Sub-Saharan Africa DBQ Example: Time 57 minutes

Trade is inextricably linked with the growth and development of states. The religion of Islam intensified this connection as its spread throughout Africa and Asia between the 7th and 11th centuries because of the history of Muhammed as a merchant and the use of trade in spreading the religion. Islam was able to take advantage of the expanding Trans-Saharan trade routes, made possible by the innovations of caravans, camels, and caravanserai to connect Sub-Saharan Africa to the rest of the Islamic world. However, despite a lack of extensive and direct connections with European and East Asian markets, Sub-Saharan African kingdoms constructed advanced and complex societies. These kingdoms established governments and political systems that kept the peace and provided stability, they built societies capable of both religious and secular art, and encouraged trade, thereby enjoying financial prosperity. *(Thesis has complexity.)*

African kingdoms like Ghana, Mali, and Songhai established government and political systems that kept the peace and provided social and economic stability. In Document 3, Ibn Battuta writes that the land was so stable, that travelers were not scared of thieves and that the Sultan enforced justice. Prosperous trade required that merchants feel safe when they travelled between cities. Concepts of justice require complex legal codes and systems of enforcement. We can infer that Sub-Saharan Africa kingdoms had these since Ibn Battuta is referring to their effects on society. The author of Document 2 states that judges and priests were retained at the expense of the King. Likewise, the books mentioned could have included legal writings based in both secular and religious ethics. This is clear evidence of the government and legal systems whose effects are visible to Ibn Battuta during his travels. The author of document 2 is alive during the 16th century, after the Spanish Reconquista of the Iberian Peninsula has been accomplished by the Christian monarchs of Spain. At this same time Spain and Portugal were both expanding into North Africa and along the African coastline. What is remarkable is that even as these external pressures were threatening African kingdoms, the social and economic stability of cities like Timbuktu were secure. Likewise, the author of Document 1 references Mansa Musa's trip through Cairo as he took the Hajj. Along that journey Mansa Musa spread a tremendous amount of wealth. Not only is the wealth evidence of the stability of Mali that would be required to amass it, but Mansa Musa's ability to leave his kingdom in the hands of others while he journeyed is evidence of the internal stability of the kingdom. Mansa Musa can trust the government will continue to function even if he is away. Mansa Musa's wealth was made possible by the flourishing of the Trans-Saharan trade routes. When he passed through Egypt he was also on his way to Mecca, completing the Hajj as a devout Muslim. As the emperor of a wealthy kingdom, he was interested in showing the wealth and power of his empire, as well as using his wealth to help the poor and fulfill another of the five pillars of Islam. Showing off his achievements would increase his empire's prestige and help him build on growing economic and religious connections. Both economic and social stability relied heavily on the connections these empires had with the Islamic world. Rulers of these empires were able to use these connections to build stronger empires, spread their prestige and increase their legitimacy with their people. Even though Islam would undergo some syncretic changes as it spread to Sub-Saharan Africa, being part of the Islamic world brought tremendous benefits to these kingdoms that lasted for centuries.

Sub-Saharan African kingdoms developed complex and sophisticated societies. The author of document 2 references jobs and positions in Timbuktu such as priests, doctors, and judges. A society requires a certain level of sophistication and complexity to be able to support such jobs that do not directly serve to produce either raw materials or manufactured goods. The syncretism that occurred with the arrival of Islam also represented a level of complexity. For example, the spread of Sufism introduced a new emphasis within Islam on a personal connection to Allah. These teachers also spread the message that Islam was a big-tent religion that could be accepting of many cultures and types of people. These beliefs led to cultural and religious syncretism where some African societies remained matrilineal or at least had a larger social role for women, and even led to the development of languages like Swahili. The diversity encouraged by Sufism led to increased diversity and complexity that facilitated the expansion of achievements in other areas of life. The author of document 5 remarks on the size, wealth, and vigor of two cities in Ghana, saying that even the space between the cities had "continuous habitations." Cities are critical to the sophistication and

complexity of civilizations. Cities are where ideas mix and yield syncretism, where trade and prosperity is centralized, and where intellectual pursuits, including art and literature can occur. Travelers such as Ibn Battuta also remark on the importance of these cities to the health of empires and states. The stories recorded in document 5 were recorded by a resident of al-Andalus in 1068. Al-Andalus was famous for being one of the wealthiest and most culturally advanced areas of the Islamic World, rivaled only by Baghdad itself before its fall to the Mongols in 1258. The fact that an al-Andalus resident recognizes the sophistication of other urban areas further strengthens the literal interpretation of the document regarding the importance and splendor of Ghana's cities. When governments are able to provide peace and stability and encourage the growth of cities, trade, and the development of complex societies, greater achievements and grow out of this foundation.

In that way, Sub-Saharan African kingdoms were also able to develop artistic and cultural achievements that were a reflection of their uniqueness as much as a result of trade connections with the Islamic world. The author of document 4 describes the process of using wax and clay while making bronze statues. He does not specify the use of these statues, which could be religious, cultural, or economic, but is clearly proud of the abilities he is recording. The process he describes was likely based on metal working techniques of the Bantu people that dominated the region before the spread of Islam. Islam and trade might give purpose to the process, but they cannot take credit for the process itself. The images in documents 6 and 7 show evidence of this process described in document 4. Document 6 is a bronze staff in the shape of a coiled snake from the Igbo-Ukwu people in Nigeria. This staff dates from before Islam has saturated the area and gives further evidence to the argument that the metalworking processes described in document 4 are unique African achievements. Document 7 is a bronze head from Benin. Despite the fact that it is from a time period after the arrival of Islam, the way the head is depicted, mainly the neck jewelry, suggests the strong African roots of the art. The neck rings were not common allover the Islamic world, but predominantly in African societies. Combined, these documents reveal that even as trade connections offer outside support for various achievements, societies in Sub-Saharan Africa continued to develop their own traditions and achievements. *(This paragraph does the best job of connecting documents)*

One of the unifying causes of the political, economic, and cultural achievements of Sub-Saharan African kingdoms was Islam. The spread of the religion into Africa offered a unifying force around which rulers could build strong traditions and legitimate power structures. Mali and Songhai were larger and more powerful than Ghana because Islam offered greater trade connections with the Middle East and provided an expansionist zeal. Similarly, the Swahili city-states experiences an expansion of Islam within their regions as they grew more connected to the Indian Ocean trade routes and the Arab traders that used their ports. Merchants exchanged more than just goods along these trade routes. The movement of people, ideas, and technology within a unified religious landscape increased the prosperity and advancements of all involved. It also provides the impetus to continued internal achievements and advancements that reflect both the fusion of cultures, and the ways people and societies carve out unique traditions that help retain their cultural identity. This process would continue as waves of globalization continued to connect new areas if the world in later centuries and continually spread new ideas and innovations.

Context
Thesis
Doc Usage
Sourcing
Outside Info
Complexity???