

CHAPTER 5 | LESSON 1 West African Culture and Daily Life

Lesson 1 West African Culture and Daily Life**BEFORE YOU READ**

In this lesson, you will learn about daily life, the development of the economy, and the oral tradition in early West Africa.

AS YOU READ

Use this chart to take notes about the main sections in this chapter. Answering the questions at the end of each section will help you fill in the chart.

Section	Summary
Village life in West Africa	
Trade and regional commerce	
The oral tradition in West Africa	

TERMS & NAMES

- **kinship** a connection among people by blood, marriage, or adoption
- **clan** a group formed by kinship groups with a common ancestor
- **labor specialization** when people in a society focus on specific types of work
- **griot** a West African storyteller

Village Life in West Africa

(pages 151–152)

What role did families play in West African society?

From 300 to 1500, powerful empires controlled much of West Africa. Most West Africans dealt with their ruler only for court cases and taxes. Many of these people felt a strong loyalty to their village and family.

Family relationships were very important in West Africa. **Kinship** groups formed the government of many African societies. These groups were equal in power. A council of the kinship groups' eldest members often made the decisions. Kinship groups with a common ancestor often formed larger groups called **clans**. Clan members usually followed the same rules.

In West African villages, the way of life for most people centered on farming. Women prepared food and cared for children. They also made pottery and worked in the fields. Men looked after large animals, such as cattle.

They also cleared land for farming and built houses and fences. Children often gathered firewood. In addition, they helped their fathers and mothers.

Some people focused on specific types of work such as farming or trading. This is called **labor specialization**. Labor specialization led to a diverse West African economy. Most people practiced an economy based on farming. Others focused on herding animals or metalworking. Iron technology allowed Africans to create stronger agricultural tools and weapons. As a result, they became wealthier. Also, their population grew. Finally, some people traded goods within West Africa. They also traded with other regions, such as North Africa.

1. What types of work did West Africans specialize in?

READING STUDY GUIDE CONTINUED

Trade and Regional Commerce

(pages 152–153)

How did trading develop in West Africa?

By A.D. 300, population growth and trade had led to the development of West African cities. Gold mining and trade in slaves led to more contact with North Africa. Local and international trade increased. As a result, the cities became more important centers of trade. They also became centers of politics, religion, and education.

Trade between West and North Africa continued to grow. West Africans received salt, cloth, and metal wares from Arab traders. In return, West Africans provided gold, slaves, ivory, and cattle hides.

West African societies gradually developed complex trade systems. Soon kings arose in West African societies. The king kept trade running smoothly. As a result, many people were loyal to him. In addition, kings often played an important role in religion. They were expected to help the economy by performing prayers and rituals.

2. What was the relationship between kings and trade in West Africa?

The Oral Tradition in West Africa

(pages 153–154)

What is oral history?

For centuries, West Africans had no written language. Because of this, they did not record their history in written form. West Africans passed on their history through a collection of stories. These stories were about people and spiritual forces in the natural world. The storytellers were called **griots**. They often used music in their stories.

The stories entertained and educated. The griots passed on a clan's or kinship group's history. West Africans believed their departed ancestors watched over them. They thought that their ancestors could help the living communicate with the creator of the universe. During religious rituals, West Africans appealed to ancestors for favor and protection. Griots often took part in these rituals.

Griots sang for kings, other powerful people, and common villagers. Griots acted out various characters in a story. The audience often participated. Griots are still an important part of West African culture.

3. With no written language, how did early West Africans pass on their history?

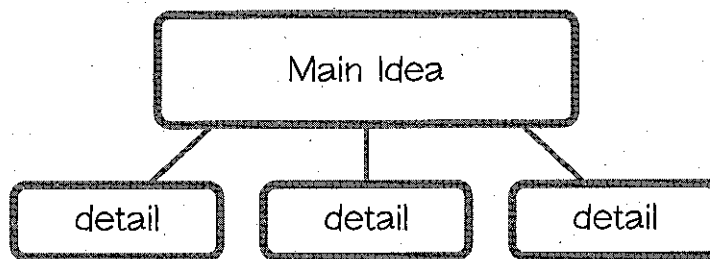
CHAPTER 5 | LESSON 2 The Empire of Ghana

Lesson 2 The Empire of Ghana**BEFORE YOU READ**

In this lesson, you will learn about the development of the trans-Saharan trade, and the growth and decline of Ghana's empire.

AS YOU READ

Use this chart to take notes about how the people of West Africa built empires from the wealth gained by trade. Answering the question at the end of each section will help you fill in the chart.

