

Chapter 1: Ancestral Africa

Multiple Choice

1. What linguistic group predominated in the region of north-central Africa?

- a. Koisan
- b. Afro-Asiatic
- c. Nilo-Saharan
- d. Niger-Congo

ANS: c

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2. Scholars believe that, around 2000 B.C.E., speakers of which language spread from present day Nigeria and Cameroon southward and eastward to make their language the most commonly used one on the continent?

- a. Akan
- b. Yoruba
- c. Kintampo
- d. Bantu

ANS: d

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3. The artifacts of the ancient Nok people of the Jos Plateau provide archaeological evidence of all of the following EXCEPT

- a. highly developed iron-making capabilities.
- b. settled communities centered around agricultural production.
- c. a written language used for administrative and economic records.
- d. figurative terracotta sculptures.

ANS: c

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4. What is an *abrammuo*?

- a. a weight for measuring precious metals
- b. a small sculpture used in religious ceremonies
- c. a wind instrument similar to the modern flute
- d. a headpiece worn by Ghanaian emperors

ANS: a

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5. Before the fifteenth century C.E., what commodity did Arabs and Europeans most desire from sub-Saharan Africa?

- a. spices
- b. slaves
- c. gold
- d. iron

ANS: c

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6. Which of the following statements about *dyula* is LEAST accurate?
- a. They used items such as cowry shells as a form of currency.
 - b. They were often among the first sub-Saharan Africans to convert to Islam.
 - c. They were all members of the same Mande-speaking ethnic group.
 - d. They settled in dispersed regions of West Africa, but maintained commercial ties among themselves.

ANS: c

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7. By the ninth century C.E., West Africa had well-established trading connections with the Muslim world, conducted
- a. across the Sahara desert.
 - b. along the Atlantic coast.
 - c. across the Mediterranean Sea.
 - d. along the Indian coast.

ANS: a

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8. Archaeological and historical evidence indicates that
- a. until ca. 900 C.E., West African settlements engaged in little trade or cultural interaction with each other.
 - b. around 900 C.E. Muslim adventurers introduced wetland rice cultivation to West Africa.
 - c. the conversion of African rulers to Islam helped to expand West Africa's commercial activities.
 - d. the absence of river-going watercraft stunted the development of West Africa's internal traffic until the arrival of Europeans ca. 1450 C.E.

ANS: c

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9. Members of the acephalous societies of the West African interior were particularly susceptible to enslavement because these societies
- a. were the first societies encountered by European explorers in the fifteenth century.
 - b. resided along trade routes frequented by Muslim traders.
 - c. possessed abundant resources, which made them the envy and prey of their neighbors.
 - d. had less political organization than their more powerful neighbors.

ANS: d

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10. Which of the following statements about West African slavery in the centuries leading up to the arrival of Europeans in that region is most accurate?
- a. Slaves could not own property of their own.
 - b. West African slavery resembled slavery as practiced in the Muslim world.
 - c. Slavery was a permanent status which could not be transcended either by a slave or a slave's children.

d. Slavery was an aberration that was almost unknown in most West African societies.

ANS: b

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11. The English word “slave” originally referred to people from

a. Eastern Europe.

b. West Africa.

c. England.

d. Egypt.

ANS: a

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12. What event led Europeans to look toward Africa as a primary source of slaves?

a. the abolition of serfdom

b. the beginning of Muslim trade with West Africa

c. the fall of Constantinople

d. the rise of serfdom

ANS: c

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13. How did the status of European serfs differ from the status of European slaves?

a. Serfs had almost unlimited freedom of mobility.

b. Serfs did not have to pay taxes.

c. Serfs were protected from harsh or coercive treatment.

d. Serfs enjoyed certain legal rights.

ANS: d

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14. Which of the following statements about West African slavery is LEAST accurate?

a. Some Africans were enslaved as a result of political offenses.

b. Some poor Africans entered into slavery voluntarily in return for protection.

c. Africans never enslaved members of their own ethnic communities.

d. Many Africans entered slavery after being conquered by a military rival.

ANS: c

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15. In West Africa, female slaves

a. were acquired to serve as wives and agricultural laborers.

b. represented twice as much of the internal slave trade as men, but only half as much as men in the trans-Saharan slave trade.

c. represented twice as much of the trans-Saharan slave trade as men, but only half as much as men in the internal slave trade.

d. were traditionally protected from having to provide their masters with sexual services.

ANS: a

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16. The West African practices of bridewealth and polygamy suggest that
- a. women's function in West African societies was more ornamental than functional.
 - b. women stood on an equal legal and political footing with men in West African societies.
 - c. women in West African societies were treated as dependents who drained the resources of their households.
 - d. women's productive and reproductive labors were highly valued in West African society.

