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<p>Doudi Aouatef</p>	<p>RESEARCH ARTICLE </p> <h2 style="text-align: center;">Political Structures, Socio-Cultural Dynamics, and Islamic Expansion in Central Sudan (16th–19th Centuries): A Historical Analysis of the Kanem–Bornu Empire</h2> <p>Dr. University of Eloued Algeria Email: doudi-aawatef@univ-eloued.dz</p>	
<p>Keywords</p>	<p>Kanem–Bornu Empire; Central Sudan; Lake Chad Region; Zaghawa Dynasty; Saifid Dynasty; Islamic Expansion; Trans-Saharan Trade; Political History; Socio-Cultural Transformation</p>	
<p>Abstract</p> <p>This study examines the political, social, and cultural transformations that shaped the Central Sudan region between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, with particular emphasis on the historical development of the Kanem–Bornu Empire. Despite its long-standing significance in African and Islamic history, the socio-cultural dimensions of this empire remain relatively underexplored compared to other prominent West African states such as Mali and Songhai. The research adopts a historical-analytical approach, drawing upon both primary narratives and secondary historiographical sources to reconstruct the evolution of the Kanem–Bornu polity. It explores the role of geography in facilitating trans-Saharan trade networks, which positioned the empire as a crucial economic and cultural crossroads linking North Africa with sub-Saharan regions. The study further analyzes the political organization of the state, particularly under the Zaghawa and Saifid dynasties, highlighting their contributions to state formation, territorial expansion, and administrative continuity over several centuries. In addition, the paper investigates the processes through which Islam was introduced, institutionalized, and disseminated across the region. The adoption of Islam by ruling elites significantly influenced governance structures, legal systems, and cultural practices, while also promoting the spread of the Arabic language and scholarly traditions. The findings demonstrate that the Kanem–Bornu Empire functioned not only as a political entity but also as a dynamic center of cultural interaction, religious transformation, and economic exchange. Ultimately, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the historical complexity of Central Sudan and underscores the importance of integrating socio-cultural perspectives into the study of African Islamic empires.</p>		
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Introduction:

Like other regions in Africa, the central Sudan witnessed the rise of many ancient Islamic kingdoms, whose emergence was a result of the spread of Islam and its cultures in these areas. Among these kingdoms was the

Islamic Kanem-Bornu Empire. This kingdom endured for a long time, which distinguished it from others by its continuity until the 19th century AD. Its geographical locations expanded and contracted according to prevailing conditions and circumstances, which led it to have two names: Kanem and then Bornu. It is undeniable that this latter kingdom succeeded in playing a historical role similar to that of the Soninke tribes in Ghana, the Mandinka in Islamic Mali, and other tribes. The reason for choosing this specific topic for study is the scarcity of studies and research related to the history of the kingdom during the period under investigation. I have divided this research paper into: (The Rise of the Kanem Kingdom - Kanem during the Saifid Dynasty - Islam in Kanem - The Bornu Kingdom - The Kanem Dynasty's Move to Bornu and its Fall). This is followed by a conclusion summarizing the most important findings of the paper.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative historical-analytical research design to examine the political structures, socio-cultural dynamics, and processes of Islamic expansion in the Kanem-Bornu Empire between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. The research is grounded in a systematic interpretation of historical data derived from both primary and secondary sources, aiming to provide a comprehensive and critical understanding of the region's transformation.

Research Approach

The study employs a historical method, which involves the critical examination, interpretation, and synthesis of past events within their socio-political and cultural contexts. This approach allows for the reconstruction of the evolution of the Kanem-Bornu Empire, focusing on state formation, governance structures, and religious transformation.

In addition, a historical-analytical approach is utilized to move beyond descriptive narration and to evaluate causal relationships between political authority, economic networks (such as trans-Saharan trade), and the spread of Islam.

