

Kingdoms of West Africa – DBQs

Directions: Analyze the documents and answer the short-answer questions that follow each document

Document 1

Between 700 and 1067, the Kingdom of Ancient Ghana rose in power and gained control of the trans-Saharan gold and salt trade. This description of the king's court in ancient Ghana was written by the Arab scholar, Al-Bakri.

The court of appeal is held in a domed pavilion around which stand ten horses with gold embroidered trappings. Behind the king stand ten pages holding shields and swords decorated with gold, and on his right are the sons of the subordinate kings on his country, all wearing splendid garments and with their hair mixed with gold. The governor of the city sits on the ground before the king, and around him are ministers seated likewise. At the door of the pavilion are dogs ... (wearing) collars of gold and silver, studded with a number of balls of the same metals.

1. What evidence of wealth is described by Al-Bakri?
2. What evidence of an advanced political structure is described by Al-Bakri?

Document 2

This explanation for the wealth of Ghana is taken from *Through African Eyes*.

The Arab traders of this region wanted gold as much as the Wangara wanted salt, but both had to pass through Ghana to trade ... Ghana controlled land ... it had the military forces ... to maintain peace in the area, thereby assuring safe trade for the Arabs and the Wangara. Ancient Ghana was an extremely complex empire. It possessed many of the characteristics of powerful nations today: wealth based on trade, sufficient food to feed its people, income derived from taxes, social organization that ensured justice and efficient political control, a strong army equipped with advanced weapons, and a foreign policy that led to the peace and cooperation with other people.

1. Explain Ancient Ghana's role in the gold – salt trade.
2. According to the author, what characteristics of an advanced civilization did Ghana possess?

Document 3

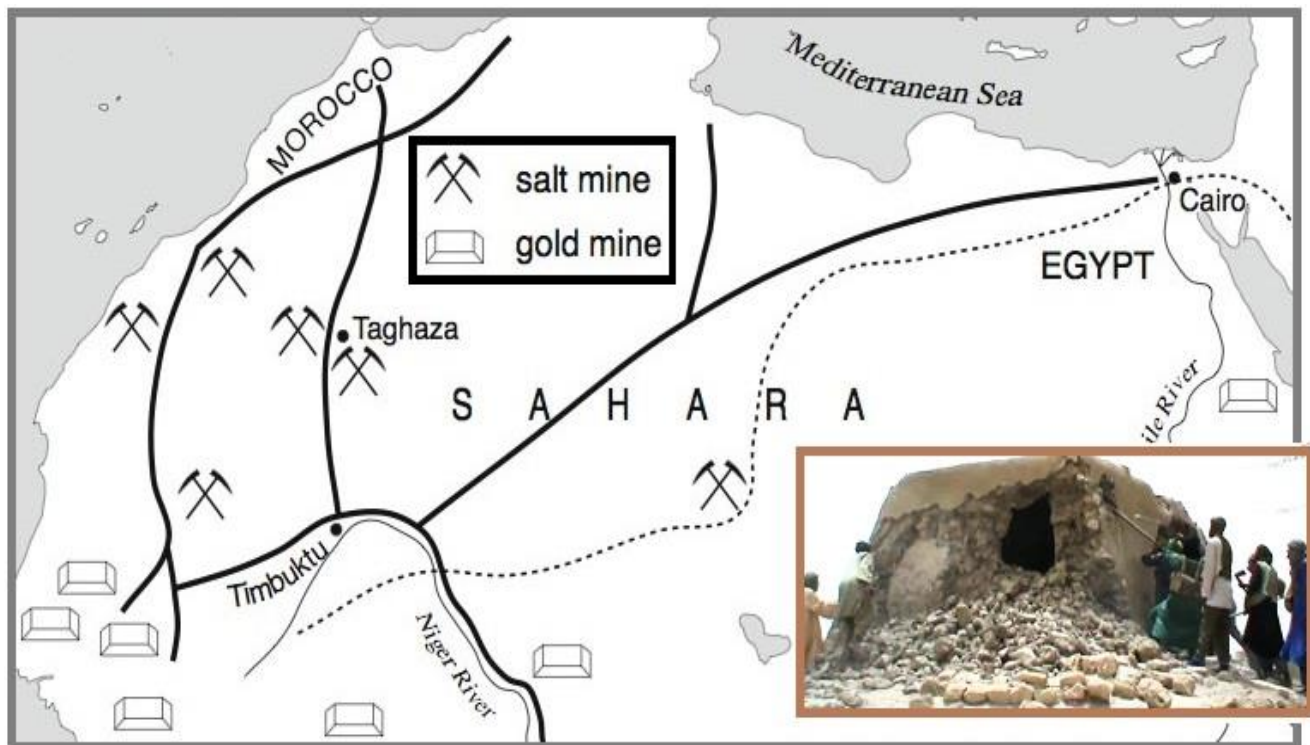
The following excerpt is from *The Trans-Saharan Gold Trade (7th – 14th century)*

The flow of sub-Saharan gold to the northeast probably occurred in a steady but small stream. Mansa Musa's arrival in Cairo (Egypt) carrying a ton of metal caused the market in gold to crash, suggesting that the average supply was not as great. Undoubtedly, some of this African gold was also used in western gold coins. African gold was indeed so famous worldwide that a Spanish map of 1375 represents the king of Mali holding a gold nugget. When Mossi raids destroyed the Mali Empire, rising Songhai Empire relied on the same resources. Gold remained the principle product in the trans-Saharan trade, followed by kola nuts and slaves. The Moroccan scholar Leo Africanus, who visited Songhai in 1510 and 1513, observed that the governor of Timbuktu owned many articles of gold, and that the coin of Timbuktu was made of gold without any stamp or superscription.

1. According to the author, what evidence is there that Mansa Musa was a powerful and wealthy monarch (king)?

Document 4

Timbuktu: A Center for Trade



1. According to the map, what products were traded on the trade routes?
2. According to the map, what areas were involved in the trade?



Document 5

In this excerpt, Leo Africanus, a traveler, describes the city of Timbuktu.

Here there are many doctors, judges, priests and other learned men, that are well maintained at the king's cost. Various manuscripts and written books are brought here out of Barbarie and sold for more money than any other merchandise.

The coin of Timbuktu is of gold without any stamp or superscription, but in matters of small value, they use certain shells brought here from Persia, four hundred of which are worth a ducat and six pieces of their own gold coin, each of which weighs two-thirds of an ounce.

1. What about Timbuktu impressed Leo Africanus?

Document 6

Ibn Battuta traveled in Mali in 1352 and wrote this description in *Travels to Kingdom of Mali*.

They are seldom unjust, and have a greater hatred of injustice than any other people. Their sultan shows no mercy to anyone who is guilty of the least act of it. There is complete security in their country. Neither traveler nor inhabitant init has anything to fear from robbers.

1. What two things impressed Ibn Battuta about Mali?