**TERMS & NAMES**

- **vegetation zone** a region that has certain types of plants
- **Sahara** a large desert of northern Africa
- **savannah** a grassland in a tropical region
- **Ghana** a region between the Sahara and southern West Africa that developed into an empire
- **Almoravids** a group of Muslim Arabs that came to power in North Africa during the 11th century

West Africa's Geography Fuels Empires

(pages 157–158)

What are the three vegetation zones in West Africa?

West Africa's geography helped people develop a strong trade. West Africa has three **vegetation zones**: desert, grasslands, and forests. Soil and climate determine what plants grow in a vegetation zone. For example, a desert has a dry climate. Only plants that use little water grow there.

The northern section of West Africa is part of a large desert. This desert is called the **Sahara**. The middle section of West Africa is a **savannah**. It is flat, grassy, and has scattered trees. Forests make up the southern region of West Africa. The Niger River runs across West Africa. For centuries, the river has been used for transportation and communication. It has also served as a trade route.

The Sahara has rich deposits of salt. Crops, such as millet, grow well on the savannah. The southern forests hold large amounts of gold.

People in the savannah and forests of West Africa had gold, but they wanted salt. People in North Africa had salt, but they wanted gold. As a result, a trans-Saharan trade of gold and salt developed. Trans-Saharan means across the Sahara. People in the Sahara would mine salt. Then they traded it for the gold mined in the forests of West Africa.

Around A.D. 300, savannah and forest people began to use camels to transport goods. Camels could cover great distances with little food or water. These qualities made camels ideal for carrying goods across the Sahara. Traders used camels in groups called caravans. Camel caravans helped increase trans-Saharan trade.

1. What trade goods are found in the different vegetation zones?

READING STUDY GUIDE CONTINUED

The Growth of Ghana's Empire

(page 159)

What, besides goods, can trade bring to a region?

The region between the desert and the forest of West Africa came to be called **Ghana**. The northern part of Ghana became a center of trade. Salt and other goods arrived there after crossing the Sahara. Gold, enslaved people, and goods reached Ghana from the south. The people of Ghana supervised the trading.

The king of Ghana gained wealth by taxing the trade. Using this wealth, Ghana expanded into an empire. It conquered surrounding lands. Cities in Ghana became thriving trade centers. The city of Koumbi Saleh was Ghana's capital.

Most of the people who traded salt and other goods from the north were Arabic speaking Berbers. Most Berbers practiced the religion of Islam. Berber traders brought more than just goods to West Africa. They also introduced their written language (Arabic) into West Africa. In addition, Arabs brought Islam to West Africa.

2. How did Ghana gain wealth?

Islam and Ghana

(pages 160–161)

In what ways did Islam influence Ghana?

Most of Ghana's common people kept their traditional beliefs. Some of Ghana's kings converted to Islam. Even so, they still practiced their traditional religion. According to this religion, kings were descended from the ancestors who settled Ghana. This ancestry gave the king the right to rule. Most people accepted this belief. So if the king rejected the traditional religion, he would lose his claim to the throne.

Still, Islam strongly influenced Ghana's rulers. Many Muslims advised the king on running the empire. Much of Ghana's upper class converted to Islam. They learned Arabic to study the Muslim holy book, the Qur'an. These people were often involved in government. As a result, Islamic beliefs about what is right and wrong influenced Ghana's legal system.

Islam's influence, however, could not stop Ghana's decline. The **Almoravids** came to power in North Africa during the 11th century. They were a group of Muslim Arabs. The Almoravids wanted other Muslims to follow their own view of Islam. In addition, the Almoravids were poor camel herders. Because of this, they did not gain much wealth in trans-Saharan trade. As a result, they envied the great wealth of Ghana. Soon the Almoravids declared war on Ghana. The war weakened Ghana's trade network. Before long, Ghana began to crumble. In 1076, the Almoravids seized the capital city of Koumbi Saleh.

3. Why did the Almoravids declare war on Ghana?

CHAPTER 5 | LESSON 3 The Empire of Mali

Lesson 3 The Empire of Mali

BEFORE YOU READ

In this lesson, you will learn about the growth and decline of the Mali and Songhai empires.

AS YOU READ

Use this chart to take notes about the similarities and differences between the Mali and Songhai empires. Answering the questions at the end of each section will help you fill in the chart.