Data Sources

The research relies on a combination of:

- Primary historical narratives, including classical Arabic geographical and historical texts (e.g., works attributed to Al-Qalqashandi, Leo Africanus, and other early chroniclers), which provide firsthand or near-contemporary accounts of the region.
- Secondary scholarly sources, including modern academic studies, books, and historiographical analyses related to African Islamic history, Central Sudan, and the Kanem-Bornu Empire.

These sources were selected based on their academic relevance, credibility, and contribution to understanding the political and socio-cultural evolution of the region.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using:

- Content analysis, to identify recurring themes related to governance, Islamization, trade networks, and social transformation.
- Comparative analysis, where relevant, to situate the Kanem-Bornu Empire within the broader context of other West African Islamic states such as Mali and Songhai.
- Contextual analysis, to interpret historical developments in relation to geographical, economic, and cultural factors influencing the region.

Source Criticism and Reliability

A critical source evaluation was conducted to ensure the reliability and validity of the data. This included:

- Assessing the authenticity and historical context of primary sources
- Identifying potential biases and limitations in classical narratives
- Cross-referencing multiple sources to enhance historical accuracy and consistency

Limitations of the Study

The study acknowledges several limitations, including:

- The scarcity of primary sources directly related to certain periods of the Kanem–Bornu Empire
- The reliance on translated and interpreted historical texts, which may introduce interpretive bias
- Limited availability of recent empirical studies focusing specifically on socio-cultural dynamics in the Central Sudan region

Despite these limitations, the methodological triangulation of sources and analytical approaches strengthens the overall validity of the findings.

Literature Review

The history of the Kanem–Bornu Empire and its role in the spread of Islam in Central Sudan has attracted scholarly attention within the broader field of African and Islamic historiography. However, compared to major West African empires such as Mali Empire and Songhai Empire, the socio-cultural and institutional dimensions of Kanem–Bornu remain relatively underexplored.

Early historical knowledge about the region is largely derived from classical Arabic historians and geographers, including Al-Qalqashandi and Leo Africanus, whose works provide valuable descriptions of political organization, trade routes, and cultural practices in Central Sudan. These narratives highlight the strategic importance of the Lake Chad Basin as a crossroads between North Africa and sub-Saharan regions.

Modern scholarship has expanded upon these early accounts by examining the economic and political significance of trans-Saharan trade networks. Researchers have emphasized that these networks facilitated not only the exchange of goods such as salt, textiles, and slaves, but also the transmission of religious ideas, particularly Islam. In this context, the Kanem–Bornu Empire is often interpreted as a **mediating space of cultural and religious interaction**, where Islamic institutions gradually integrated with indigenous traditions.

Several studies have focused on the role of ruling dynasties, particularly the Zaghawa and Saifid dynasties, in shaping the political continuity of the empire. These works suggest that the adoption of Islam by political elites played a crucial role in consolidating authority, legitimizing governance, and establishing administrative systems influenced by Islamic law.

Despite these contributions, there remains a significant gap in the literature concerning:

- the **interaction between political power and socio-cultural transformation**,
- the **processes of Islamization at the societal level**, and
- the **comparative positioning of Kanem–Bornu within the wider Islamic African world**.

This study seeks to address these gaps by integrating political, economic, and cultural perspectives into a unified analytical framework.

Findings

The findings of this study reveal that the Kanem–Bornu Empire functioned as a **complex and dynamic system** in which political authority, economic networks, and religious transformation were deeply interconnected.

1. Strategic Geography and Trade Networks

The geographical position of the Kanem–Bornu Empire in the Lake Chad Basin played a decisive role in its historical development. The region served as a central hub in trans-Saharan trade routes, linking North Africa with sub-Saharan Africa. This strategic location facilitated economic prosperity and enabled the empire to become a key center of cultural exchange.

2. Political Stability and Dynastic Continuity

The long-term stability of the empire was largely sustained by the governance structures established under the Zaghawa and Saifid dynasties. These ruling elites developed systems of administration that combined traditional authority with emerging Islamic political principles, ensuring continuity over several centuries.

