

GREAT AFRICAN MILITARY LEADERS

QUEEN AMINA

The Hausa Kingdoms were a grouping of West African states that were located between Lake Chad to the west and the Niger River to the east. The African ethnic group which populated these kingdoms and the area in general from around 700 AD are known as the Hausa people with one of the oldest kingdoms being Daura (in modern-day northern Nigeria). The Hausa Kingdoms included Kano, Katsina, Zazzau, Gobir, Rano, Daura and Biram and were founded in 1000 AD.

The kingdoms are also known as 'Hausa Bakwai' which means 'Seven True Hausa States'. The Zazzau Kingdom was the nation from which Queen Amina descended and she was the daughter of Queen Bakwa Turunku who was the founder of the city of Zaria and constructed the royal palace of Zaria. The city of Zaria was located in modern-day Kaduna State in Northern Nigeria. Queen Amina and her nation were Muslims who engaged in trade with the other six Hausa Kingdoms where they were able to sell horses, salt, kola nuts, precious metals and textiles.

Queen Amina was a renowned warrior queen and military strategist who also designed the re-enforced protective walls which Queen Amina had surrounding the central city of Zaria. These defensive fortifications became known in the region as 'Ganuwar Amina' or 'Amina's Walls'. Throughout the reign of Queen Amina, she was involved in military action and conquest in western Africa. Queen Amina's standing army numbered over 20,000 soldiers who she used to consolidate her power in the region and ensure that her merchants had safe passage when travelling in the region. Queen Amina enlarged the territory of Zaria and ruled the kingdom for 34 years. Queen Amina is also credited with upgrading the armour of the Zaria military with chain mail and iron helmets. The history of Queen Amina and the surrounded area is referenced in the great west African literary work called the Kano Chronicles.

