was in the middle of the trade between the salt mines of kingdoms in the north Sahara Desert and the gold mines of kingdoms to the south, Ghana prospered by controlling the trade routes.

The Oyo Kingdom

The Oyo kingdom is one of the largest empires in West Africa. Oral history has it that the Oyo kingdom originated through a Yoruba prince named Òrànmiyàn, the son of Òdùduwà. Òrànmiyàn, the first Oba (king) of Oyo, was succeeded by Oba Ajaka, called Aláàfin of Oyo. Ajaka was later deposed because he lacked Yoruba military virtue and allowed his sub-chiefs too much

independence. During the 17th century, Oyo began a long stretch of growth, becoming a major empire. The Oyo Empire developed a highly sophisticated political structure to govern its territorial domains. The Aláàfin of Oyo, the king, was the head of the empire and the supreme overlord of the people.

Unit 9 Political Institutions II

Expected duration: 1 week or 2 contact hours

Introduction

In the last unit, we discussed the role of political institutions in using power and authority to make members of the society conform to societal expectations. In this unit, we will discuss the various issues we will be looking at in this units are the indigenous political systems in Africa, some empires in Africa, succession to high political offices in Africa, the formal procedures or rites involved in kingship traditions and the relationship between kinship and politics.

Learning Outcomes for Unit 9

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- 9.1 Define and use correctly all of the key words printed in **bold**. (SAQ 9.1, SAQ 9.2, SAQ 9.4)
- 9.2 Describe the rules of succession to high political offices in Africa. (SAQ 9.2)
- 9.3 Explain at least 2 different rituals of kinship. (SAQ 9.3)
- 9.4 Discuss the relationship between kinship and politics in Africa (SAQ 9.4)

9.1 Succession to high political offices in Africa

There are rules for selecting individuals into positions of authority in any society. In Africa, the recruitment or **succession** of an individual into high office is very important owing to the fact that there are limited high profile positions and these positions must be occupied by the right person(s). High profile positions such as the position of a king, the position of the second in command to the king, the position of the third in command to the king, the position of a military head and the position of women leaders are sensitive positions that require scrutinising possible successors before being selected. In some African societies, succession to a position is based on **lineage**. For instance, in Ghana, among the Akan people, a successor to the throne or any traditional political positions is selected based on **matrilineal affiliations**. That is, members of the society assume leadership positions through their mothers' family whereas, in Nigeria, individuals assume leadership positions in connection to their **fathers' lineage**. Furthermore, in some societies, only **members of a particular family** are recognised as being qualified to occupy a position of authority, whereas, some others practice **rotational succession** like the one practised in Ibadan, the capital of Òyó State, in which ascension to the throne as a king is rotated among the Ibadan high profile chiefs. The next in rank to the king that died automatically becomes the new king. Sometimes, recruitment into some important positions of authority in the society are **honorary** in nature based on the recipients' achievements, character, bravery and so on.



Fig. 6.6 An Akan king (seated -third from left to right)

9.2 Rituals of Kingship in Africa

9.2.1 The concept of Rituals of Kingship in Africa

In Africa, the coronation of a king is accompanied by different forms of rites and ceremonies. That is, the ascension to the throne by a prince or selected king-to-be, after the death of a old king, requires some form of elaborate rituals. Although the ceremonies and requirements for a new king to ascend the throne vary among Africa societies, every society has its own ritual that a king-to-be must undergo before ascending the throne. According to Peter, Kopsieker, Katiba and Stiftung (2006), African societies had a known system of succession. There was a system by which a successor was chosen when a leader, be it a chief, king or spokesman dies. In some societies, the succession was hereditary. In some others, a successor could be one designated by the chief or king according to the criteria determined by the culture of that society or tribe. Some societies had no hereditary leaders and the choice of a successor depended on special qualities such as the ability to arbitrate. Normally, however, in most systems, succession was limited to certain classes or clans in the society. We will look closely at four different types of rituals kings in Africa undergo before their official installations as king.

- The procedural ceremonies or rites marking a king's coronation can also be referred to as what/

- Rituals of Kinship

9.2.2 Rituals of Kingship in Nyoro

The Nyoro people are located in Uganda, East Africa. The most complete scholarly study of the Nyoro people was done by John Beattie (1960) in this book *Bunyoro: An African Kingdom*. The land of Nyoro is made up of 135 clans. Every individual in the land belongs to one of the clans. However, the Nyoro king always come from the Bito clan. The entitlement of the Bito clan to rule is supported by a number of oral histories and practices. The Nyoro king is called mukama. When an old mukama dies and a new one is to be selected, a number of rituals were observed. It was the rituals, correctly performed, that made a normal Bito into a mukama. The Nyoro mukama has some non-Bito courtiers who work in his palace. When he dies, the courtiers have the responsibility of preparing his body for burial. This preparation normally last for about four months. The dead mukama's body will be slowly dried out and smoked with drippings from the decaying corpse being carefully preserved to be consumed by the new mukama in the course of his installation, thus, physically transmitting something of the royal line to each new ruler.

