

The Mutapa State

Did these economic activities Contribute to the growth and expansion of the Mutapa.

Farming generated more food and this helped many people to settle together farming large communities

The control of trade by the leaders gave them power and wealthy which held them dominate / controlling other less wealthy groups.

Knowledge of iron making also gave power in terms of weapons and helped the leading group to establish authority and even expand its influence over large areas.

Resulting exhibition of power also enhanced growth and expansion when smaller ethnic groups Voluntarily joined the Mutapa state / kingdom

The King's alleged religious powers were also a factor in the growth of the state as it generated loyalty of subjects.

The political system where all subordinate people were controlled through the chief's representatives also enhanced growth

The military prowess of the nucleus group of Mutapa helped them to conquer other areas and bring them under centralized authority

Political Organisation of Mutapa state

The King was the head of the state and ruled with the help of the council.

His daily duties were to settle disputes lead religious ceremonies and political organization / affairs.

Upon his death he became a mhondoro (a high respected chief)

The Mutapa was 'democratic' because he consulted his council on important issues such as war and important religious matters.

The council was made of army commanders, priest and sons of the pfumos.

Provincial administration.

It was headed by the provincial chief or pfumos

They enjoyed some degree of independence

They performed a number of duties which were

- (i) Paying tribute to Mutapa.
- (ii) Contributing troops during wars
- (iii) Collected the royal fire from the king and distributed to the social province.

Religion

The religion recognized the existence of a supreme God creator of all called Mwari (Musikavanhu). The people and their God communicated through spirit mediums. They know that there is a God in Heaven. They believe that their kings go to heaven and when they are there call the vadzimus and ask them for whatever they require. This shows the link between the people, vadzimu, the mutapa and the religion. For one to be a ruler they had to be sanctioned by the vadzimu if this happened he would be blessed and automatically feared. The vadzimu gave him orders e.g. to have a war or not and in time of famine and hunger he go help.

Military Organization

The Mutapa needed an army to defend the large area he controlled.

If an emergency arose he would gather his Dare or Hondo (council of war) to make plans and choose who to conscript into the attacking or defending force.

The forces were organized into several battalions under a chain of command the top of which was the Mutapa and a commander in chief.

Before heading into battle n'angas (spirit healers) 'treated' the soldiers to make them brave.

Sources from the time say that the Mutapa armies liked to fight in the open using the classic 'cow horns' formation to surround the enemy.

Hwamanda parapand was used to give orders to attack to withdraw etc.

The decline of the Mutapa State

1. Weak Mutapas

Nyahuma who succeeded Matope lacked his predecessor's qualities. He was young, weak and incompetent. Senior and more ambitious leaders were tempted to rebel.

His sub-chiefs Chang and Togwa / Torwa rebelled with success. In 1490 Changa started to rule. But his rule was short-lived. In 1494 Changa was killed by Nyahuma's son Chikuyo Chisamarengu. Chikuyo rules from 1494 up to 1530.

The empire was divided into two.

Competition of these two Kingdoms remained a source of weakness.

ii) The vastness of the Empire

the vastness of the empire created by Nyatsimba and Matope proved too unwieldy to anybody without the qualities of those two. What was needed was an efficient administrative and communication system backed by a powerful army leader who followed Matope had neither the capacity nor ability to do so leading to the disintegration of the Kingdom.

iii) Succession Disputes:

succession disputes which were by and large supported by the Portuguese also led to empires decline. Portuguese interference in the Mutapa state also worked to destroy it e.g. the struggle between Gatsi Rusere and Matuzianhe.

Mavhura and Kaporaridze installed their own puppet Mamvura in 1630 and this weakened the state.

Prazo –holders took land and recruited private army which attacked the local people.

The Prazo-holders enslaved the local people

The Mutapa state was invaded by the Rozvi under Changamire Dombo

The state was also invaded by the Nguni under Zwangendaba as well as the Ndebele state.

The invasion of the state by the British in 1890 marked the end of the Mutapa state