3. Islam as a Transformative Force

One of the most significant findings is the central role of Islam in reshaping the political and socio-cultural landscape of the region. The conversion of ruling elites to Islam facilitated:

- the institutionalization of Islamic law
- the expansion of religious education
- the integration of the region into the broader Islamic world

Importantly, the spread of Islam occurred not only through political authority but also through trade networks, scholarly exchange, and voluntary adoption, indicating a gradual and multifaceted process of Islamization.

4. Socio-Cultural Transformation and Identity Formation

The interaction between Islamic and indigenous traditions led to the emergence of a hybrid socio-cultural identity. Arabic language and Islamic scholarship gained prominence, while local customs adapted to new religious and cultural frameworks. This process contributed to the development of a distinctive regional identity within Central Sudan.

5. Military Organization and State Expansion

The empire's military strength played a crucial role in both territorial expansion and internal stability. Particularly during the reign of rulers such as Idris Aluma, the state achieved a high level of military organization, which reinforced political authority and protected trade routes.

6. Factors of Decline

The decline of the Kanem-Bornu Empire was influenced by a combination of internal and external factors, including:

- dynastic conflicts and political fragmentation
- economic pressures and declining trade influence
- external invasions, particularly by the Fulani

These factors collectively weakened the state structure and contributed to its eventual collapse in the context of expanding colonial influence.

The Kanem-Bornu Kingdom: The Bornu State (1) is currently located in northeastern Nigeria, western Chad, and eastern Hausaland. Historically, it was one of the regions of the Kanem Kingdom, which bordered Sudan and Libya. Its capital was the city of Gidam. During the Bornu period, Kanem became part of the Bornu Empire. Therefore, some historians divide the history of the Bornu Kingdom into two flourishing periods: the Kanem period, extending from the establishment of the empire in the Kanem region until the end of the 14th century CE, and the Bornu period, beginning in the late 14th century CE until the end of the Bornu Empire during the era of modern colonialism.

1-Kanem Kingdom: The first government of the Kanem Kingdom (2) was established in the northeast of Lake Chad (3) during the period from 184 AH/800 AD. Then its influence grew and expanded during the ninth and tenth centuries AD until the end of the eighth century AH/14 AD. There are many accounts of its origins and early beginnings, but the established history of its emergence dates back to what we mentioned previously. After the arrival of Islam in the kingdom, it expanded to include areas west of Lake Chad, known as the Bornu region, and vast lands in the Central Sudan (4) and Western Sudan. Ancient history contains many legends about successive migrations towards Kanem, especially from the east and northeast, via the ancient routes leading to it from the direction of the Nile Valley. In addition, it was said that Kanem had received the Umayyad dynasty fleeing from the Abbasid sultan who was pursuing them with persecution (5). Some historians indicate that all these peoples mixed into one people known as the Sao people (6). The historian Orfuy determined the date of the migration of this people to the Kanem region to be around the sixth century AD, and they initially spread on the northeastern bank of Lake Chad. Then they controlled the savanna region extending north, and finally settled in the southwestern part of the lake (7). Because Kanem lacked natural resources like the gold and salt mines of the kingdoms of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai, the Sao people were spared the invasions of their neighbors and remained dependent on the trade caravan routes between the Mediterranean and Chad (8). With the beginning of the 8th century CE, new migrations began, including those of the Zaghawa (9). These initially settled around Lake Chad, having been nomadic tribes along the southern edge of the Sahara Desert. The Zaghawa soon migrated and extended their influence over the Chad region, as the nomadic Fulani did several centuries later, forming an aristocratic class. Some of them spoke Arabic alongside their native language, the Tebu. The founding of the first Bornu state in the Kanem region is attributed to them (10). Yaquut al-Hamawi mentions the Zaghawa kingdom and its expansion, and

