

PEOPLES AND STATES OF AFRICA TO 1500

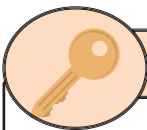
Unit Introduction

This unit deals with the civilisations. Apart from these linguistic classifications of peoples of Africa. In unit two, you have learnt about ancient Egypt, Kush and Carthage. The civilisation of these peoples and states is discussed as part of ancient and classical world civilisations. In this unit, we shall briefly discuss the civilisations of these peoples and states.

Unit learning outcomes

At the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

- outline the major economic, cultural, social and political developments in pre-colonial Africa.
- describe the peoples and language families of Africa.
- analyse inter-connections and inter-dependence among Africans as a result of trade, population movements and wars.
- evaluate the factors for the rise and decline of various empires in Africa to the beginning of the 16th Century.
- explain the origin of Islam and the role it played during the expansion of the West African Empires.



Key Terms

- People
- State
- Pre-colonial
- Empire

5.1 Languages and Peoples of Africa

Lesson learning outcomes

At the end of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- describe languages and peoples of Africa.
- appreciate the diversity of the languages of Africa.

Brainstorming

- What is a native language? Discuss in a group.

Africa is a vast continent inhabited by people who speak various languages. Linguists have stated that over 1000 diverse and interrelated languages are currently spoken all over the continent. Languages that belong to the same group share certain vocabulary or words. Linguists describe the degree of the relationships among these languages. Based on this, they classify the peoples of Africa into the speakers of four super-families of languages. These are Congo-Kordofanian, Afro-Asiatic, Nilo-Saharan and Khoisan.



Chart 5.1 Super Families of African Languages

The speakers of the **Afro-Asiatic super-family** live in northern Africa, the Sahara, the Horn of Africa and around Lake Chad. This super-family is divided into six sub-groups: Berber, Chadic, Coptic (Ancient Egyptian), Cushitic, Omotic and Semitic. The Semitic language sub-group is spoken mainly in the Horn of Africa. The Omotic sub-family is spoken only in Ethiopia. The Cushitic branch extends from the Red Sea coast, through the Horn of Africa, and into central Kenya and Tanzania.

Based on rough estimates, the **Niger-Congo super-family** has the most significant number of speakers, followed by the Asiatic Super –Family. This super-family has two main branches: Niger-Congo and Kordofanian. Niger-Congo covers much of West Africa and all of Bantu Africa. Bantu speakers live across much of sub-Saharan Africa. There are over 450 languages that are grouped in the Bantu family. Kiswahili, one of the most

widely spoken African languages and a mixture of African and Arab cultures, belongs to the Bantu language group. Kordofanian languages are spoken in a small area in the Nuba hills, south of the Republic of Sudan.

Nilo- Saharan Super-Family is the third majority in terms of the number of speakers and is divided into six subgroups: Chari-Nile, Songhay, Saharan, Meban, Koman and Fur.

Khoisan Super-Family has two subgroups: the Khoikhoi and the San. The speakers of these languages live in and around the Kalahari Desert of northern South Africa, Southwestern Botswana and Namibia.



Map 5.1 Distribution of the four-language superfamilies of Africa,
(source: Wikimedia Commons)

Not all languages spoken in Africa are native to the continent. For instance, many people in northern Africa speak the Arabic language. This language was brought to Africa by the Muslim Arabs between the seventh and eleventh centuries. Afterwards, the European colonial powers brought their languages to their respective colonies of Africa.

Activity 5.1



Case study: living along the border

The Horn of Africa is inhabited by peoples who speak various languages. Above all, living along the border allows people to interact with other people of diverse cultures and languages. For example, in this region, a girl named Neima lives in Moyale, along the Ethio-Kenyan border. Due to her exposure to various languages, Neima can communicate in Afan-Oromo, Amharic, Somali, Swahili, and English. In addition to school, she participates in local trade activities to earn a living. Based on the case study above, answer the following questions.

1. How many languages does she speak?
2. Draw the chart that shows the SuperFamilies of African Languages and show families where the languages she speaks belong.
3. Are all languages native to the continent of Africa?

5.2 States in North Africa

Lesson learning outcomes

At the end of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- explain the Mamluk Egypt.
- discuss the Funj Kingdom.

Brainstorming

- What do you know about states in North Africa?

