education

Department:
Education
North West Provincial Government
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

NATIONAL SENIOR CERTIFICATE

HISTORY

TASK 1

QUESTION PAPER

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MARKS: 50

DURATION: 1 HOUR

DATE: 12 FEBRUARY 2026

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INSTRUCTIONS AND INFORMATION

1 This question paper consists of SECTION A based on the prescribed content for 2023.

SECTION A: SOURCE-BASED QUESTION

QUESTION 1: THE WORLD AROUND 1600 – SONGHAI EMPIRE

2. SECTION A consists of one SOURCE-BASED QUESTION. Source material that is required to answer this question can be found in the ADDENDUM.

2 When answering questions, you should apply your knowledge, skills and insight.

3. You will be disadvantaged by merely rewriting the source as answers.

4. Number the answers according to the numbering system used in this question paper.

5. Write neatly and legibly.

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SECTION A: SOURCE-BASED QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1: WHAT WERE THE SOCIO- ECONOMIC FACTORS THAT LED TO THE RISE OF THE SONGHAI EMPIRE IN THE 1600s?

Study Sources 1A, 1B, 1C and 1D and answer the questions that follow.

1.1 Read Source 1A.

1.1.1 According to the source, where was the Songhay empire situated during the 15th and 16th centuries? (1 x1) (1)

1.1.2 Define the term *century* in your own words. (1x2) (2)

1.1.3 What, according to the source, were the THREE factors that made the Songhay empire to thrive? (3x1) (3)

1.1.4 Identify THREE cities in the source that were used by the kingdom as administrative and cultural centres. (3x1) (3)

1.1.5 Using the information in the source and your own knowledge, explain how the Songhay empire was governed during the 15th and 16th Centuries. (1x2) (2)

1.2 Study Source 1B.

1.2.1 List FOUR circumstances from the source, that led to the socio-economic and political stability in the Songhay empire. (4x1) (4)

1.2.2 Quote evidence from the source that suggests that the defeat of Tuaregs and capture of Timbuktu was important towards Songhay Empire? (1x2) (2)

1.2.3 Why, according to the source was the Songhay empire an economically strong? (1x2) (2)

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1.2.4 Quote TWO pieces of evidence from the source which indicates that both Sunny Ali and Askia Mohammed were good leaders. (2x1) (2)

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1.3 Use Source 1C.

1.3.1 Identify any THREE trading centres from the source that were involved in Trans-Saharan trade. (3x1) (3)

1.3.2 Why would a historian find the source reliable when researching about the Trans-Saharan trade. (1x2) (2)

1.4 Consult Source 1D.

1.4.1 Explain the concept *Trans-Saharan trade* in the context of Songhay empire. (1x2) (2)

1.4.2 Why do you think the trade routes were important to the economic growth of the Songhay empire? (2x2) (4)

1.4.3 How, according to the source, were Timbuktu and Gao important to the economic and cultural developments of the Songhay empire? (1x2) (2)

1.4.4 Name TWO commodities (goods) that were part of trade routes between Songhay empire and neighbouring states. (2x1) (2)

1.4.5 Why, according to the source, were camels regarded as the 'ships of the desert' by merchants (1x2) (2)

1.5 Refer to Sources 1C and 1D. Explain how the information in Source 1D supports the evidence in Source 1C regarding trade in the Songhay empire. (2x2) (4)

1.6 Using the information in the relevant sources and your own knowledge, write a paragraph of about EIGHT lines (about 80 words) explaining the socio - economic factors that led to the rise of the Songhai empire in the 1600s (8)

[50]

TOTAL: 50

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GRADE 10

HISTORY

TASK 1

ADDENDUM

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QUESTION 1: WHAT WERE THE SOCIO- ECONOMIC FACTORS THAT LED TO THE RISE OF THE SONGHAI EMPIRE IN THE 1600s?

Source 1A

This source is about the origins and governance of the Songhay Empire during the 15th to the 16th centuries.

The Songhai Empire was one of the largest and most powerful empires in African history, dominating the West African region from the 15th to the 16th century. Centred around Gao, Timbuktu, and Djenne, the empire thrived (increased) on trade, scholarship, and military strength. It succeeded the Mali Empire and expanded under rulers like Sunni Ali and Askia Muhammad.

The governance of the Songhay Kingdom was characterized by a centralized auth ority under the emperor, known as the "Askia." The Askia was both a political and spiritual leader with ministerial and provincial governors overseeing different aspects of governance. The empire was divided into provinces, each with its own governor, ensuring efficient administration and local governance.

The main provinces included Gao, Timbuktu, Jenne, and Songhai, each contributin g to the empire's vast territory and diverse population. The Songhay Empire's gove rnance was marked by a mix of traditional West African cultural beliefs and Islamic religion, with emphasis on trade and scholarship.

The empire's socio-political structures was a key factor in its success, allowing it to control a vast territory and flourish for several centuries

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Source 1B

The extract below describes circumstances that led to the socio-economic and political stability of the Songhay Empire during the 15th to the 16th Centuries.

Songhay rose and expanded because of a strong army. Sunni Ali built a strong military force which became the most respected in the region. He was able to defeat the Tuaregs and captured Timbuktu which gave him control over the Trans-Saharan trade. He was also able to defend his state from the Mossi in the south.

Secondly favourable political conditions led to expansion of Songhay empire. The Tuaregs who captured the northern part of Mali were oppressive and exploitative. For this reason the people of Timbuktu invited Sunni Ali to rescue them. This created a favourable political atmosphere for Songhay.