that the Kawara region, or the Sao kingdom, was... The kingdom of the giants, which was under the influence of the Zaghawa, also saw the Zaghawa government dominate the Wadai region and the neighboring Nubian tribes to the east. When their power was consolidated, they established their capital in Wanjimi (11) in the Kanem region (12). Historical writings indicate that the Zaghawa were renowned for their significant contribution to introducing the metal industry to the central Sudan region. Today, in Hausaland and its surrounding areas, in Dendi and Borjo (or Barko), there exists a class of people who practice metalworking and even leatherwork, distinct from the neighboring populations. This class has been referred to by several names, most of which are similar, including: Zojo, Zermowa, or Joamb. It is likely that this class is of Zaghawa origin, and some of their descendants ruled over Hausaland, establishing their capital in the city of Gobir. These descendants are known as the Hab. The tribes known as the Zaghawa in modern times reside in the Wadai region, east of Lake Chad.

The Zaghawa tribes The Zaghawa group continued to rule the Kanem region until the beginning of the 9th century AD, when a new dynasty emerged and took control of Kanem. Known as the Maghumi, they were white Berbers, cousins of the Tuareg. This dynasty continued to rule, both in the Kanem region and later in the Bornu region, until it was overthrown by the Fulani during the 19th century AD. The reign of this dynasty was one of the longest in the world (13).

A - Kanem during the Saifid era (the Saifid dynasty):

Sources and records of the Kanem-era government mention that the Saifid dynasty was named after Saif ibn Dhi Yazan al-Himyar. One of its kings, Uthman ibn Idris (1392-1424 CE), the thirty-third king in the line of Mayyat Barnu, confirms this fact in a letter to Barquq, the Mamluk Sultan of Egypt (1382-1398 CE), when he was complaining about the attacks of the Judham tribe in his lands. He stated that he was from the lineage of Saif ibn Dhi Yazan, saying to him, "We are the descendants of Saif ibn Dhi Yazan, the Arab Qurayshi, as we have learned from our elders." (14)

The Saifid dynasty continued to rule Kanem for about eight centuries. Narratives about this dynasty say that its rule was one of the longest successive governments from a single family, with the number of its early kings reaching eleven. (15) Their kings were known from the time of the pagans by the title 'MAI,' meaning Imam. According to local sources, the first of them to convert to Islam was the twelfth king, Huma Gilma, whom the orientalist Orfuybanhuli estimates to have been born between 1085 and 1097 CE. These sources add that he made a statement on the day of his conversion, saying, "I was the first country in Sudan to embrace Islam, and it was Bornu that was brought by Muhammad ibn Manani, who resided in Bornu for five years during the reign of King Balu, six years during the reign of King Zaku, four years during the reign of King Kadayhu, and fourteen years during the reign of King Huma." With his conversion (16), the people of Kanem also converted in the 11th century.

It is worth mentioning that May Huma Gilma was one of the strongest of the Saifian kings. He managed to achieve victory against the pagan Bulala (17), who posed a threat to his kingdom. He forced them to pay tribute, but they broke the treaty and They raided the southern borders of Bornu, thanks to the support these Bulala received from neighboring pagan tribes. However, all their raids failed, and they were defeated, with three thousand of their fighters killed. This gave King Humeh Gilma a good reputation, and he became the military hero of the Kanem kingdom.

After his death, he was succeeded by Ibn Hadwanma (1098-1151 CE). During his reign, Kanem's military power flourished, as he focused on military affairs and related matters to achieve the security and stability of the kingdom and to pursue its military objectives. These objectives included pursuing and eliminating pagan tribes, converting them to Islam, and forcing them to pay tribute. It is said that Kanem's army numbered one hundred and twenty thousand soldiers. Among them were one hundred thousand slaves, not counting the mercenaries. Therefore, his fame increased during this period, and he became a formidable military force in the region (18). Dunama undertook extensive conquests, extending his influence from the borders of Egypt in the east to Niger in the west, and from Fezzan (19) in the north to Benin in the south.