The accession ceremonies of a new king include washing, shaving, and nail-paring rites, been anointed with a special oil and smearing with white chalk, ceremonial milk drinking, and animal sacrifice. Furthermore, the new mukama is handed various objects symbolizing political and military power, such as spears, a bow and arrows, a dagger, and a stick, and he is formally admonished and instructed to rule wisely, to kill his enemies, and to protect his people. Another rite is the ceremonial acting-out of the settlement of a lawsuit in which one man sues another for debt. It is a symbolic way of impressing on both king and people the important part he is to play as lawgiver and judge. Finally, there is a ceremony in which the king shoots arrows with the bow he has been given toward the four points of the compass, saying as he does so: "Thus, I shoot the countries to overcome them" (Beattie 1960). Many of these symbolic acts were to be repeated by the mukama annually or even more often throughout his reign, for they served as constant signposts of his status as protector and symbol of his nation (Jordan, n.d).

9.2.3 Rituals of Kingship in Benin

The abridged version of Nevadomsky's (1993) extensive anthropological study of the rituals of kingship of the Benin people will be used in our discussion on Benin's rituals of kingship. According to Nevadomsky (1993), the ceremonial kingship rituals among the Benin people of Nigeria can be grouped into three parts namely: the investiture ceremonies which has to do with conferring the king-to-be with the position of 'Edaiken', or Crown Prince; the burial rites of the dead king called Emwinekhua and the accession itself. The rituals of succession for the first son of a dead monarch begins soon after the confirmation of the death of his father. These rituals, sometimes, takes close to one year to conclude. Every crown prince lives in a makeshift palace of his own on the outskirts of the city where he completes his training in the etiquette of kingship.

By custom, anyone about to be made a king is first initiated into one of the three palace societies charged with the state regalia, the harem and the king's person. The prince is expected to pay homage at the shrines of Osa (God). Over a two-week period, the prince distributed enormous quantities of cloth, food and money. He created chieftaincy titles for his wives and prepared an elaborate feast for the senior town and palace chiefs. Every morning, royal dance groups welcomed him as he emerged from the palace. On the seventh day, priests anoints the prince's head with the blood of sacrificial animals, an act testifying to the belief that the fate and fortune of an individual are symbolized by the head and the belief that the blood of an animal is a substitute for the life of a man. Finally, after some other forms of necessary rituals, the royal butchers sacrificed a chicken, goat and cow for the king's coronation. To announce the successful conclusion of the ceremony, retainers carried the head of the cow to the palace. After some other forms of compulsory and symbolic ceremonial activities, the new king officially ascends the throne and establishes his headship.

9.2.4 Rituals Of Kingship In Owambo land, Namibia

Salokoski's (2006) study on Owambo land gave a lengthy account of kingship and rituals of kingship in the land. The abridged version of his study will be discussed in this section. In his study, he identified four ritual processes of kingship in Owambo land. The first is the "un-making" of a king through ritual regicide and kingly burial. Regicide is the ritual of killing an old and feeble king. What commonly happened was that when the king was old or weakened by illness, he was suffocated by a "soft sheepskin" or by other means through which his breathing was made to stop. Kingly inauguration usually begins with this ritual killing of the old king. This reflects the power

transfer from the old king at the moment of the ritual. Regicide was considered an essential aspect in making the new king.

The second process, the sacralisation of a king-elect through inaugural rituals, takes place during the installation of the new Owambo king. It was through these rituals that the king could legitimately take over power. The third process is the strengthening of kingship through the appropriation of rituals which is broadly related to the fertility of the land, and fourthly, is the process of the devolution of sacred kingship. A major prerequisite for being king in Owambo societies was to be of the kingly clan in power. Other conditions were those pertaining to political suitability and to ritual purity. The criterion of physical wholesomeness excluded a blind or crippled person from becoming king and no man whose wife or mother had given birth to twins could be considered for kingship. According to custom, a new ruler took a woman from a particular clan to become his head wife. She assumed part of the secret power of the king through special rituals and, according to oral tradition, in the past, she was killed when the king died. The Head Councillor of the king, and also other officials at the kingly court also had to die with the king just like his head wife.

