

# West African Culture and Daily Life

7.16 I can explain the importance of family, labor specialization and regional commerce in West Africa.

# West African Culture and Daily Life

You will learn about the daily life, the development of the economy and oral tradition in early West Africa.

Create the chart and write notes on the following topics

Village Life in West Africa	Trade and regional commerce

# ESSENTIAL QUESTION

- What role did families play in West African society?

– Read p. 382 *Early Peoples' Way of Life*

# Importance of Family

- Typical West African family includes extended family.
- Every person was loyal & had a specific job.
- Many West Africans believed their ancestors' spirits stayed around.
- They also believed things in nature has spirits, called animism.



# Early Peoples' Way of Life

## Village Society



### Families

Families were the basic group of village society.



### Extended Families

Extended families included grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and their families.



### Village Chiefs

Extended families often had a male leader who served as a village chief.



### Council of Elders

Sometimes, village chiefs formed a council of elders that led the village.

- Who made up the extended family?
- How are the families of Africa similar to families in the US?
- How are they different?
- See page 382

# I. Village Life West Africa

- 300 – 1500 powerful empires controlled much of West Africa.
- Daily life separate from government.
- Most people dealt with rulers during court cases and taxes.
- **Family relationships were very important**
  - Kinship groups formed the government of many - Each equal in power
  - Council of kinship groups' elders made decision.
  - Kinship groups with a common ancestor formed larger groups or clans.



# Work

- Farming was center of family, village life
  - women cared for children, cooked, made pottery, worked in fields
  - men built houses, cleared farm land for cattle, camels
  - children gathered firewood, helped mothers and fathers
- **Labor specialization**—specific types of work—led to diverse economy
  - metal work, tool-making, trade created wealth; population grew



# II. Trade and Regional Commerce

## Essential Questions

**How did trading develop in  
West Africa?**



# Cities and States Develop

- By 300, West African cities such as Djenné grew
  - inland city along Niger River was regional, international hub
  - Djenné was also political, religious, education, and trade center
- West, North Africans traded salt, cloth, metal, gold, slaves, ivory

# Rise of Kings

- Kings took control of trade system
  - maintained order, gained loyalty
- Kings had religious role
  - expected to pray for rain, fertile land, and wealth

# Exit Ticket

- Summarize why African family was important.
- Compare how labor specialization is similar to families in US.