

## **Early African Civilizations**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

### **Bantu Migrations**

Bantu is the name of a language family in Africa. The first Bantu-speaking people lived in what is now Nigeria and Cameroon. Bantu-speaking people began migrating south and east out of this area throughout most of sub-Saharan Africa. As a result, millions of people in sub-Saharan Africa speak one of the hundreds of Bantu languages. Swahili is one of the Bantu languages and is widely spoken in East Africa. It contains many words borrowed from Arabic.

### **Nok**

The development of iron working was very important to early civilizations and occurred at different times in different areas throughout the world. Historians believe that iron working was related to other changes in society.

For example, the Nok were an early African society known for iron working. They made iron tools and weapons that made it easier to farm, hunt, and fight. It was around this time that the Nok also grew in power. Historians believe iron technology was directly related to this development.

The Nok culture was found in West Africa in what is now Nigeria, starting around 500 BCE. They were farmers who used iron. They also make sculptures made of terra cotta, a reddish brown clay. The sculptures often depict human or animal heads in great artistic detail. Some of the heads depict hair styles that are still worn in the region today.

### **West Africa**

Traditionally African societies were centered around family life, including extended family ties and clans where people shared common ancestors. Local religions involved a belief in one creator but included elements of animism, a religion in which spirits played an important role in daily life.

Most African languages did not have writing, but history and literature was preserved by specialized storytellers. In West Africa they were known as griots. Archaeologists uncovered the remains of a city in west Africa known as Djenné-Djeno that existed around 250 BCE. The city had around 50,000 people and was part of a large trading network. The people lived in plastered reed huts and brick houses and had iron technology.

### **Ghana**

The empires of Ghana, Mali and Songhai all thrived in western Africa. They were in a fertile Savannah area of Africa, south of the Sahara Desert, near the Niger River. Ghana existed from around 300 A.D. until around 1100 A.D. by 800 A.D., Ghana controlled much of the trading in West Africa. Gold and salt were the two most important goods traded by Ghana. Attacks by the Almoravids in 1076 led to the decline of the Ghana Empire.

## **Mali**

Mali gained control of the West Africa trade routes after the fall of Ghana. Mali was in power from the 1200s until the 1400s. Mali was the source for almost half of the world's gold during the 14th century. A pilgrimage to Mecca led by Mansa Musa made Mali more well-known on an international level.

Mali developed Timbuktu as a center of learning and built a large library for the University of Sankore. Mali Empire began its decline after the death of Mansa Musa; the Mali Empire began shrinking in size.

## **Songhai**

Songhai ruled from the late 1400s until the late 1500s. Songhai's first Muslim king was Askia Muhammad. Songhai was introduced to laws based on the teachings of the Quran by Askia Muhammad. Eventually Songhai was conquered by the Moroccans

## **East African Civilizations**

The kingdom of Axum was also a powerful empire along the Indian Ocean on Africa's eastern coast. Axum was a powerful empire in East Africa located in what is now Ethiopia. Axum became wealthy because of its location on trade routes between the Roman Empire and India. The empire declined in the seventh century after Muslims conquered neighboring areas and took over trade routes

## **Muslim City-States**

City-states included Kilwa, Malindi, Mombasa, and Sofala on Africa's east coast. They became wealthy due to international trade. The Muslim city states used monsoon winds to travel across the Indian Ocean. They exchanged African goods for Asian goods such as porcelain and silk.