9.2. Rituals of Kinship in Asante (or Ashanti), Ghana.

The symbol of political authority in Ashanti is the Stool. To Ashantis, the Golden Stool is the source of the nation's vitality and strength. In Asante, the Asantehene (king) is not a Divine King. It is the Golden Stool that is Divine. The King of Ashanti is only its sacred agent. Ashantis do not allow any person who cannot reflect the sacredness and beauty of their national spirit in himself to be king. A royal cannot be king if it is proved that he is infertile, has committed felony, is impotent, is a habitual drunkard, is a gambler, is deaf, is leprous or is deformed in any way. For a royal to become a king, after the death of the old king, the king-elect will undergo the ritual of 'enstoolment' which seeks to change the nature of the person selected for office to fit him for his role as king. A number of people, such as the Queen-mother; the Akyiaa Ama (the ritual mother); the Adwumakaasihene (the ritual father) and many others, play significant roles in the coronation of the new king. Without them performing their own part of the ritual, the Asantehene-elect cannot become king. For a detailed account of every ritual to be performed by the Asante king-elect, check the online version of the work of George Hagan titled 'The Golden Stool and the Oaths to the King of Ashanti.

6.6 Kinship and politics

Kinship has to do with family relations and traditional indigenous government in most African states are based on kinship ties. While eligibility into leadership roles and prestigious positions are hereditary in nature, most political offices have rules of inclusion and exclusion as well as rights and limitation for each office. Among the Ashanti's of Ghana, for instance, there are two traditional female political roles (hemmaa and Obaapanin) that are retained within the immediate families of the office holders. The political titles of these women give them the right not only to bear kings but to name a person to kingship. Succession to these positions is from sister to sister to daughter, and then to a grand-daughter. In the absence of a male royal to occupy the throne, a female royal in any of these categories could be crowned as "King". That is, no individual outside the families of these two key people can ever occupy that position.

Another good example is the government of the Bafut, in Cameroon. The political structure is a complex web of relations of kinship, loyalty and tribute which centred around the palace. The Bafut political system centered on the Fon or Mfor who was the source of political and religious life of the people. The Mfor controlled external relations and made laws internally. The Fon was assisted and advised by titled royals. The most prominent among them is the Mamfor, the mother of the Fon, which could either be his real mother or his sister. In addition, he had two assistants, who are his brothers, called Ndimfor (older brother) and Muma (younger brother). However, none of them (his brothers serving as assistants) can serve as kings in the event of the Fon's death or incapacitation. There is a body of elders, known as Kwifor (meaning holder or supporter of the Fon), who actually share power with Fon and deputised for him. It is the Kwifor that plays the role of kingmakers in Bafut and serve as a check on royal power. The Kwifor also assisted the Fon in judicial matters. When investigations have to be done on cases and the investigations have been completed, the Fon delivered judgement while Kwifor undertakes its execution.

Activity 9.1

How are kings referred to in Nyoro, Rwanda and Oyo Kingdoms?

Activity 9.1 Feedback

In Nyoro kingdom, a king is called mukama; in Rwanda, a king is referred to as Umwami while in Oyo kingdom, the king is known as the Aláàfin.

Summary of Unit 9

In Unit 9, you have learned that:

1. Succession into the position of a king or other high profile political offices in African societies requires some rites or rituals.
2. Politics in Africa are closely tied to kinship affiliations.

Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 9

SAQ 9.1 (tests learning outcome 9.1)

What is ritual of Kinship?

SAQ 9.2 (tests learning outcome 9.2, 9.1)

There are rules that govern succession, describe the rules of succession to high political offices in Africa

SAQ 9.3 (tests learning outcome 9.)

Explain at least 2 different rituals of kinship.

SAQ 9.4 (tests learning outcome 9.4, 9.1)

Briefly discuss the connection between kinship and politics?

Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 5

SAQ 9.1:

African societies had a known system of succession. There was a system by which a successor was chosen when a leader, be it a chief, king or spokesman dies. This process by which a successor take the place of his predecessor is known as a ritual of kinship. In some societies, the succession was hereditary. In some others, a successor could be one designated by the chief or king according to the criteria determined by the culture of that society or tribe. Some societies had no hereditary leaders and the choice of a successor depended on special qualities such as the ability to arbitrate.

SAQ 9.2:

There are rules for selecting individuals into positions of authority in any society. In Africa, the recruitment or succession of an individual into high office can be based on any of the following:

1. Lineage
2. Matrilineal affiliations.
3. Fathers' lineage.
4. members of a particular family
5. rotational succession
6. honorary in nature

SAQ 9.3:

Rituals of Kingship in Benin

According to Nevadomsky (1993), the ceremonial kingship rituals among the Benin people of Nigeria can be grouped into three parts namely: the investiture ceremonies which has to do with conferring the king-to-be with the position of 'Edaiken', or Crown Prince; the burial rites of the dead king called Emwinekhua and the accession itself. The rituals of succession for the first son of a dead monarch begins soon after the confirmation of the death of his father. These rituals, sometimes, takes close to one year to conclude. Every crown prince lives in a makeshift palace of his own on the outskirts of the city where he completes his training in the etiquette of kingship.

