
Worksheet 6:1 African Empires Map and Questions

Part 1: Empires Map

Directions: The following empires represent only a partial listing. Read the following information about each empire, then summarize the excerpt in the provided box on the map.

300 CE - Rise of Axum (Ethiopia)

In modern day Ethiopia, the empire of Axum flourished from about 500 BCE until 700 CE. In 300 CE, the kingdom converted to Christianity, becoming the first Christian empire in Africa. It was influenced by the Christians from the Roman Empire in Egypt. It served as a trading hub until the rise of Islam.

740 CE - Invasion of Spain by the Moors

An Islamic empire had spread across North and East Africa during the 7th and 8th centuries. In 740 CE, Muslim Moors invaded Spain. Their rule would last until 1492. Despite being an occupying force for 700 years, the Moor brought many new ideas to Medieval Europe, including mining, agriculture, engineering, architecture, and education. During this time, Spain became the center for culture and learning in Europe.

1000 CE - Ghana Empire

The empire of Ghana controlled the trade routes across the Sahara desert. Armed with iron weapons, it held a monopoly on two of the greatest commodities of the time, gold and salt. While never an Islamic empire, Muslims acted as advisors.

1235 CE - Mali Empire

The Mali Empire continued where Ghana left off, controlling the profitable gold trade. Mansa Musa, the most powerful Mali leader, oversaw the creation of Timbuktu as an intellectual and cultural center. Musa was a devote Muslim who spread Islam through the empire and made a famous pilgrimage to Mecca. This pilgrimage strongly established the Mali Empire throughout the Islamic and Christian spheres.

1300 CE - Kingdom of Benin

Through a link with the trans-Saharan trade network, the Kingdom of Benin was able to thrive after the 1300s. At its peak, over 200 towns and villages were part of the kingdom. Benin became one of the first major trading partners with the Portuguese in the late 1400s. Known for its brass, ivory, and wax art, Benin also heavily participated in the slave trade.

1300 CE- Great Zimbabwe

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The first centralized state in Zimbabwe took advantage of large gold reserves. It centered around a great stone enclosure. While it received goods from outside of Africa through trade, it was far enough away from the coastal trading cities that there was no non-African influences, including Islam.

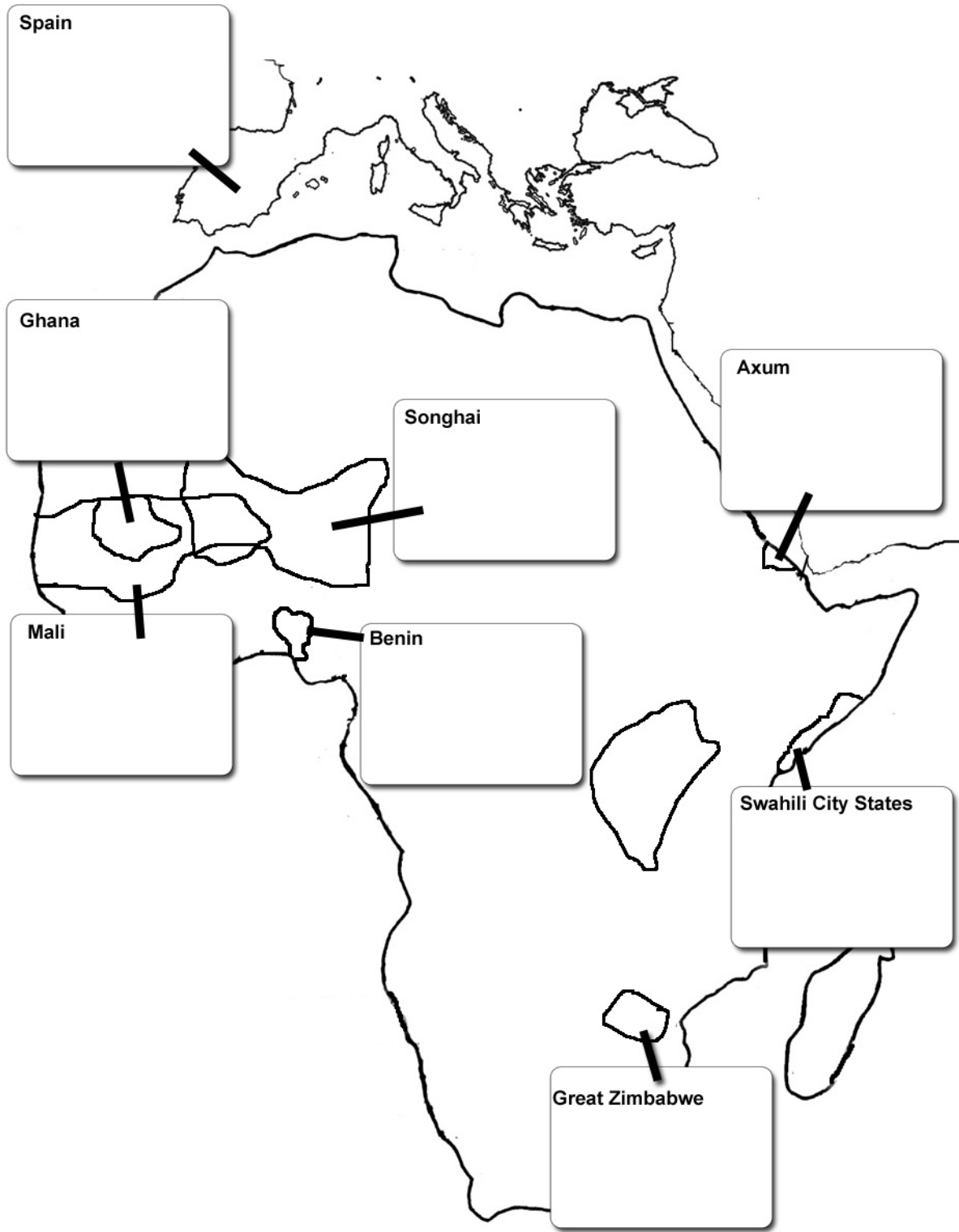
1400 CE - Songhai Empire

The largest of the three Sub-Saharan empires, Songhai encompassed part of the former Mali Empire. As with Ghana and Mali, Songhai's success was rooted in the control of trans-Saharan trade networks. Using cavalry and a strong centralized military, Songhai became the largest empire in African history. Muslim leaders instituted Islamic laws and the Islam became the dominant religion within the cities. However, in rural areas, traditional religions dominated.

1400 CE - Swahili City-States

A series of independent city-states formed on the east coast of Africa. While they shared a similar culture and language – Swahili (a combination of Arab and Bantu languages), they never collaborated or formed an empire. The Islamic city-states competed for trade with Persian and Indian traders. They specialized in ivory, gold, iron, and slaves.

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Name _____ Period _____ Date _____

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Part 2: Questions

Directions: Based upon the timeline and map, answer the following questions.

1. What did the Moors bring to Europe?

2. What did Ghana, Mali, and Songhai have in common?

3. Describe why Mansa Musa's pilgrimage to Mecca significant?

4. Why was Timbuktu important?

Name _____ Period _____ Date _____

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5. Most of these events occurred during the European Middle Ages and Renaissance. What do these events in Africa tell us about events outside of Europe?

6. Empires and civilizations were spread throughout Africa, what does this tell us about Africa as a continent?

7. Why do you think Europe dominates the history regularly taught in school?