A) Mamluk Egypt

The Fatimid rulers used soldiers called Mamluks and declared Egyptian independence from the rule of Baghdad in 969 AD. The Mamluks were of Turkish origin. They gradually became military commanders and took power militarily. They founded their dynasty that ruled Egypt from 1250 to 1517. After that, they expanded into Palestine, Syria, Europe and Asia. Besides, Egypt, under the Mamluk, witnessed critical economic developments. During the rule of the Mamluks, Ethio- Egyptian relations was full of conflicts. However, the Ethiopian ruler, Zera Yacob (r. 1434 - 1468), tried to create smooth relations. But their relation short-lived. The Mamluk power started to decline because of corruption, the decline in agricultural productivity, cattle plague and drought. Firearms helped the Ottoman Turks to defeat the Mamluk force in Palestine, and they occupied Egypt in 1517.

B) The Funj Sultanate

The Funj sultanate was established in 1504 by cattle keeping nomads in northeast Africa- in the present-day Republic of Sudan. The Funj established their Sultanate in 1504 with its capital at Sennar. Like Mamluks, the Funj sultanate fought against the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia due to rivalry over trade routes. As a result, the army of King Susenyos destroyed them in about 1620. However, the Funj Sultanate continued to exist until Muhammed Ali of Egypt conquered it in the 1820s.

Activity 5.2



1. Explain the reasons for the rise and fall of Mamluk Egypt and Funj Sultanate.

5.3 Spread of Islam and its impact in West Africa

Lesson learning outcomes

At the end of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- explain the origin of Islam and the role it played during the expansion of the West African Empire.
- recognise the role of Islam in the expansion of the various empires in West Africa to develop the respect of the religions in the society.

Brainstorming

- What do you know about the religions in West Africa?

After the birth of Islam early in the 7th century, the Muslim Arabs conquered Egypt in 642AD. Later in the century, they went on from Egypt to the rest of North Africa. By the end of the century, the Arab empire had reached Morocco and even conquered southern Spain. After politico-religious rivalries in the 11th century, there was a revival of Islam in North Africa, accompanied by a further wave of Arab immigration. This was also followed by the expansion of the West African Empires.

Islam promoted trade between West Africa and the Mediterranean. The religion developed and widened the trans-Saharan Caravan trade. The work enriched the West African and the Muslim traders. Muslims from North Africa came and settled in the commercial centers. Islam in Africa has also linked together diverse peoples through better cultural understanding and a spirit of cooperation and commonwealth.

The historical impact of Islam upon trade, particularly in West Africa, significantly increased the wealth of African people and helped the rise of great African empires. The coming of Islam to Africa facilitated the rise of political empires that encouraged trade and wealth. Islam was also more attractive to kings because of its concept of the caliph's combined political power with religious authority.

Activity 5.3



1. Discuss the impacts of Islam when it spread into West Africa.

5.4 States in Western Africa

Lesson learning outcomes

At the end of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- write the origin, rise and fall of various empires of West Africa.
- appreciate the achievements of the African kings towards the rise of various empires in West Africa.
- recognise the role of Islam in the expansion of the various empires in West Africa to develop the respect of the religions in the society.