By custom, anyone about to be made a king is first initiated into one of the three palace societies charged with the state regalia, the harem and the king's person. The prince is expected to pay homage at the shrines of Osa (God). Over a two-week period, the prince distributed enormous quantities of cloth, food and money. He created chieftaincy titles for his wives and prepared an elaborate feast for the senior town and palace chiefs. Every morning, royal dance groups welcomed him as he emerged from the palace. On the seventh day, priests anoints the prince's head with the blood of sacrificial animals, an act testifying to the belief that the fate and fortune of an individual are symbolized by the head and the belief that the blood of an animal is a substitute for the life of a man. Finally, after some other forms of necessary rituals, the royal butchers sacrificed a chicken, goat and cow for the king's coronation. To announce the successful conclusion of the ceremony, retainers carried the head of the cow to the palace. After some other forms of compulsory and symbolic ceremonial activities, the new king officially ascends the throne and establishes his headship.

Rituals of Kinship in Asante (or Ashanti), Ghana.

The symbol of political authority in Ashanti is the Stool. To Ashantis, the Golden Stool is the source of the nation's vitality and strength. In Asante, the Asantehene (king) is not a Divine King. It is the Golden Stool that is Divine. The King of Ashanti is only its sacred agent. Ashantis do not allow any person who cannot reflect the sacredness and beauty of their national spirit in himself to be king. A royal cannot be king if it is proved that he is infertile, has committed felony, is impotent, is a habitual drunkard, is a gambler, is deaf, is leprous or is deformed in any way. For a royal to become a king, after the death of the old king, the king-elect will undergo the ritual of 'enstoolment' which seeks to change the nature of the person selected for office to fit him for his role as king. A number of people, such as the Queen-mother; the Akyiaa Ama (the ritual mother); the Adwumakaasihene (the ritual father) and many others, play significant roles in the coronation of the new king. Without them performing their own part of the ritual, the Asantehene-elect

cannot become king. For a detailed account of every ritual to be performed by the Asante king-elect, check the online version of the work of George Hagan titled 'The Golden Stool and the Oaths to the King of Ashanti.

SAQ 9.4: The connection between politics and kingship is that the two are closely knitted. No member of a society can occupy a political position not historically connected to his/her clan or family. Also, most African political office holders are related to one another in one way or the other.

Unit 10 The legal institutions

Expected duration: 1 week or 2 contact hours

Introduction

Disagreements occur every now and then. Sometimes, disagreements can be among individuals in the society in relation to family matters, property ownerships and deviant acts. In such cases, there are mechanisms and institutions put in place to resolve such disputes. These mechanisms and institutions are known as the legal institution. This institution is our focus in this unit.

Learning Outcomes for Unit 10

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- 10.1 Define and use correctly all of the key words printed in **bold**. (SAQs 10.1, SAQ 10.2)
- 10.2 List and explain at least 2 major methods of social control (SAQ 10.2)
- 10.3 Describe the nature of customary and religious laws (SAQ 10.3, SAQs 10.1)
- 10.4 Explain dispute and conflict resolution in Africa (SAQ 10.4, SAQs 10.1)
- 10.5 Discuss the problem of ethnic pluralism in Africa (SAQ 10.5)

10.1 The meaning of the legal institutions

The legal institution or system is the process by which laws are administered and enforced. Legal institutions are structures put in place by members of society for conflict resolutions. Legal institutions create laws, enforce laws and mediate conflicts among the members of the society. They are set up as an instrument of social control to place restraint upon the behaviour of members of the society. The legal systems in Africa are commonly based on civil/customary law, common law, religious law or a combination of these. Indigenous African legal institutions are basically founded on customary and religious laws.

10.1.1 Customary Laws

Customary law refers to the uncodified law or legal system developed and practised by indigenous communities. Usually this type of legal system evolved from the ways of life- that is, the values, customs and norms of a people. It is the traditional rule or practice that has become an integral part of the accepted and expected behaviour in a community and is treated as a legal obligation. To illustrate this point, among the Vais of Sierra Leone, there are unwritten laws against murder, treason, rape, abduction, seduction, adultery and theft. Offences such as murder and witchcraft are known by all members of that society to be punishable by death while offences such as rape,

adultery, theft and the likes are known to be punishable by fines and/or imprisonment.

10.1.2 Religious Laws

Religious laws are moral codes embedded in the religious beliefs of a people. African traditional religions specify conducts that are regarded as good manners and those that are treated as abominable acts. Most times, the line between good and abominable conducts are spelt out through a number of dos and don'ts in a society or through what can be referred to as taboos. Religious laws mete out sanctions to offenders. However, these sanctions are based on religious dictates.

10.2 Law, Social Order and social control

In a general sense, law may be regarded as the explicit and implicit rules for conduct of members of society that are generally recognised or accepted and for which positive or negative sanctions can exist. Radcliff-Brown (1952) defines law as "those rules of conduct which have been officially announced as essential in a particular society and which are officially enforced." It has to do with the use of force to regulate individual and group conduct and to prevent, redress or punish deviations from prescribed social norms. Law provides a means of dealing peacefully with whatever conflicts that may develop in society.