Third factor was the good geographical position. Songhay was located on a fertile area (Savannah belt) which was suitable for the growing of crops and people could easily fish in the rivers of Niger and Senegal.

And lastly was also having the able leaders contributed to the rise and expansion of Songhay empire. Songhay was blessed with good leaders like Sunni Ali, during his reign, the empire expanded in all directions while under Askia Mohammed, Songhay developed commercially and diplomatically.

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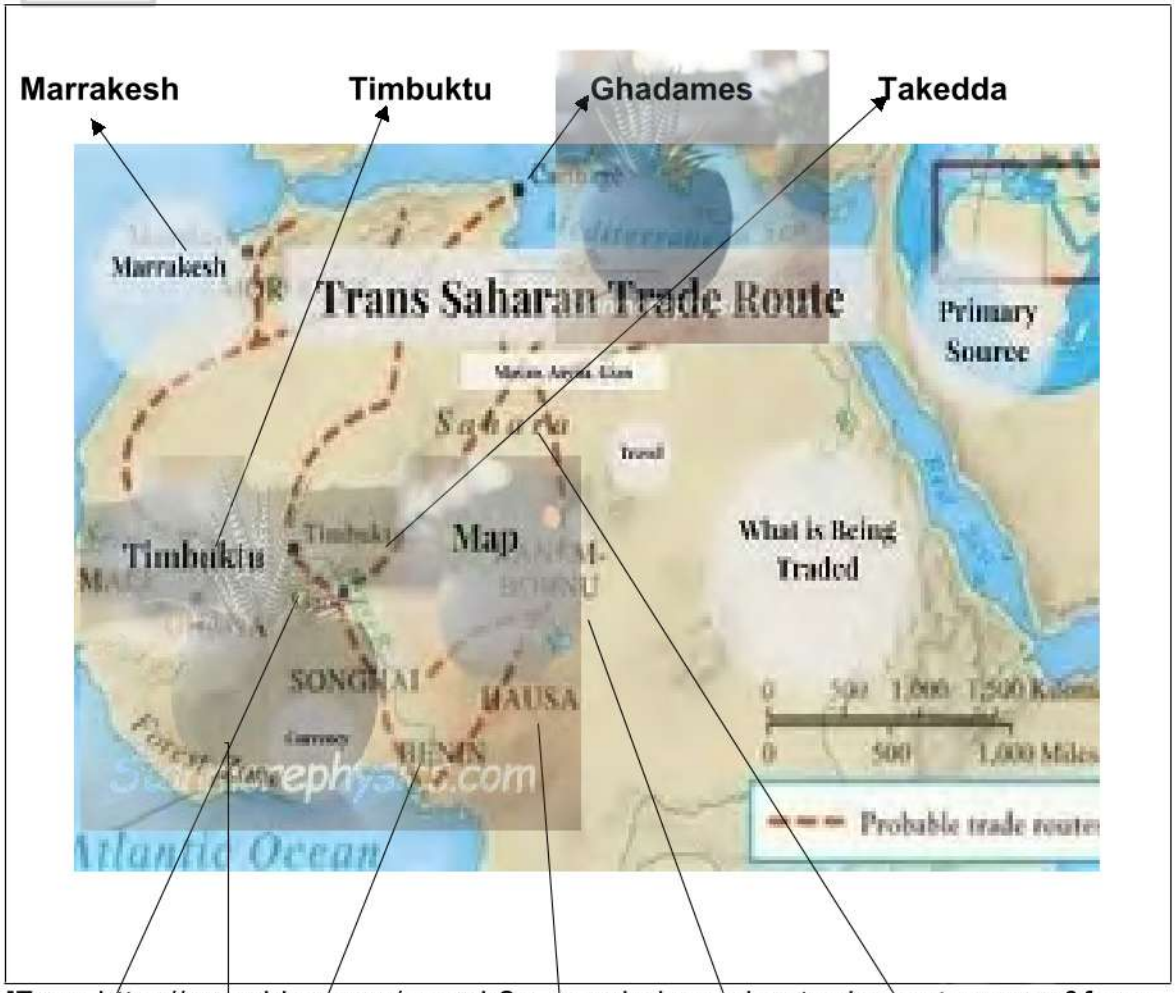
Source 1C

The map below is showing how trading was done in Songhay Empire during the 15th to the 16th Centuries.



[From https//www.bing.com/search?q=songhai+empire+trade+routes+map&form Accessed on 05 January 2026]

Gao **Benin** **Hausa** **Kanem Borno** **Sahara**

Forest Zone

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Source 1D

This source is about how Trans-Saharan Trade routes contributed towards Songhay Empire becoming the strongest empire.

The Trans-Saharan trade routes were a network of overland trade paths that connected sub-Saharan Africa to North Africa, facilitating the exchange of goods, culture and ideas across the Sahara Desert

The Trans-Saharan trade played an important to the growth of Songhay empire. The Trans-Saharan trade was extended in Hausa land between the 14th and 15th century, Songhay became a focus or terminus for trade route giving it a chance to play the middle man roll in the trade.

The trade routes facilitated not just the exchange of goods like salt and gold, but also the spread of Islam and cultural influences across West Africa. Songhay's control over key cities along these routes, such as Timbuktu and Gao, allowed it to dominate trade routes and accumulates wealth during its height. Merchants used camels, known as 'ships of the desert,' to transport goods across the harsh landscape.

[From New Generation Grade 10 Learners book by Pillay G at al]

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Visual sources and other historical evidence were taken from the following:

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https//www.bing.com/search?q=songhai+empire+trade+routes+map&form

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