ANS: d

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17. How did West African conceptions of land ownership differ from European ones?
- a. West Africans did not believe that individual farmers could own or sell the products of the land they farmed.
 - b. West Africans believed that land was the collective possession of a state or kinship group.
 - c. West Africans believed that land must be continuously redistributed to ensure that each adult man had his own plot.
 - d. West Africans believed that individual ownership of land was an inviolable right.

ANS: b

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18. Which of the following statements about West African slavery is most accurate?
- a. Gang labor of the sort that would be used in New World plantations was unknown in West Africa.
 - b. Because slaves were seen as integral members of their master's household, they could not be sold to other masters.
 - c. Because of the threat of revolt, slaves were only used for domestic and agricultural services, and were never employed in military or political capacities.
 - d. The status of slaves varied across a wide spectrum depending on the services they provided.

ANS: d

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19. Kumbi Saleh was the capital of which West African empire?
- a. Ghana
 - b. Mali
 - c. Songhay
 - d. Nok

ANS: a

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20. What triggered the economic collapse of Ghana in the late eleventh century?
- a. The arrival of Muslim traders redirected West African commerce across the Sahara.
 - b. A series of droughts undermined the agricultural foundation of Ghana's economy.
 - c. A wave of epidemic diseases devastated the population.
 - d. The intensification of the slave trade diverted Ghana's economy from productive industries to a single-minded and destructive focus on enslaving neighboring peoples.

ANS: b

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21. Which king ascended to Ghana's throne in 1063?

- a. Al-Bakri
- b. Muhammad Rumfa
- c. El-Momar
- d. Tunka-Menin

ANS: d

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22. The empire of Ghana exhibited all of the following characteristics EXCEPT

- a. an international reputation that extended to such distant cities as Cairo and Baghdad.
- b. an army that could reportedly field 200,000 soldiers.
- c. a hostile attitude toward Islam and the brutal persecution of Muslims.
- d. the control of gold mines, which provided Ghana's emperors with an important source of revenue.

ANS: c

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23. Which subject people of the kingdom of Ghana reportedly overthrew the kingdom in the twelfth century, only to have their own empire overthrown by one of their own subject peoples, the Malinke of Mali, in the thirteenth century?

- a. the Soninke
- b. the Keita
- c. the Hausa
- d. the Sosso

ANS: d

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24. Which legendary thirteenth-century ruler led a successful revolt that consolidated and strengthened the kingdom of Mali?

- a. Tunka-Menin
- b. Sundiata
- c. El Omari
- d. Soni Ali

ANS: b

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25. Which of the following statements about the reign of Mansa-Musa is LEAST accurate?

- a. The reforms Mansa-Musa implemented ensured that his empire would continue to prosper and to grow in strength under almost a dozen successors.
- b. Mansa-Musa's international fame grew to be so great that European cartographers included him and his empire in their maps.
- c. Mansa-Musa embarked on a trek across North Africa and the Middle East that reportedly included an entourage of thousands of people and enough gold to lower the value of that precious metal.

d. Mansa-Musa was a devout convert to Islam who commissioned an Arab architect to build elaborate mosques in several cities under Mansa-Musa's rule.

ANS: a

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26. Which African king embarked on a famous pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324?

- a. Tunka-Menin
- b. Sundiata Keita
- c. Mansa-Musa
- d. Sonni Ali

ANS: c

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27. What military asset did Sonni Ali exploit in his fifteenth-century conquest of the Niger region of West Africa?

- a. a riverine navy
- b. an improved crossbow
- c. a trained cavalry that fought on horseback
- d. gunpowder muskets and cannons

ANS: a

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28. Under the skillful administration of rulers such as Askia Muhammad, which empire became the largest and most powerful kingdom in West African history?

- a. Ghana
- b. Mali
- c. Kongo
- d. Songhay

ANS: d

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29. Which of the following statements about the Songhay kingdom is LEAST accurate?

- a. Songhay cemented its power with an army composed of slaves and prisoners.
- b. The rulers of Songhay encouraged the development and spread of learning.
- c. Portuguese invaders overthrew the last Songhay king in 1598.
- d. After returning from a pilgrimage to Mecca, a Songhay king established Islamic law as the basis for administering justice in the empire.

ANS: c

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30. The reforms implemented by Askia Muhammad included all of the following EXCEPT

- a. the separation of church and state and the guarantee of religious freedom.
- b. the development of a system of governance that relied on local governors and military administrators.
- c. the establishment of a uniform system of weights and measures, which facilitated trade.
- d. the improvement of banking and credit.

ANS: a
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31. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the cities of Timbuktu, Gao, Walata, and Jenne were all important centers of
- a. gold mining.
 - b. slave trading.
 - c. agriculture.
 - d. higher learning.