Social order and social control are closely related and are sometimes used interchangeably. Social order refers to a set of social structures and social practices which conserve, maintain and enforce "normal" ways of relating and behaving in the society. Similarly, social control includes social mechanisms that regulate individual and group behaviour leading to compliance to rules of a given society.

Box 10.1: Ways of ensuring conformity with societal rules

There are two major ways of ensuring that individual members of the society conform to laid down rules. These are through informal modes of social control – which are mainly embedded in the customary laws of a society, and formal modes of social control which are mainly based on sanctions. The informal social control methods rely on the socialisation process of members of society to establish social order while the formal one is expressed through statutes or regulations against deviant acts. Under the formal mode of social control, an offender may be required to pay fines or even be imprisoned.

10.3 Dispute and Conflict Resolution

Every society has institutions that adjudicate disputes and address any form of threat against peaceful co-existence in the society. These are mainly done through sanctions. When violence occurs in the society or a member of the society violates the rules of the society, there will be a need to resolve this violation. Disputes are usually settled between aggrieved parties either peacefully or violently, depending on the severity of the dispute. Besides, the methods of conflict resolution also serve as a system of social control in the society. Conflict resolution not only serves as a means of restoring peace and resolving issues but it also serves as a precedence and an ideal for others to follow in future.

10.3.1 Traditional African Dispute and Conflict Resolution

In traditional African societies, great emphasis is put on peaceful resolution of conflict and the promotion of social harmony through the principles of custom and tradition of justice. For example, among the Tallensi of Ghana, violent resolution of conflicts are generally avoided. In order to promote peaceful resolution of conflict, they celebrate a festival called Golib in which all disputes and feuds between clans were forbidden.

Peacekeeping in most African communities follow four general principles. The first was the settlement of disputes by deliberation and discussion, rather than by force. The second was by correction of wrongdoing by compensation except for serious crimes such as murder. The third was trial or adjudication by the elders who were considered to be impartial and the fourth was the use of fairness in any dispute situations. For disputes arising within the family - for instance, a father and his son or between a man and his wife- such cases are resolved, in some African societies, by the family head. If the aggrieved person is not satisfied with the resolution, the case is referred to the head of the lineage for further deliberation and settlement of the conflict. When disputes involve persons from different lineages, the procedure for conflict resolution is slightly different. The issue causing grievances to any respected member of the community, say the head of his lineage who would call upon the head of the offender's lineage or other elders to help ensure impartial arbitration. The elders will be the ones to decide who was in the wrong and settled how the aggrieved person will be appeased.

Among the Igbo people in Nigeria, dispute resolution are done in five indigenous ways. It could be through the family head, the Umuadas (married daughters), the village tribunal, the age grade and/or the religious priest. The family head mediates in certain marital disputes such as cases of

delinquency, boundary disputes, and other cases between family members. If a member of the family defies a family head, his married daughters, Umuada, may be invited to resolve the dispute or enforce compliance with the decision. Matters involving persons outside the family or issues that threaten the stability of the entire family were referred to the village tribunal, composed of 10 to 15 lineage units. The tribunal units handle matters relating to traditional ceremonies, festivals, contract disputes with strangers and the likes. For disputes among the youth, these are handled by the age-grades while disputes of mysterious nature, such as a curse or strange illness, are usually referred to the priest or "medicine man." Such mysterious issues are often resolved through divination.

Peaceful resolution of conflicts

African societies have various means of settling disagreement among individuals, groups or parties in a peaceful manner. In societies without written or codified laws, one way the legal institution in society resolve conflict in a peaceful way is through community action. This could be in form of expelling the culprit from the society or even executing the individual. Another way of peaceful resolution of conflict is through oath taking and ordeal. Oath taking and ordeal both involve appeals to supernatural powers. Oath taking is an act that involves calling upon a deity to bear witness to what is being said while ordeal has to do subjecting an accused person to a dangerous and painful test in a bid to determine guilt or innocence. For example, in some societies, an accused person is forced to take some form of poison. If he or she survives, it serves as a proof of his or her innocence. In some societies, where laws are written or codified, conflicts are settled peacefully in traditional law courts. For instance, the Ashantis of Ghana have an elaborate legal arrangements. In Ashanti court procedures, elders examined and cross-examined witnesses as well as parties to the dispute. There were no advocates. Appeal against a verdict could be made directly to the chief heading the court. In indigenous Africa, proverbs also serve as means of peaceful conflict resolution.



Fig. 10.1 A picture showing a scene of an ethnic and religious clash (picture from google).

