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Astract

Both oral and written sources accredited pre-colonial Kano as a cosmopolitan commercial and production center. The driven forces were statecraft, security, liberal reception of merchant communities and entrepreneurial zeal of diaspora networks. The cumulative consequences of these factors were the emergence of Kano as a leading Southern terminus and entreport of the trans-Saharan trade and trade routes in the 19th century. This paper submits that productive capacity, state policies on economy and trade promoted commercial intercourse on the African scale and the vice versa was true as well. As the example of Kano shows, trade and production facilitated exchange between the West coast of Africa and North Africa. A remarkable outcome was the unhindered flow of goods, peoples and ideas that gave Kano its cultural values and identities. Its main manufactures were the famous Kano cloth woven on looms from locally-grown cotton and usually dye blue as well as sandals, and tanned hides exported to North Africa such as Ghat, Fezzan, Tripoli and Morocco and West Timbuktu and the shores of the Atlantic and as far South as Kumasi and Lagos. From 1452 to 1463, Kano's trade expanded with establishment merchant settlements for Tripolitanian and Ghadames traders. Arabs operated the slave and gold trade between Hausaland and the Niger bend. The contemporary Kano identity has been shaped, partly, by the commercial intercourse with North Africa and liberal reception of North African diaspora communities in Kano.