Sub-Saharan Africa from Pre-History to 1500 A.C.E.

I. Pre-historic Africa

1. Regions in Africa: Sub-Saharan Africa vs. Northern Africa (inc. Nile Valley)
   a. The Sahara is the greatest physical and cultural barrier
   b. North settled early by Berbers, Hamites (Caucasian groups)
   c. Sub-Saharan Africa has larger regions with many micro regions
   d. West Africa Forest, Sahel called Sudan, Central Africa, East Africa, and South Africa

2. Each region defined by physical geography and vegetation; many micro cultures
   a. North and East Africa saw first “African” civilizations
   b. The Nile River: Pharaonic Egypt; Kush-Meroe (often called Nubia)
   c. The Ethiopian Highlands: Axum (Aksum) or Ethiopia
   d. North Africa: Carthaginian Empire, Roman and Greek civilizations

3. The Sudan
   a. Sudanic region was Sahel or plains stretching across Africa south of Sahara
   b. 9000 B.C.E. domestication of cattle; cultivation of sorghum, cotton
   c. Became home to most Sub-Saharan civilizations
   d. Small states based on tribes, clans developed
   e. Religion: polytheism, shamanism, and placation of spirits, divination
4. Climatic Change
   a. Prior to 5000 BCE Sahara one large inland sea surrounded by plains
   b. 5000 B.C.E. development of Sahara Desert as desertification increased
   c. Increasing desertification forced mass popular migration to water
   d. Nile shifts to east; formation of large lakes in Central Africa that feed Nile

Regions of Africa
II.  First African Civilizations Egypt (Review)

1. Egyptian History, c. 3100 BCE to 525 BCE
   a. Pre-history dominated by small city-states along Nile

2. Old Kingdom
   a. Menes- Narmer united Upper/Lower Egypt
   b. Pyramid building era; pharaohs considered divine

3. Middle Kingdom
   a. 2nd Illness saw Semitic invasion: Hyksos

4. New Kingdom saw rise of empire
   a. 3rd Illness saw invasions by Kush, Assyrians, Sea Peoples
   b. Eventually ruled by Persians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines

5. Kush in Upper Nile assimilates Egyptian culture
   a. Ethnically were Black Africans
   b. Adopted many of Egyptian practices: religion, architecture
   c. Ruled Egypt as 26th Dynasty
   d. Famous for iron, gold trade
   e. Remained independent until Muslim conquests

6. Nile Societies
   a. Urban elites (2%) ruled over rural masses
   b. Social Classes
      - Pharaoh (ruler and his immediate family)
      - Officials (Advisors, generals, soldiers, priests)
      - Merchants and artisans
      - Peasants
      - Slaves
   c. Patriarchal societies with a twist
      - Women were occasionally rulers
      - Women had rights, could own lands
      - Were “less” than males but not oppressed
7. Economics of the Nile  
   a. Economic Specialization and Trade  
      Bronze Age arose around 17th century B.C.E.  
      Iron Age begins around 1,000 B.C.  
   b. Transportation  
      - Largely waterborne; little need for roads  
      - Out of Nile Valley, camels and horses were common  
   c. Trade  
      - Egypt was largely self-sufficient  
      - Net exporter of grains, foodstuffs, luxuries, paper, medicines  
      - Most trade was based on luxury products  
      - Papyrus, paper, medicines, herbs, finished products especially silver  
      - Imports tended to be wood, gold, finished products  
      - Kush-Meroe specialized in iron, gold workings  
   d. Trade Routes  
      - Up Nile to Kush-Meroe  
      - Across Sinai to Fertile Crescent  
      - Down Red Sea to East Africa, Southern Arabia  
      - Across Mediterranean to Greece, Phoenicia  
      - Little contact with interior of Africa  

III. Sub-Saharan Africa: Nok Culture  

A. Flourished 900 B.C.E to 200 A.C.E on Niger-Benue River  
   1. Clearly first Sub-Saharan civilization/culture  
   2. Precursor of Bantu, West African forest peoples  
   3. Iron makers and sculptors  
   4. Animals and humans made from fired clay  
      a. Figures of animals, peoples including leaders  
   5. Seem to have been pastoralist, farmers  
   6. Could smelt iron  
      a. Iron tools, weapons; probably also used wood  
      b. Seemed to have skipped copper, bronze ages  
   7. Indigenous or borrowed from North Africa, Nile River
B. Sub-Saharan Writing
1. Lacked alphabet, books
2. Lack due to termites, lack of durable medium
3. Developed oral traditional, tribal memories
   a. West African griots. Memorized history by pneumonic devices. Kept all records for tribes, rulers
4. Islam brought first alphabet to Sub-Saharan Africa