Violent Resolution Of Conflicts

Although Africans generally avoid violent means of conflict resolution, they do occur sometimes. Individuals may resort to violence when there are no effective ways of resolving disputes. For instance, when there are unresolved conflicts among communities, districts or political entities, it may be difficult to prevent warfare among these set of people. Apart from using wars to resolve disputes, aggrieved parties may decide to raid their opponents by using force to acquire goods, animals or other forms of wealth belonging their opponents.

10.4 Ethnic Pluralism in Africa - Burundi And Rwanda

Most Africa societies are pluralistic in nature. African countries are laden with ethnic, religious and cultural diversities which are common sources of tension. In the past few decades or nearly half of a century, African societies have been undergoing difficult times in terms of ethnic and religious, sometimes, cultural conflicts. Ethnic, religious and religious conflicts have taken different shapes and dimensions in African. While these conflicts may not be preconceived at the time of occurrence, they normally cause untold damages and losses. To illustrate this, let us take major ethnic crises in Burundi and Rwanda. There are various accounts on the genocide that occurred in Burundi and Rwanda concerning the ethnic strife between the Hutus, who are in the majority, and the Tutsis, who are in the minority. A version of the 19102 and 1993 conflict in Burundi reports that the vast majority of those killed were of Hutu origins, representing

approximately 80 per cent of a total population; the perpetrators were drawn overwhelmingly from the Tutsi minority, accounting for some 15 per cent of the population, its representatives holding full control over the armed forces and the government. The Tutsi army killed the Hutu people in 1972 and the Tutsi people were killed in the 1993 Genocide of Burundi.



Fig. 10.2 A picture showing indigenous Africans in the Congo region during Belgian rule, where violent amputations were the preferred method used by Europeans as a way of inflicting wounds that would not disappear (Picture by Ismail Lagardien).

In 1994, the Hutu majority in Rwanda organised and implemented the mass slaughter of the Tutsi minority. In just 100 days, 800,000 Tutsi were slaughtered. The Hutus and Tutsis are two ethnic groups in Rwanda who share a common past. It was not until the Europeans came to colonise the area that the terms "Tutsi" and "Hutu" took on a racial role. the colonialists empowered the Tutsi aristocracy, and cemented the second class status of Hutus, in what had previously been a fairly fluid social system. Upon leaving Rwanda, the colonialists reversed their favoritism and handed over power to the Hutus. This did not favour the Tutsis. However, in 1993, the then president of the country, Juvénal Habyarimana, made some amendments in the country's governing codes

which favoured the Tutsis but the Hutu extremists were displeased by this. On April 6, 1994, when President Habyarimana was returning from a summit in Tanzania, a missile was shot at his plane and all on board died. Within 24 hours after the crash, Hutu extremists had taken over the government, blamed the Tutsis for the assassination, and begun the slaughter of the Tutsis which lasted 100 days.

In Nigeria, there have been a number of ethnic and religious conflicts as well. There have been religious clashes between Muslims in the core north and Christians living among them. Presently, the country is battling with the menace of Boko Haram which is threatening the peaceful co-existence of the Nigerian populace.

Box 7.2

African communities suffer from ethnic, racial, and religious tensions periodically punctuated by outbreaks of brutality and carnage.

Activity 10.1

Take a moment to reflect on what you have read so far. Based on what you have learnt about the legal institutions, mention two major laws on which the African indigenous legal system was founded upon.

Activity 10.1 Feedback

African traditional legal institutions were founded on customary and religious laws.

Summary of Unit 10**In Unit 10, you have learned that:**

1. The legal institution or system is the process by which law are administered and enforced.
2. Laws are rules of conduct which have been officially announced as essential in a particular society and which are officially enforced.
3. Customary laws usually evolve from the ways of life- that is, the values, customs, norms and so on, of a people while religious laws are moral codes embedded in the religious beliefs of a people
4. Dispute and conflict resolution could either be peaceful or violent.
5. Most Africa societies have numerous distinct ethnic, religious, or cultural groups within a particular society and these groups are prone towards conflicts.

Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 10

Now that you have completed this study session, you can assess how well you have achieved its Learning Outcomes by answering these questions. You can check your answers with the Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions at the end of this Module.

SAQ 10.1 (tests learning outcome 10.1)

How can you correctly explain the following terms?

1. Law
2. Social order and
3. social control

SAQ 10.2 (tests learning outcome 10.2)

Mention and explain briefly two methods of social control

SAQ 10.3 (tests learning outcome 10.3)

Describe the nature of customary and religious laws

SAQ 10.4. (tests learning outcome 10.5)

Why do you think people resort into violent means of dispute resolution?

SAQ 10.5 (tests learning outcome 10.5, 10.1)

Discuss the problem of ethnic pluralism in Africa using Rwanda as an example

SAQ 10.6 (tests learning outcome 10.1)

Define legal institutions

Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 10

SAQ 10.1:

Law may be regarded as the explicit and implicit rules for conduct of members of society that are generally recognised or accepted and for which positive or negative sanctions can exist. It has to do with the use of force to regulate individual and group conduct and to prevent, redress or punish deviations from prescribed social norms. Law provides a means of dealing peacefully with whatever conflicts that may develop in society.