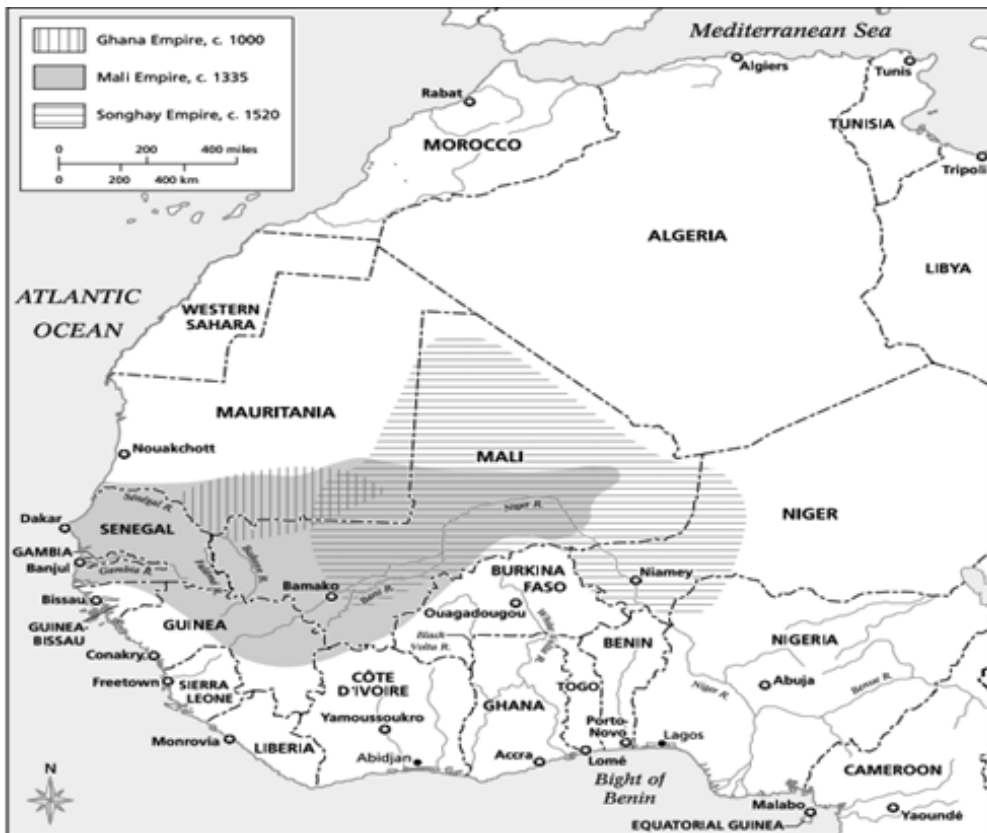
Brainstorming

- Explain different empires that existed in West Africa in the ancient period.

Many states and kingdoms were flourished in western Africa. More than ten modern African nations, including Mali, Guinea, and Senegal, have a geographical connection to the three medieval African empires of Ghana, Mali, and Songhay.

A) Ghana

The Ancient Ghana Empire was located in parts of what are now called Mauritania, Mali and Senegal. It was founded by the Soninke people in the fourth century AD and reached the height of its power at about 1000AD. Ghana relied on Trans - the Saharan trade, and its rulers were able to build a vast empire. However, the rise of Islam was the main factor for the greatness and decline of Ghana. Ancient Ghana came to an end in 1076 when the Islamic Empire of Almoravids invaded and captured its capital, Kumbi Saleh.



Map 5.2 Empires of West Africa, (source: ReasearchGate.net)

B) Mali

Mali emerged after the fall of Ghana. Sundiata Keita founded the Mali Empire of the Mandinka people. The Mali Empire had many profound cultural influences on West Africa that allowed the spread of its language, laws and customs along the Niger River. The greatest king of Mali was Mansa Musa (1312-1337), who made a pilgrimage to Mecca. During his time, Islam expanded in the Empire vastly.



Figure 5.1 Cartoon of Mans Musa (source: historyhustle.com)

Mali was famous for its Islamic studies. Timbuktu, the capital of Mali, became one of the most important Islamic learning and culture centers.

After Mansa Musa, there was no king as powerful as he was. The great kingdom of Mali weakened due to inefficient leadership and attacks from the neighbouring peoples, such as Tuareg. Although Mali fell, another advanced African kingdom took its place, the Kingdom of Songhai.

C) Songhai

The Songhai people established the Empire named after their name, with its capital at Gao. The Songhai people had been subject to Ghana and then to Mali at various times. However, towards the end of the 14th century, they threw off the over-lordship of Mali. The Empire extended from the central area of today's Nigeria to the Atlantic coast.

Songhai became powerful by controlling the Trans-Sahara trade. The Songhai had trading connections with the Berbers. Its kings accepted Islam early in the 11th century. Their prosperity grew as gold began to come from the forest region. The Empire ended in 1591 when a Moroccan army defeated Songhai in the battle of Tondibi.

D) The Kingdoms Kanem-Bornu

There were many other kingdoms in the grassland region of Africa. One of these was Kanem-Bornu. The ruling family was a Muslim dynasty. Trade was important for Kanem's greatness. Kanem's army kept the trade routes safe and collected taxes from traders. After Bornu became a province of Kanem, the Empire was often called Kanem-Bornu. Kanem-Bornu probably began to decline because trade centers shifted from inland routes to the Atlantic coast of West Africa.