III. Bantu Migrations
A. The Bantu peoples
1. Originated in the region around modern Nigeria/Cameroon
2. Influenced by Nok iron making, herding, agriculture
4. Two major movements: to south and to east and then south
5. Languages split into about 500 distinct but related tongues
6. Bantu agriculture and herding
   a. Early Bantu relied on agriculture – slash-burn, shifting
   b. Pastoralist, semi-nomadic due to agriculture, cattle
7. Iron metallurgy
   a. Iron appeared during the 7th and 6th centuries B.C.E.
   b. Iron made agriculture more productive
   c. Expanded divisions of labor, specialization in Bantu societies
8. Population Pressures
   a. Iron technologies produced population upsurge
   b. Large populations forced migration of Bantu
B. The Bantu Migration

1. Population pressure led to migration, c. 2000 B.C.E.
   a. Movement to South, along Southeast and Southwest coasts
   b. Languages differentiated into about 500 distinct but related tongues
   c. Occupied most of sub-Saharan (except West) Africa by 1000 C.E.
   d. Split into groups as they migrated: Eastern, Central, Southern

2. Bantu spread iron, herding technologies as they moved

3. Between 300/500 A.C.E., Malay seafarers reached Africa
   a. Settled in Madagascar, visited East African coast
   b. Brought with them pigs, taro, and banana cultivation. Bananas became well established in Africa by 500 A.C.E. Bantu learned to cultivate bananas from Malagasy. Bananas caused second population spurt, migration surge.
   c. Reached South Africa in 16th century CE

4. Population growth
   • 3.5 million people by 400 B.C.E.
   • 11 million by the beginning of the millennium
   • 17 million by 800 C.E.
   • 22 million by 1000 C.E.
C. Bantu Political Organization

1. Village Structure
   a. Early Bantu societies did not depend on elaborate bureaucracy
   b. Societies governed through family and kinship groups
   c. Village council, consisted of male family heads
   d. Chief of a village was from the most prominent family heads

2. Stateless Society
   a. A group of villages constituted a district
   b. Villages chiefs negotiated inter-village affairs

3. Chiefdoms
   a. Population growth strained resources, increased conflict
   b. Some communities began to organize military forces, 1000 C.E.
   c. Powerful chiefs overrode kinship networks and imposed authority
   d. Some chiefs conquered their neighbors

4. Kingdom of Kongo
   a. Villages formed small states along the Congo River, 1000 C.E.
   b. Small states formed several larger principalities, 1200 C.E.
   c. One of the principalities conquered neighbors, built kingdom of Kongo
   d. Maintained a centralized government with a royal currency system
   e. Provided effective organization until the mid-17th century
IV. African Social Organization

A. Political diversity in Sub-Saharan Africa
   1. Complex societies developed into kingdoms, empires, and city-states
   2. Coexisted with small states and stateless societies

B. Social Organization
   1. Lineages consisted of all members descended from a common ancestor
   2. Kinship groups of stateless societies Extended families and clans as social and economic organizations
   3. Communities claimed rights to land, no private property
   4. Village council allocated land to clan members

C. Sex and gender relations
   1. Men undertook heavy labor, herding
   2. Women were responsible for child rearing, domestic chores, farming
   3. Men monopolized public authority but women could be leaders
   4. Women enjoyed high honor as the source of life
   5. Many societies were matrilineal; aristocratic women influenced public affairs
   6. Women merchants commonly traded at markets
   7. Sometimes women organized all-female military units
   8. Islam did little to curtail women's opportunities in sub-Saharan Africa
D. Age grades
   1. Publicly recognized "age grades" or "age sets"
   2. Assumed responsibilities and tasks appropriate to their age grades
   3. Coming of age ceremonies and secret societies restricted by age, gender

V. Slavery in Africa
   A. Structure of Slavery in Africa
      1. Most slaves were captives of war, debtors, and criminals. Kept for local use or sold in slave markets
      2. Often used as domestic laborers especially agricultural workers
      3. Generally not a social stigma attached
      4. Slaves could receive freedom, become part of family, tribe
      5. Children born to slaves were not slaves