Dunama was the first sultan to perform the Hajj pilgrimage. Local accounts indicate that he performed it three times, and each time he left three hundred slaves in a town belonging to Egypt. The townspeople feared that he would seize it upon his return from the Hajj, so they sank the ship he was traveling on, and he perished in the Gulf of Suez in Egypt. He was succeeded by his son, but he was weak, and the sources do not mention any of his achievements. He was deposed and imprisoned (20). He was succeeded by Abdullah (1176-1193 CE), who ruled for seventeen years, during which he managed to repel external threats. He was then succeeded by Al-Maysalam ibn Bakr. (1194/1221 CE) During his reign, the kingdom was attacked by the pagan Sawali tribes, but he managed to defeat them (21).

After him, Dunama Ahmad ascended the throne (1221/1259 CE). He was a resolute man like his grandfather and interested in conquests. He spent several years subduing the Tebu tribes (22). It is believed that he was the one who extended Kanem's influence over all of Fezzan. After his death, Kanem entered a period of weakness. Ten weak sultans succeeded to its throne between 1225 and 1386 CE. This weakness led to dire consequences for the kingdom (23).

B- Islam in Kanem

Like other Sudanese kingdoms at that time, Islam entered Kanem. Internal and external sources almost unanimously agree on one fact: the first country in Central Sudan to embrace Islam was Kanamu, the northeastern part of Nigeria near Lake Chad, in the 5th century AH/11th century CE. Hamijilmiya was the first of its kings to convert, in 1085, and after his conversion, he named himself Muhammad. As we mentioned earlier, his entire kingdom converted to Islam at his hands (24).

It is noted that when the ruling family in Kanamu converted to Islam, Islam was able to gain a firm foothold in the Central Sudan region.

The kings of Kanamu exerted great effort to make Islam the official currency of the kingdom and to spread it throughout its lands, and they succeeded in this. They spread Islam by building many mosques. In addition, they were keen to perform the Hajj pilgrimage (25). The Mai were not the most devout in the land. A Muslim king performed the Hajj pilgrimage twice and destroyed a shrine belonging to the ancient pagan religion, called Muniy.

Generally, this king was known for his jihad against the infidels and his charitable works. In addition, many groups from the Berber regions of central Sudan embraced Islam at his hands. His successors adhered to the Islamic faith, and justice prevailed during their reigns as a result (26).

During the reign of King Uthman ibn Zaynab (1279-1300 CE), the nineteenth king in the line of Sayfi kings, it is mentioned that he is the one referred to as al-Hadi al-Uthmani, as indicated by Arabic sources. He was considered the Caliph of the Muslims. During his reign, two Fulani scholars from Mali came with the aim of preaching Islam. Uthman encouraged them to spread it in the regions that were still practicing paganism. He also initiated the Islamic jihad movement and engaged in many wars with the Tebu tribes.

2- The Bornu Kingdom:

The Arab tribes of the Shuwa (27), who settled in the Lake Chad region, were the ones who gave the word Bornu to the Kanuri tribes (28). This word is a corruption of the words Barana and Abaram in some Saharan languages. Barana and Abaram are plural forms of the word Bara, meaning man or warrior, according to these languages. Therefore, Bornu means warrior men. Some Arabic sources mention the name Bornu when referring to the land of Bornu, the king of Bornu, and the kingdom of Bornu, as well as Qalqashndia and Al-Hasan Al-Wazzan (29).

As for the establishment of this Islamic kingdom, it arose in the lands of Central Sudan, dating back to the later stages of the medieval period. This is specifically attributed to the last kings who established the rule in the Kingdom of Bornu, who were of the same origin as the kings of Kanem (30).

