

Essay on the governance of the ancient kingdom of ghana

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The Governance of the Ancient Kingdom of Ghana

The Ghana Ancient Empire also known as Wagadugu Empire was in existence between the 9th and the 13th centuries. The empire's location was on a gold mine, within the present day boundaries of Senegal, Mali, and Mauritania. Some of the present-day West Africa inhabitants who are believed to have ancestors linked with the empire include; Gonja, Dagomba, voltaic people, and Mande. The empire acquired its wealth and power from gold and the Trans-Saharan trade (Quigley, 2002).

With the growth of Wagadugu Empire, like other empires, they invented new methods of governing themselves, producing wealth, and raising money to help the government. Accordingly, this stage of social organization needed a government or a single authority. This single authority according to the customs of that period could only be an emperor or a king.

The empire consisted of the metropolitan Ghana and the provincial Ghana. The provincial Ghana consisted of the territories that had been defeated and annexed. The king, the governor of the capital city and the ministers had the responsibility over the central government. The king of the Wagadugu was given the title 'ghana' meaning 'a war chief' (Quigley, 2002). The king served as a commander in chief of the empire's army, head of the justice administration and controlled all the trading activities in the region. The king appointed civil servants, mayors, ministers, and counselors to assist him in executing administrative duties however, he remained in charge at all times.

In the conquered states, the local leader was the natural leader of his own community and the selection procedure was customary and the selection confirmed by the king of proper Ghana. To ensure that there was a continued allegiance of the conquered territories, the king insisted on the sons of the vassal kings to be sent to his court (Quigley, 2002). The leaders of the provincial states had the obligation of provision of annual tribute, loyalty to the king and the contribution of warriors to the empire's army when they are needed for active service. In return, the King of the proper Ghana provided protection to them against external attacks and facilitate the processes of settling disputes.

The king had a responsibility of assembling his court and allowing people to air their complaints. The meetings were convened by the signals of drums, which resounded throughout the entire empire. In these meetings, the king listened to the complaints raised and gave his verdict. These hearings were allegedly peace, unless the matters involved were criminal in nature. The most serious offences were shedding of blood and denial of debt, and the trial was by ordeal (Quigley, 2002). The inhabitants of the conquered empires were subject to examination for their loyalty and their good behavior as well. The territories which obedience, order, and proper payment of taxes prevailed, autonomy was granted. However, in territories that defied the king's orders or struggled for independence, the king appointed governors to act as watchdogs over them.

The King used trade to spread his power and influence outside the empire. At the peak of the empire, Ghana mainly bartered slaves, ivory, and Gold for

salt from the Arabs and cloth, horses, books and swords from the Europeans and North Africa. The Islamic merchants who were involved in the trade were taxed for both what they took out and what they bought. Hence, this made the empire rich and the kings more powerful (Quigley, 2002). Upon the death of the King, his sister will assume powers, and in cases where he has no sisters or brothers, then the eldest son will take the crown.

Reference

Quigley, M., (2002). Ancient West African Kingdoms: Ghana, Mali, Songai. Turtleback Books.