   B. Slave trading
      1. Slave trade increased after the 11th century A.C.E.
      2. Primary markets
         a. Across Sahara to North Africa and Egypt and ultimately Arabia
         b. Out of East Africa to Arabia and Middle East
      3. In some years, 10 to 12 thousand slaves shipped out of Africa
         a. Males preferred, could also act as carriers of trade goods
         b. 10 million slaves transported by Islamic trade between 750 A.C.E. and 1500 A.C.E.
      4. Demand for slaves outstripped supply from Eastern Europe
         a. Original slaves preferred in Muslim world were Caucasian Slavs
         b. Word “slave” comes from Slav
5. Slave raids against smaller states, stateless societies
6. Muslims could not be used as slaves (Quran) yet often ignored

VI. West African History: Ghana

A. Camels
1. Camels came to Egypt from Arabia, 7th century B.C.E.
2. Romans introduced them to North Africa, patrolled desert
   a. After 500 C.E. camels replaced horses, donkeys as transport animals
3. Camels' arrival quickened pace of communication across the Sahara. Islamic merchants crossed the desert to trade in West Africa. Established relations with sub-Saharan West Africa by 8th century

B. The kingdom of Ghana
1. Kings maintained a large army of two hundred thousand warriors
2. A principal state of West Africa, not related to modern state of Ghana
3. Became the most important commercial site in West Africa
   a. Controlled gold mines, exchanged it with nomads for salt
   b. Provided gold, ivory, and slaves
   c. Wanted horses, cloth, manufactured goods
4. Koumbi-Saleh
   a. Capital city
   b. Thriving commercial center
VII. Arrival of Islam in West Africa
   A. North Africa  
      1. Arab armies conquered region by early 8th Century; pushed up Nile  
      2. Mass conversions of local inhabitants due to tax incentives  
   
   B. West Africa  
      1. Introduced by Trans-Saharan Trade route  
      2. Merchants were greatest contact with Islam  
      3. Local rulers, elites converted by 10th century  
         a. Gave elites control of trade, many benefits  
      4. Allowed people to observe traditional beliefs  
   
   C. North Africa  
      1. Nomadic Berbers in North Africa  
         a. Berbers and Arabs were bitter rivals  
         b. Arabs settled coastlands, cities  
         c. Berbers lived in deserts, mountains  
         d. Berbers became puritanical Muslim, Shia  
      2. Berber fanatics invaded Ghana, Morocco  
         a. Ghana weakened, fell 10th century CE  
      3. Elite religion vs. common practices  
         a. Most people remained polytheists especially outside of cities, towns  
         b.Produced syncretic blend such as accommodation of African gender norms. After conversion by elites, old beliefs remained; part of inherited traditions  
      4. Religion introduced writing, literary traditions  
   
VIII. Kingdom of Mali: West Africa  
   A. Mandike Peoples  
      1. Ghana was established by Mandika  
         a. After fall of Ghana, Mandika established many small states  
         b. Most people were not Muslims but merchants were  
      2. Sundiata
a. After Ghana dissolved, political leadership shifted to Mali empire, a Mandika state
b. The lion prince Sundiata (reigned 1230-55) built the Mali empire
c. Ruling elites, families converted to Islam after his death

3. The Mali Empire and trade
   a. Controlled gold, salt; taxed almost all trade passing through west Africa
   b. Enormous caravans linked Mali to North Africa
   c. Besides Niani, many prosperous cities on caravan routes

4. Mansa Musa
   a. Sundiata's grand nephew, reigned from 1312 to 1337
   b. Made his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324-1325
   c. Gargantuan caravan of thousand soldiers and attendants
   d. Gold devalued 25% in Cairo during his visit

5. Mansa Musa and Islam
   a. Upon return to Mali, built mosques
   b. Sent students to study with Islamic scholars in North Africa
   c. Established Islamic schools in Mali

6. The decline of Mali
   a. Factions crippled the central government
   b. Rise of province of Gao as rival to Mali
   c. Military pressures from neighboring kingdoms, desert nomads
IX. Songhai Empire of West Africa

A. Origins
1. Sorko fishermen of Niger became merchants
2. Joined Gao state (part of Malian Empire)
3. Mali could never collect taxes from Gao

B. Rise of the Songhai
1. Sonni Ali the Great build cavalry, war fleet
   a. Disputed Mali, conquer Timbuktu
   b. Anti-Muslim: saw them as a threat

C. Zenith of the Songhai Empire
1. Askia Muhammad seized power after Sonni’s death
   a. Devout Muslim, promoted Islam; launched jihads
   b. Visited Cairo, Mecca; promoted Songhai to Muslims
   c. Declared Caliph of the Sudan
   d. Built centralized state using Muslim jurists as advisors