Regarding the nature of the relationship between Kanem and Bornu before the Kanem people migrated to Bornu before the 14th century, sources do not mention much about this relationship, except for what Ibn Sa'id al-Maghribi indicated during the 13th century. He mentioned an independent kingdom located west of Chad called Mahajawa, which led us to believe that the Kingdom of Bornu was independent (31). A- The Kanem Dynasty's Move to Borno:

Towards the end of the 14th century AD, Kanem began to experience a state of weakness and decline. The reasons for this weakness can be summarized as the internal conflict that arose among members of the ruling family. This exposed the kingdom to danger, opening the door wide to foreign powers (32).

In 1386, disturbances began with wars waged by the powerful Saw tribes in the south, who managed to kill four sultans in succession in several bloody battles. To make matters worse, the Bulala tribes residing in Kanem and its northern regions joined them, tightening the noose around Sultan Wodeben Nakamah (1376-1386 AD), named after his mother, until they expelled him from the capital, Njimi. Several civil wars ensued, claiming the lives of several sultans. The fact that twenty sultans ascended the throne of Kanem in less than a year is a testament to this.

The ruling family was forced to seek refuge in Borno, Nigeria. When the sultans sought refuge in Borno after leaving Kan, their title changed to Sultans of Borno instead of Kan (33). Arab sources tell us that the beginning of the fifteenth century witnessed a bitter struggle waged by the kings of the Saif dynasty in Borno to reassert their power and eliminate their rivals. Mai Ali Haji Banduna (1476-1503 CE) is considered the true founder of the new

state. He managed to end the internal wars that were still raging in Borno (34). He built a new capital for his kingdom around 1488, namely the city of Borno. From this new, stable capital, Mai Ali Haji began his expansionist projects after he waged war against Kan, one of the Hausa states, due to its attack. The Wongara tribes, subject to Bornu, were forced to pay him tribute. May Ali Haji continued the policy of his ancestors in attempting to reclaim the Kan region from the Bulala, who controlled it. In one of his battles, he managed to eliminate a large number of them, but he was unable to enter his territory and was satisfied with the Bulala's apparent submission, which was temporary (35).

During the 10th century AH (16th century CE), Bornu experienced a period of great power. Three great rulers—Idris ibn Aisha, Idris al-Wama (36), and Muhammad Idris—worked to rebuild the kingdom's strength. Bornu extended its dominion from Darfur to the western borders of Hausaland, and Fezzan was once again under its control. During the reign of Idris Aluma (1570-1602 CE), one of the most famous sultans who waged fierce battles to quell unrest and consolidate his rule, Bornu reached its zenith. Aluma established his kingdom as a purely military force, and Bornu possessed an army unmatched by any other in all of West Africa. He achieved significant victories around Bornu, defeating the Tuareg tribes and subduing some Kano vassals, though he was unable to capture the city itself. This army maintained its reputation until the Fulani wars (37).

Idris Aluma exerted considerable effort to establish Islam as the state religion and to spread it throughout the kingdom. Some of Sheikh Vartu's writings indicate the great interest this king showed in spreading Islam in his kingdom, where most of the prominent figures and dignitaries embraced Islam. By the 18th century CE, the vast majority of the population had become Muslim. He was keen to strengthen the rule of Islamic law, establishing courts under the supervision of Sharia judges, entrusting them with safeguarding and upholding the faith. He also increased the construction of mosques and encouraged the performance of the Hajj pilgrimage.