E) The Hausa States

The Hausa city-states emerged in Nigeria between 1000 and 1200AD. The people were both pastoralists and farmers. These city-states were Kano, Katsina, Zazzau (Zaria), Gobir, Kebbi, Rano and Zamfara. The economy of the Hausa city-states was based on agriculture and the trans-Saharan trade. Hausa cities were noted for their leather goods, craft technology and textiles. The most famous of them was the walled city of Kano. Islam spread to Hausa land from Kanem-Bornu.

Activity 5.4



1. List the major empires of West Africa?
2. Why were the West African empires so powerful?

5.5 Equatorial, Central and Eastern Africa

Lesson learning outcomes

At the end of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- analyse the nature of relationships among the different regions of Africa.

Brainstorming

- What do you know about the kingdom of Kongo and Swahili states?

In eastern Africa, a variety of states and small societies emerged. Islam strongly influenced many of them. Some became extremely wealthy as a result of trade. Beginning in the 1st millennium BC, new peoples migrated into eastern Africa from the west. Farming peoples who spoke dialects of the Bantu family began to move from the region of the Niger River into East Africa and the Congo River basin. They moved slowly, not as invading hordes but as small communities.

A) Kongo

The Kingdom of Kongo was located on the lower bank of the Zaire River. Bantu people founded it in the late 14th century. The people were hunters and warriors. They were also clever smiths. Apart from agriculture, trade played an important role in the kingdom's economy. The explorers reached the Kongo in 1482 and 1491. Missionaries who were converted to Catholicism arrived having such footsteps. The Portuguese colonised the kingdom.

B) Swahili city-states

About 2000 years ago, Bantu speaking people established small village settlements along the coast of the Indian ocean. After the rise of Islam, the region received a great impetus from Muslim Arabic speaking merchants who married into local ruling families. Subsequently, the language and culture were developed distinctly African but with Islamic and Arabic influences. These mixed Bantu-Arab stocks their language called Swahili, meaning "coasters" in Arabic. Swahili is now a common language in East African countries.

The Swahili civilisation is an example of cultural diffusion formed from the interaction between Arabic, Persian and Bantu traditions. There were several important coastal commercial centers called Swahili city-states. Among the most important and influential coastal cities or ports were Mogadishu (in Somalia), Malindi and Mombasa (in Kenya), Zanzibar and Kilwa (in Tanzania), Brava Pate, Pemba and Sofala. The most famous and imposing was Kilwa, situated on a small island. Kilwa became the main center of the East African gold and ivory trade.

Wealthy Muslim elites ruled the Swahili cities. Evidence suggests that their commercial relations with Arabia, the Persians, Indian and Chinese existed long before the Portuguese arrival in the area. From the very beginning, the Portuguese aimed to destroy the growing power of Muslims in East Africa. Impressed by east Africa's gold and ivory trade, the Portuguese established a trading fort at Sofala in 1505.

Activity 5.5



1. How is Swahili an example of cultural diffusion? Discuss in a group.

5.6 Southern Africa

Lesson learning outcomes

At the end of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- describe the different kingdoms of Southern Africa.
- explain the nature of the southern African people.

Brainstorming

- What do you know about Great Zimbabwe, the Khoi - Khoi and the San people?

In the southern half of the African continent, states were formed more slowly than in the north. However, these independent villages gradually consolidated in some parts of southern Africa, starting in the eleventh century. Out of these groupings came the first states.

A) Zimbabwe

The founders of Great Zimbabwe were the Bantu speaking people of Shona who began their rule about AD 1000. They built Great Zimbabwe. In the thirteenth or fourteenth century, stone houses and walls were built in Great Zimbabwe. Great Zimbabwe was a medieval African city known for its large circular wall and tower. It was part of a wealthy African trading empire that controlled much of the East African coast from the 11th to the 15th centuries.

With an economy based on cattle husbandry, crop cultivation, and the trade of gold on the coast of the Indian Ocean, Great Zimbabwe was the heart of a thriving trading empire from the 11th to the 15th centuries.

Zimbabwe's namesake is a Shona (Bantu) word meaning "stone houses."



Figure 5.2 Ruins of Great Zimbabwe (adopted from Kevin Shillington, 1995:148-150)

It maintained trade relations with the Swahili states. Great-Zimbabwe was known for its gold mines. After 1450AD, the Rozwi clan kings of the Shona people established the empire called Mwene Mutapa. However, later on, the Portuguese conquered Mwene Mutapa in the late sixteenth century.