Social order and social control are closely related and are sometimes used interchangeably. Social order refers to a set of social structures and social practices which conserve maintain and enforce "normal" ways of relating and behaving in the society. Similarly, social control includes social mechanisms that regulate individual and group behaviour leading to compliance to rules of a given society.

SAQ 10.2:

Two methods of social control are i)informal method of social control ii) formal method of social control

SAQ 10.3:

Customary law refers to the uncodified law or legal system developed and practised by indigenous communities. Usually this type of legal system evolved from the ways of life- that is, the values, customs and norms of a people. It is the traditional rule or practice that has become an integral part of the accepted and expected behaviour in a community and is treated as a legal obligation

Religious laws are moral codes embedded in the religious beliefs of a people. African traditional religions specify conducts that are regarded as good manners and those that are treated as abominable acts. Most times, the line between good and abominable conducts are spelt out through a number of dos and don'ts in a society or through what can be referred to as taboos. Religious laws mete out sanctions to offenders.

SAQ 10.4

People resort into violent means of dispute resolution where there are no effective means of getting justice.

SAQ 10.5

Ethnic pluralism is the co-existence of various ethnic, religious and/or cultural groups within the same society.

SAQ 10.6

The legal institution or system is the process by which laws are administered and enforced

Unit 11 cultural changes in African social institutions

Expected duration: 1 week or 2 contact hours

Introduction

There is a popular saying that says the only constant in life is “change” Changes happen every now and then and these changes affect social institutions as well. In this last unit, you will be intimated with the cultural changes that have taken place in the various social institutions you have learnt about in the preceding chapters.

Learning outcomes for unit 11

At the end of the unit, the learner should be able to:

- 11.1 Define and use correctly all of the key words printed in **bold**. (SAQs 11.1)
- 11.2 Identify the various changes that have occurred in at least 2 of the social institutions (SAQ 11.1)

11.1 Cultural Changes in African Social Institutions

11.1.1 Cultural Changes within the Family Institution

The practice of **polygamous** marriages, in which a man may have more than one wife, is declining in contemporary Africa. Although monogamy is widely accepted above polygamous unions, these unions are plagued with a high rate of divorce which was uncommon in the past. Recurrent remarriages among divorced individuals are referred to as serial monogamies. Furthermore, unlike in the past when sexual behaviours were strictly regulated, such restrictions no longer exist. In the past, in Nigeria for example, it was a taboo for a lady to get pregnant before getting married but now are days, some elders and clergies advice intending couples to make sure the bride-to-be is pregnant before performing the marriage rites. In addition, in the past, marriages are been arranged by parents for their children. They help their male and female children to find suitable partners. There was nothing like marrying a person because of love. However, this has changed drastically from what it used to be. Although parental consent is still much needed in the eventual choice of a life partner, parents no longer search for spouses for their children, especially in western, eastern and southern Nigeria. Marriage today is based on the love intending couples have for each other. They only involve their parents when it comes to seeking their approval to get married to the chosen person.



Fig. 11.1 Modern African wedding ceremony (Picture from Izismile).

11.1.2 Modifications in the Economic Institution

The economy of Africa was predominantly peasant and pastoral in early times. While some members of the societies own large farm plots, others own numerous livestock. Apart from these, individuals also trained as artisans in professions like gold smiting, iron smelting and so on. The workforce for each trade normally comes from the immediate families of each member of the society. Women or wives are expected to assist their husbands in their trade and children are trained in the line of their parents' trade from their youth. Hence, everyone had a means of earning a living. There were no problems of unemployment. In fact, individuals had jobs beyond what they could conveniently do. However, as a result of contact with the Europeans and also due to the widespread of industrialisation that took place in Europe, African economic institution took a new form. People migrated from the rural areas to the urban centres, and even outside the country, to look for paid employment, thereby, abandoning their trades. The change in the economic systems resulted in some social problems which are still present in contemporary Africa.



Fig. 11.2 Modern means of production.

11.1.3 Changes in Educational Institutions

Education, in pre-colonial African context, can generally be thought of as a medium for the transmission of the values of the society. Every member of the community had a hand in contributing to the educational upbringing of a child. Education, in the past, was essentially a societal instrument for the expansion of human culture. In traditional Africa, the educational institutions mainly prepare young persons in the areas of artistic performances, games, festivals, dancing, singing, drawing and the likes as well as teaching and socialising the young ones into societal expectations. Furthermore, young persons are trained in the economic professions of their parents so that they could be self-supporting as adults. In most African societies, the high point of the educational experience always comes in form of the rites of passage ceremony which marks the movement from childhood to adulthood. However, when colonialism took place, many indigenous African educational systems began to change. With the advent of western form of education, the focus shifted. Both young persons and adult now strive to go to formal schools in order to get certificates for employment outside the home as well as to compete favourably with others for limited available opportunities.