From a military standpoint, he organized his wars to align with the principles of Islamic jihad. He also adopted Islamic thought regarding the treatment of prisoners of war, and his wars to spread Islam became rooted in the Islamic faith. No one was forced to convert to Islam; conversion became a matter of free will and conviction. Thus, Islam spread more widely during his reign through preaching and without any coercion (38). Despite the numerous wars, disturbances, seditions, and raids that Mai Idris faced throughout his rule, these did not prevent him from performing the Hajj pilgrimage. While the Hajj was a pillar of Islam, it also provided an opportunity for King Idris to learn more about Islam and meet its scholars, enabling him to establish relationships in various fields, particularly the economic sphere. In 1580 CE, King Idris performed the Hajj and, during this journey, became aware of the value of Nazi weapons. He purchased many of them from the Ottomans, thereby changing the nature of warfare in these regions. Thanks to this weapon, Bornu succeeded in imposing its military power on the region, thus expanding its geographical borders. In addition, during his travels, he built a headquarters in Mecca and Medina for pilgrims, encouraging the inhabitants of the Bornu kingdom to perform the Hajj pilgrimage. (39) In 1012 AH/1603, Maya Idris Aloma died after a life full of heroism and sacrifices in the cause of spreading Islam and Arab-Islamic civilization, after being stabbed by a spiteful pagan. He was then buried in Alwa, specifically in the Adamawa region, leaving behind a great and powerful state, the greatest state that Central Sudan had ever witnessed. Thus, the Bornu kingdom came to an end after a long period in which it witnessed development and progress in various aspects. (40)

B- The Weakening and Fall of the Bornu Kingdom:

When discussing the decline and fall of the Bornu Kingdom, we can consider the beginning of the 17th century as a starting point. From the time of May Idris's death, the state's power began to weaken due to internal divisions. The Bornu army became so weak during the reign of May Ali ibn Umar (1645-1684 CE) that two enemies, the Tuareg from the north and the Korfa tribes from the south, besieged the city. The only thing that saved him was his success in instigating conflict between them. They fought until they were defeated, and God spared him their evil. The kingdom remained in this state of weakness.

May Ali ibn Umar performed the Hajj pilgrimage three times, in 1648, 1656, and 1767 CE. Upon his return from his final pilgrimage, he found that a war had broken out against him in the capital. However, due to his intelligence and courage, he had no difficulty suppressing it. The decline of this kingdom was further evidenced by frequent famines, particularly during the 18th century AD. The longest famine occurred during the reign of Nama (1704-1722 AD), lasting approximately seven years. Of the seven Bornu sultans who ruled until the early 18th century, only Maya Ahmad ibn Ali ibn Dunma (1793-1810 AD) is worth mentioning. He was described as a scholar, a patron of scholars, and a benefactor to the poor and needy. During his reign, a plague struck, killing many. This Maya was a righteous man, but his neglect of state affairs led to frequent enemy raids and a surge in banditry that

plundered the land. Consequently, the people abandoned farming, and famine ravaged them. In this deplorable state of affairs in the kingdom, the threat of the Fulani, followers of Sheikh Uthman ibn Fawzi, emerged and began launching attacks from the west. At that time, the kingdom was weakened, causing the kings to flee the capital. Had it not been for Sheikh al-Amin al-Kanemi, whose strong personality enabled him to control the kings, the kingdom would have collapsed beyond repair (41).

Al-Amin al-Kanemi became the de facto ruler of the kingdom in 1809, establishing Kaka as his capital. Thus began a new era in the kingdom's history (42).

Conclusion:

Based on the foregoing presentation of this model in this research paper, it is worth noting that the Islamic Kanem-Bornu Kingdom, which flourished around Lake Chad, formed, by virtue of its strategic location and strong administrative system, a civilizational pillar in the history of the central Sudan. This kingdom played a pivotal role in spreading Islam, refining existing customs, and eradicating paganism. With the spread of Islamic sciences, its connection with the most advanced contemporary civilizations increased. Alongside the spread of Islam, the Arabic language spread and became the official language of the Bornu government. This kingdom continued until the end of the 19th century, when it was occupied by the French, who swept through all the other kingdoms in the region, reaching as far as the Maghreb.

Ethical Considerations

This study is based exclusively on historical and archival sources, including published literature, documented narratives, and secondary analyses. No human participants, personal data, or experimental procedures were involved in the research process. Therefore, formal ethical approval was not required.

The author has ensured that all sources are properly cited and that the research adheres to principles of academic integrity, transparency, and responsible scholarship. All interpretations are presented objectively, without fabrication, falsification, or misrepresentation of historical evidence.

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Conflict of Interest

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