D. Tradition and Trade
1. Maintained tribal rituals of sacred drum, sacred fire, dress
2. Privileged caste craftsmen; slaves important in agriculture
3. Traded kola nuts, gold, slaves for horses, salt, luxuries, finished goods

E. Fall of the Songhai Empire
1. Civil war erupted in 16th century A.C.E.
2. Demographic Changes
   a. Drought, desertification hurt economy
   b. Diseases spread
   c. Moroccan Empire invades and destroys state in order to control gold trade
X. Central North Africa: Kanem-Bornu

A. Origins
1. Situated north east of Lake Chad.
2. In 11th century, Sefawa dynasty was established

B. Shift in lifestyle
1. From entirely nomadic to pastoralist way of life with agriculture
2. State became more centralized with capital at Njimi; maintained large cavalry

C. Islam and Trade
1. Kanem converted to Islam under Hu or Hawwa (1067-71).
   a. Faith was not widely embraced until the 13th century.
   b. Muslim traders played a role in bringing Islam to Kanem
2. Wealth of Kanem derived from ability of rulers to control trade
   a. Main exports were ostrich feathers, slaves and ivory; imported horses, luxuries
   b. Exports were crucial to their power, ability to dominate neighbors

D. Slow Decline of Kanem-Bornu Kingdom
1. Combination of overgrazing, dynastic uncertainties, attacks from neighbors
2. Rulers of Kanem to move to Borno, state now referred to as Kanem-Borno
3. New contacts with Hausa of Nigeria; capital becomes center of knowledge, trade
4. Army modernized by trade with Muslim, Turks: acquired firearms
5. Decline was long, gradual and peaceful: fell in the 19th century
XI. Early East African History

A. Early visitors to east Africa
1. Egyptians visited, traded with area
2. Famous expedition of Hatshepsut to Punt
3. Indian, Persian visited after 500 B.C.E.
4. Greeks, Romans called area Azania
5. Malays established colonies on Madagascar

B. Kingdom of Axum (Aksum)
1. Sabeans of Yemen created Axum
   a. Arose in highlands of Ethiopia
2. Trading state across Bab el Mandeb straits
   a. Tribute empire on land; trade gold, frankincense, myrrh, food, ivory
   b. Traded with Romans, Byzantines, Persians, Indians, Arabs
3. Built stone structures, issued own coins
4. Eventually became Monophysite Christian
   a. King Ezana converted and court followed in early 4th century
   b. Developed Ge’ez language, writing in association with Christianity
   c. Maintained strong contacts with Egypt
5. By 2nd century: Bantus populated much of East Africa
6. By 7th century: Arab merchants begin to visit
7. By 8th century: Muslim armies, merchants push up Nile
XII. The Swahili City-states: East Africa

A. Origins

1. Intermarriage of the Bantu and the Arab produced Swahili
   a. An Arabic term, meaning "coasters"
2. Dominated east African coast from Mogadishu to Sofala
3. Swahili is a Bantu language mixed with Arabic

B. The Swahili city-states

1. Chiefs gained power through taxing trade on ports
2. Developed into city-states ruled by kings, 11th-12th centuries

C. Trade

1. Controlled trade from interior: slaves, gold, ivory, spices
   a. Exchanged goods for finished goods, cloths, dyes, luxuries
   b. Craftsmen, artisans, clerks were Muslims

D. Slavery

1. Slaves used for domestic, agriculture
2. Zanzibar clove plantations needed slaves

E. Kilwa

1. One of the busiest city-states
   a. Multistory stone buildings, mosques, schools
2. Issued copper coins from the 13th century
   a. By 15th century, exported ton of gold per year
3. Merchants from India, China, Arabia visited

F. Islam in East Africa

1. Ruling elite and wealthy merchants converted to Islamic faith
2. Conversion promoted close cooperation with Muslim merchants. Conversion also opened door to political alliances with Muslim rulers
XIII. Kingdom of Zimbabwe

A. South Central Africa
   1. Wooded and grass savannahs
   2. Rich in minerals especially copper, gold
   3. Bantu herders, ironsmiths found it wonderful

B. Kingdom of Zimbabwe
   1. A powerful kingdom of Central Africa arose in 13th century
   2. From 5th centuries C.E. built wooden residences known as zimbabwe
   3. By the 9th century began to build stone zimbabwe

C. Great Zimbabwe
   1. Magnificent stone complex known as Great Zimbabwe, the 12th century
   2. 18,000 people lived in Great Zimbabwe in the late 15th century

D. Kings and wealth
   1. Organized flow of gold, ivory
   2. Trade include slaves
   3. Counted wealth in cattle, too
   4. Traded with Swahili city-states