Fig. 11.3 Children now have to start school early to prepare them for the future (Picture from Baysider) .

11.1.4 Changes in Religious Institutions

Indigenous religious beliefs and practices have undergone some cultural and social changes. In communal societies, religion permeated all aspects of society but in contemporary industrial society, the institution of religion has become separated from many social and economic activities. How did this occur? Most African religious beliefs and practices require blood sacrifices to placate the gods and involve other acts western countries will refer to as barbaric. Food sacrifices, animal sacrifices and, in serious cases, human sacrifices were regular practices in the indigenous African religions. These sacrifices are done either to placate the gods or win one favour or the other from the gods. In the name of religion, among the Calabar people in Nigeria, twins, as soon as they were born, were buried with their mothers because this was seen as a bad omen. Among other tribes in Nigeria, and elsewhere in Africa, female virgins were sacrificed annually to one of the indigenous gods of the people. Apart from these, in the early periods in eastern and western regions of Nigeria, part of the religious and burial rites for kings involved killings many slaves or even free ones to “accompany the king to heaven”. However, after contact with European Christian missionaries, things began to change. The missionaries taught people how to read and write. As a result of being able to read, people were able to read the bibles given to them by the missionaries and they began to have new perspectives on some of their religious beliefs and practices. As a result, adherence to these religious beliefs and practices began to wane. In the past, members of the society connects with their gods through their shamans or priests and receive directions on what to do in all circumstances, however, in Africa today, many people have embraced Christianity and Islam. These religions, although have their own priests that oversee religious affairs, promote individual relationship with God and abhors all sorts of blood sacrifices.

11.1.5 Changes in Political Institutions

In traditional political institution, succession to leadership positions is mostly hereditary. The heir to the position, be it kingship or positions of chiefs, is always very obvious - even before the death of an incumbent. However, current day Africa has changed drastically. The influence of kings and chiefs have declined. Due to colonial influence, most African countries indigenous political systems have been eroded. African leaders have imbibed the political systems of their colonial masters or borrowed other forms of government from the western world. For example, most African countries have embraced the democratic type of government. African countries that are not yet in democracies are clamouring for such. This is because democracy is said to be the government of the people, by the people and for the people. Members of societies now want to be directly involved in controlling their affairs. In democracy, a number of eligible individuals

contest for leadership positions on the platform of political parties. To eventually occupy the contested positions, they have to vote and be voted for by their supporters. Most times, there may be speculations that the eventual winner may not always be obvious. Additionally, some African countries are ridden with political unrest due to military insurgencies in a bid to take over power from incumbent governments. To become national leaders, military men sometimes seize power by force through coup de tat. Sometimes, these coups are peaceful, however, most times, they could be very bloody.

11.1.6 Changes in Legal Institutions

While Africa has been able to retain some contents of its legal institutions, it has been affected or modified as a result of contacts with the colonialists. Before, legal institutions were rooted in indigenous traditions, customs, religious beliefs and native laws, however, now, there has been a mix with foreign types which bears the hallmarks of European culture. Over the years, English and French forms of legal systems and social control mechanisms in African countries have taken on some local variations. In present day Africa, society depends on the military, police and the general justice system in society to enforce compliance to laws, rules and regulations, whereas in the past, it used to be the duties of family heads, lineage heads, community tribunals and so on to enforce compliance to societal rules and regulations. While these forms of indigenous legal systems are still operative, they have been overshadowed by western forms of dispute and conflict resolutions mechanisms.



Fig. 11.4 Session of the East African Court of Justice (EAC photo)

Activity 11.1

Take a moment to reflect on what you have read so far. Based on what you have learnt, what major changes have taken place with the marriage and family institutions?

Activity 11.1 Feedback

One major change which has taken place within the family and marriage institutions is that parents no longer arrange spouses for their children to marry.

Box 11.1

Since contact with Europeans and colonialists, African indigenous social institutions has witnessed a tremendous change.

Summary of Unit 11

In Unit 11, you have learned that:

All indigenous social institutions in Africa have undergone tremendous transformations, due mainly to colonialization and European contacts.

There is a wide difference between the social institutions in pre-colonial and contemporary Africa.

Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 11

Now that you have completed this study session, you can assess how well you have achieved its Learning Outcomes by answering these questions.

SAQ 11.1 (tests learning outcome 11.1, 11.2)

Identify the various changes that have occurred in at least 2 of the social institutions

Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 1

SAQ 11.1

In contemporary Africa, education now involves going to formal schools to be trained in order to fit well into life outside the home, however, in the past, individuals, especially young boys and girls, were socialised and trained to fit into adult, family and economic roles.

One major change in the African economic institutions is the movement from peasant and pastoral societies to industrialised societies.

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