	Mali	Songhai
Trade		
Religion		
Decline		

TERMS & NAMES

- **Mali** a West African empire that thrived from about 1240 to the 1400s
- **Sundiata** chief of the Malinke people, established the Empire of Mali
- **Timbuktu** West African city that developed into a center of trade and culture during the 1200s.
- **Mansa Musa** king of Mali's empire from 1307 to 1332
- **Songhai** West African empire that thrived from the mid-1400s to the late 1500s
- **Askia Muhammad** king of the Songhai Empire from 1493 to 1528

Mali Builds on Ghana's Foundation

(pages 165–166)

How could Mali build on Ghana's empire?

The empire of **Mali** was formed around 1240. It was located in the southern area of what had been Ghana's empire. The Malinke people founded the empire of Mali. A great chief named **Sundiata** led the Malinke.

In 1240, Sundiata and his army captured the former capital of Ghana. He expanded his empire beyond Ghana's old border. Sundiata also reestablished the gold-salt trade and expanded trade routes.

Sundiata developed the city of **Timbuktu** as a center of trade and culture. He also supported the development of food crops, cotton farming, and cotton weaving. Sundiata balanced his Islamic belief with his traditional religious beliefs. In this way, he was similar to the kings of Ghana.

After Sundiata's death, the rulers of Mali continued to expand the empire. In 1307,

Mansa Musa became king of Mali. He was a devoted Muslim. He allowed his subjects to practice other religions.

In 1342, Mansa Musa began a pilgrimage to Mecca. On his pilgrimage, he brought 12,000 slaves, 80 camels, and 300 pounds of gold with him. Mansa Musa's pilgrimage greatly impressed those who saw it. It also increased trade for Mali. More merchants wanted to travel to the empire of Mali.

Mansa Musa brought with him an architect and Arab scholars on his return trip to Mali. The architect designed the Sankore mosque in Timbuktu. The scholars taught history, theology, and law in Timbuktu.

Mansa Musa continued to expand the empire until his death around 1332.

1. How did Sundiata improve Ghana's trade?

READING STUDY GUIDE CONTINUED

Decline of Mali

(pages 166–167)

How did weak rulers lead to Mali's decline?

The descendants of Mansa Musa argued about who should be the next ruler of Mali. This internal fighting greatly weakened the empire. Eventually, Timbuktu was raided and burned.

Newly conquered regions of Mali's empire began to rebel. In the east, the **Songhai** people gradually gained strength. Led by the Songhai, the city of Gao declared its independence from Mali in 1400.

In the north, Berber nomads seized much of Mali's territory. They captured Timbuktu in 1431. In the south, bandits began to raid trading caravans and military outposts.

By 1500, rebels and invaders had greatly reduced Mali's territory. Mali was no longer a strong empire.

2. What external factors led to Mali's decline?

The Empire of Songhai

(pages 167–169)

What happened to the Songhai Empire?

During the first half of the 1400s, the Songhai were unsuccessful in forming a strong kingdom.

Since 1431, the Berbers had controlled Timbuktu. In 1468, Muslim leaders asked the Songhai king, Sunni Ali, to help overthrow the Berbers. Sunni Ali agreed. He captured Timbuktu and drove out the Berbers. He also killed many people who lived in the city. Soon Sunni Ali became known as a powerful, harsh leader. He went on to conquer neighboring lands.

Sunni Ali died in 1492. His son was declared ruler. But a leader named **Askia Muhammad** wanted to seize the throne. He and his followers had felt that Sunni Ali did not practice Islam correctly. In 1493, Askia Muhammad defeated Ali's son. He then became ruler of the Songhai Empire.

Askia Muhammad conquered the salt mines to the north. He also expanded Mali's other borders. Soon, the Songhai Empire covered an area larger than the empire of Mali had.

Askia Muhammad organized the government of this vast empire. He began by dividing Songhai into provinces. He then put a governor in charge of each province. Askia Muhammad also set up an organized tax system.

Under Askia Muhammad's rule, Islam spread throughout the empire. Muslim scholars converted many people in the cities to Islam. In rural areas, Islamic beliefs were often blended with traditional religious beliefs.

Askia Muhammad's son removed his father from the throne. The rulers of Songhai after Askia were weak. Using guns, Moroccan forces captured Timbuktu and Gao in 1591. Soon after that, the Songhai Empire collapsed.

3. How was Islam spread during Askia Muhammad's rule?

CHAPTER 5 | LESSON 2 The Empire of Ghana

Skillbuilder Practice**Conducting a Cost-Benefit Analysis**

A cost-benefit analysis involves determining the economic costs and benefits of an action. Imagine, for example, that you started a business of mowing lawns. You would benefit from the business if your income was greater than the costs of buying a mower, paying for gas, repairing the mower, and so on. The ability to recognize the costs and benefits of an action in history will help you to better understand why people made the decisions they did.