ANS: d
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32. Most of the population in Atlantic Africa from the Gambia River to the Niger Delta lived under what type of political system?
- a. small kingdoms
 - b. large empires
 - c. village-states
 - d. tribal chiefdoms

ANS: c
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33. What confederation of five states managed to maintain its independence from Mali and Songhay before succumbing to the French in the nineteenth century?
- a. Hausa
 - b. Mossi
 - c. Benin
 - d. Biguba

ANS: b
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34. Members of the Hausa city-states included all of the following cities EXCEPT
- a. Gao.
 - b. Kano.
 - c. Zaria.
 - d. Kebbi.

ANS: a
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35. Which of the following statements about the use of art to enhance royal authority in the kingdom of Benin is LEAST accurate?
- a. For a time, the kings of Benin controlled the use of all copper within their realm, and ensured that it was used to celebrate their authority.
 - b. Commemorative art in Benin demonstrated the use of the physical head as a symbol of royal qualities.
 - c. Commemorative altars in Benin included brass representations of the heads of Benin's queen mothers.

d. Benin's kings were entombed in large pyramidal structures which were adorned with copper plaques celebrating their achievements.

ANS: d

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36. Which of the following statements best represents the basis of political authority in regions such as Biguba, Sierra Leone, and the Gold Coast during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries?

a. Political authority was transmitted automatically from father to eldest son in a system of absolute monarchy.

b. Rulers were chosen through popular elections in which all male residents were allowed to vote.

c. A small group of powerful priests claimed the sole authority to appoint and remove kings from their thrones.

d. Rulers were elected by, and their powers were circumscribed by, representatives of a few prominent lineages.

ANS: d

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37. In 1491, Nzinga a Nkuwu, king of Kongo, took what unusual step for a West African ruler?

a. He abolished slavery throughout his realm.

b. He voluntarily converted to Catholicism.

c. He seized a Portuguese ambassador and sold him into slavery.

d. He ceded his throne to a Portuguese adventurer, who ruled the kingdom under the name Joao I.

ANS: b

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38. The appearance of European traders in West Central Africa in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries encouraged all of the following developments EXCEPT

a. the spread of Catholicism in some kingdoms.

b. the centralization of political authority in many states.

c. the conquest and settlement of many African states by European settlers.

d. the intensification of internal conflicts over sovereignty and the legitimacy of rulers.

ANS: c

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39. Which ruler of Ndongo seized power in 1624 and then led an army, including a battalion of women, against Portuguese forces to remain on the throne?

a. Njinga

b. Hari a Kiljunaji

c. Amina

d. Muhammad Rumfa

ANS: a

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40. Although it contains many words borrowed from Arabic and other languages, in terms of structure, Swahili belongs to which language family?

- a. Akan
- b. Yoruba
- c. Kintampo
- d. Bantu

ANS: d

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Essay

41. Compare the histories of the empires of Ghana, Mali, and Songhay. How did each empire obtain and consolidate dominion over its neighbors? What brought about the respective collapses of the three empires? In what ways were the problems faced by these empires—and the means which rulers employed to address those problems—similar, and in what ways did they differ substantially?

42. Discuss the influence of Islam on West African society. In what ways did the introduction of Islam contribute to the economic and political development of West African states? How thoroughly did West African communities embrace Islam? How integrally connected were West Africa and the Islamic regions of North Africa and the Middle East? Should West Africa be regarded as an integral part of the broader Islamic world, or as its own distinct region? How did the influence of Islam in West Africa before 1500 compare with the influence of Catholicism after 1500?

43. Discuss the nature of slavery in West Africa before the beginning of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. How important was slavery to African society and to the African economy? What roles did slaves serve in African societies? How did slavery in West Africa compare with contemporaneous systems of coercive labor in Europe?

44. Discuss the impact of ecological and environmental factors on West African civilization. How did they affect social development within the region? Which empires took advantage of ecological factors to expand their dominions, and which empires suffered disaster as a result of environmental factors? Can West African history be understood without treating the environment as a central shaper of events?

45. Compare the accomplishments of Tunka-Menin, Mansa-Musa, and Askia Muhammad. What specific reforms did each ruler implement? Did their success lie primarily in expanding the dominion of their respective empires or in improving the administration of empires conquered by others? How did each ruler handle issues such as religion and trade? What were the lasting legacies of each ruler? How long did each ruler's accomplishments survive his own death?

46. Explain the nature and importance of trade in African societies. How did trade encourage the growth and development of individual regions? How did rulers exploit trade to their own political and economic advantage? What were the cultural effects of widespread trading networks on African civilizations?

47. Compare the artistic achievements of the Nok people and the people of Benin. What qualities did their artwork share? Are there notable differences between them? What do the similarities and differences suggest about the development of West African civilization over time? For what purposes were Nok and Benin artistic works employed? What do these uses suggest about the role of art in West African society, generally?