To conduct cost-benefit analysis, identify the historical topic that is under consideration. The following passage examines the costs and benefits associated with the action of establishing trade and trade routes. Locate the potential economic benefits of the action. Identify the potential costs associated with the action. Determine what decision was made based on the cost-benefit analysis.

Trans-Saharan Trade

As the peoples of West and North Africa considered their resources, they realized that they could gain wealth and other goods by trans-Saharan trade. The people of Ghana realized that their location was an ideal center for this trade. They could gain great wealth by supervising the trading. The king of Ghana realized that wealth could be gained by taxing the trade. Ghana would also gain prestige and power.

At the same time, traders had to be protected as they moved gold and goods across an open desert. Goods of great value could be lost to robbers. People who lived in the surrounding lands could capture traders and caravans. Ghana would have to pay the costs of an army to conquer these lands and set up a system to collect tribute. There were the costs of an army to keep trade routes secure and open to Ghana. In the end, the economic benefits outweighed the costs. Before the 1200s, Ghana established a lively trade network across the Sahara.

1. What is the historical topic of the passage?

2. What dangers to traders and goods were involved?

3. What costs were associated with Ghana's action?

4. What were the economic benefits of the action?

CHAPTER 5 | West Africa

Vocabulary Study Guide**VOCABULARY**

The words below can be found in this word puzzle. Once you find all the words, look for a hidden message and write it in the space provided. Cross off the words as you find them.

1. GHANA
2. MALA
3. SAHARA
4. SAVANNA
5. SONGHAI
6. TIMBUKTU

W	E	S	U	T	A	F	R	I	C	A	N	A	G	O
L	D	A	T	N	D	S	A	L	T	T	R	R	A	D
E	H	F	K	A	N	J	Y	H	P	J	I	A	A	X
O	R	H	U	K	E	L	M	Q	F	R	S	H	G	I
O	Q	P	B	V	N	O	Q	N	I	U	A	A	E	L
C	A	W	M	I	A	H	G	N	O	S	V	S	I	Z
B	H	V	I	K	J	S	U	Z	J	R	A	F	E	T
A	Z	N	T	X	H	G	Z	Y	A	S	N	S	P	T
M	T	S	W	X	J	S	Z	V	F	K	N	H	B	G
E	M	C	L	F	U	Y	W	F	C	M	A	I	B	N
V	R	X	F	B	B	R	K	G	F	T	M	O	J	T
M	Z	F	H	Z	M	S	I	H	T	U	P	B	Y	S
P	X	G	N	E	S	O	L	A	U	D	O	V	N	M
D	N	N	P	U	V	G	A	N	V	B	H	Z	F	L
X	C	L	H	Y	P	H	M	A	Y	Q	A	Z	H	O

STUDY GUIDE

Write the terms, names, or phrases that best complete the sentences.

7. A connection among people by blood, marriage, or adoption is called _____.
8. Some people focused on specific types of work, a process known as _____.
9. West African storytellers are known as _____.
10. A _____ is a region that has certain types of plants.
11. In addition to trade goods, North African traders brought _____ to West Africa.
12. _____ is known for his pilgrimage to Mecca and his display of gold.
13. The city of _____ was a major center of religion and education in West Africa.

CHAPTER 5 | LESSON 3 The Empire of Mali

Primary Source**Ibn Battuta Describes the Court of Mansa Sulayman in Mali**

Ibn Battuta is one of the great travelers of history. In 1325, he left his native city of Tangier to make the pilgrimage to Mecca and to complete his legal studies. He discovered an unquenchable love of travel in himself and, after completing his studies, began his great journey. Ibn Battuta traveled through North and East Africa, Southwest Asia, Constantinople, Russia, Central Asia, India, China, and the East Indies. He returned home to Morocco in 1349, but soon after went to visit the Muslim kingdom of Granada in southern Spain. In 1352, he made his last voyage. He visited West Africa as a government representative, and lived in Mali for a year. His book *Rihlah* or *Travels* recounts the things Ibn Battuta saw and experienced. Mansa Sulayman (called “the sultan”) was the ruler of Mali when Ibn Battuta visited, and Dugha was a prominent citizen of Mali who also served as an interpreter.

On certain days the sultan holds audiences in the palace yard, where there is a platform under a tree, with three steps; this they call the “pempi.” It is carpeted with silk and has cushions placed on it. [Over it] is raised the umbrella, which is a sort of pavilion made of silk, surmounted by a bird in gold, about the size of a falcon. The sultan comes out of a door in a corner of the palace, carrying a bow in his hand and a quiver on his back. On his head he has a golden skull-cap, bound with a gold band which has narrow ends shaped like knives, more than a span in length. His usual dress is a velvety red tunic, made of the European fabrics called “mutanfas.” The sultan is preceded by his musicians, who carry gold and silver guimbris [two-stringed guitars], and behind him come three hundred armed slaves. He walks in a leisurely fashion, affecting a very slow movement, and even stops from time to time. On reaching the pempi he stops and looks round the assembly, then ascends it in the sedate manner of a preacher ascending a mosque-pulpit. As he takes his seat the drums, trumpets, and bugles are sounded. Three slaves go out at a run to summon the sovereign’s deputy and the military commanders, who enter and sit down. Two saddled and bridled horses are brought, along with two goats, which they hold to serve as a protection against the evil eye. Dugha stands at the gate and the rest of the people remain in the street, under the trees.

... [The people swear by the king’s] name,

saying “Mansa Sulayman ki” [in Mandingo, “the emperor Sulayman has commanded”]. If he summons any of them while he is holding an audience in his pavilion, the person summoned takes off his clothes and puts on worn garments, removes his turban and dons a dirty skullcap, and enters with his garments and trousers raised knee-high. He goes forward in an attitude of humility and dejection and knocks the ground hard with his elbows, then stands with bowed head and bent back listening to what he says. If anyone addresses the king and receives a reply from him, he uncovers his back and throws dust over his head and back.

from Ibn Battuta: *Travels in Asia and Africa, 1325-1354*, tr. and ed. H. A. R. Gibb (London: Broadway House, 1929)

DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTIONS

1. What evidence of the king’s great wealth does Ibn Battuta give?
2. **Making Inferences** What was the purpose of the court ceremonies involving the king’s slow procession with musicians and hundreds of slaves and people wearing old clothes and throwing dust on themselves when the king addresses them?

CHAPTER 5 | LESSON 3 The Empire of Mali

Literature**Sundiata, the Lion King**

No two retellings of a story that is passed down orally are exactly the same. Over the centuries, different details may appear. Different storytellers may like to emphasize different parts of a story or have somewhat different interpretations. The condensed version of the story of Sundiata that follows is by the griot Sokana Feremu. In Feremu's version, Sundiata and his mother Sogolon are forced to flee from Mali because his father's first wife wants her own son to become king of Kangaba and may try to harm Sundiata to prevent the prophecy that he would be a great king from coming true.

"So Sundiata and his mother traveled far to the kingdom of Mema, where the king offered them sanctuary.

"There Sundiata grew into a strong man. As the people of Mema watched him, they realized that the once-weak boy had become as strong as a lion, and they sent him to fight wars with Moussa Tounkara, their greatest general. Sundiata himself became an excellent soldier and also formed a mighty cavalry. He proved to be such a good warrior that the king of Mema made him the heir to the throne. But Sogolon did not let Sundiata forget his prophesied future. Even though he had come to love the people of Mema as his own kin, Sundiata could not stay among them. He had to return to Mali and fulfill his destiny.

"Much changed in Mali after Sundiata left. Sumanguru, the king of the Sosso people, had conquered Mali during Sundiata's absence. Sumanguru was a powerful leader who derived his great strength from sorcery. Indeed, by the time he attacked Mali, he had already conquered nine other kingdoms of the Ghana Empire. Sumanguru proved to be a cruel ruler, and he laid waste to much of the Malian land, and all the people there despaired.

"So Sundiata and his mighty cavalry rode home to save his people. Sundiata and Sumanguru thus came to fight each other in a titanic battle, a struggle in which Sumanguru used all his wiles and magic. But Sundiata had something even more powerful than Sumanguru's weapons—his destiny. So Sundiata

overcame the great odds facing him and defeated Sumanguru on the plains of Kirina.

"In his victory, Sundiata not only regained Kangaba but also took over Sumanguru's lands, thus putting an end to the Ghana Empire. These lands were what made the small kingdom of Nare Marghan [Sundiata's father] into the great empire of Sundiata, known to all the world as Mali."

Feremu, Sokana. *The Story of Sundiata, the Lion King of Mali*. Griot.Net

COMPREHENSION

1. Why did Sundiata return to Mali?

CRITICAL THINKING

2. **Analyzing** How did Sundiata's mother influence his actions as a man?

3. **Interpreting** What does the story of Sundiata say about the nature of destiny?