B) The Khoi - Khoi

Initially, the Khoi- Khoi people were hunters. Since 1000AD., however, they made a change from the hunting way of life to that of sheep and cattle breeding. Beginning from 1300AD, the Khoi - Khoi expanded from present-day Botswana. They were well-established in southern Africa by the fifteenth century. However, after the Dutch settlers landed in South Africa in the mid-seventeenth century, the Khoi-Khoi people were driven out of their land to the Kalahari Desert. As a result, the Europeans called them Hottentots.

C) The San

Before they were driven out of their land by the European settlers, the San lived in parts of present-day Angola and Namibia. Europeans called them Bushmen. The San lived by hunting and gathering. Men hunted animals with bows and poison-tipped arrows. The Dutch farmers pushed the San to the Kalahari Desert, where they still lived as hunters. The San have yellowish-brown skin and tightly coiled black hair. They speak Khoisan languages, which are characterised by clicking sounds.

Activity 5.6



1. Discuss the kingdom of Great Zimbabwe.

5.7 Africa's Intra and Inter-continental Relations

Lesson learning outcomes

At the end of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- describe the Intra Relations among African states.
- show the major Inter-continental Relations of Africa.

Brainstorming

- What are Intra and Inter-continental Relations?

Intercontinental relation occurs between two or more continents, while intracontinental occurs within a continent. People who lived north and south of the Sahara Desert had a long history of irregular contact before developing the trans-Saharan trade route. Trade between these peoples became better organised after the introduction of the camel. The trans-Saharan caravan trade began regularly beginning in the fourth century as an expanded version of the pre-existing intra- and inter-regional trade among peoples of various regions in Africa. The trans-Saharan trade contributed to developing strong economic and political systems on both sides of the Sahara. The spread of Islam in tropical Africa further strengthened the relationship with the peoples of North Africa.

The Arabs traded with societies in North and East Africa. Trade contacts facilitated the exchange of ideas. The exploration and subsequent contact with European powers contributed to the ever-changing Africa. The outcome of Afro-European contact during the exploration era was the opening of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

Activity 5.7



1. Discuss on Africa's Intra-continental Relations

5.8 Trans-Saharan Trade

Lesson learning outcomes

At the end of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- evaluate the impacts of the slave trade on Africa.
- indicate routes of the Trans Saharan trade by sketching a map.
- evaluate the impact of the slave trade on Africa's development.

Brainstorming

- What do you know about the Sahara Desert and the trade route that passes through it?

As mentioned earlier, people across the African continent are diverse. Nevertheless, there are also some things that African peoples share in common. The trans-Saharan trade can be a good example. We do not know when the trans-Saharan trade exactly began. Two important trade routes connected west and west-central Africa with north-central and north-west Africa. They linked the major ancient and medieval states of West Africa. The other route crossed the central Sahara and connected North Africa with the kingdom of Kanem. A sub-branch linked West Africa and Egypt. The trade routes across the desert also connected Africa with the outside world.



Map 5.3 Trans-Saharan trade routes, (source: assets.sutori.com)

The trans-Saharan trade network played a key role in the movement of people, materials and ideas. The important traded items of the trans-Saharan trade were gold from the regions of West Africa and salt mined in northwest Africa. In addition, enslaved people became important trade goods after the emergence of the Arabs in the 7th century AD.

The trans-Saharan trade contributed to developing robust economic and political systems on both sides of the Sahara. For example, the great West African empires of Ghana, Mali and Songhai became powerful because they could control the trans-Saharan trade route. In addition, the trade facilitated the spread of Islam and Islamization in West and West-Central Africa.

Activity 5.8



1. Show trade routes of the Trans Saharan by sketching a map.

5.9 Early Contacts with the Outside World

Brainstorming

- What do you know about Arabs, Spain and Portuguese and their relations with Africa?

Due to the accessibility of the East African coast, there was wide spread interaction between it and the people from the outside world. The early contacts were mainly with Arabs, Greeks, Persians, Romans, Chinese, Indians, Spain and Portuguese.

What is Europe's perception of Africa? Europeans created an image of Africa that was the perverse opposite of Europe's. By comparison with and in contrast to this image, Europe's general superiority would be self-evident. Europe's idea of itself was thus predicated on its image of Africa.

Since the mid-fifteenth century, the turn of global events brought Africa closer to the rest of the world. Europeans, especially Portugal and Spain, were determined to dominate international trade. To this end, both countries sponsored navigators. The exploration and subsequent contact with European powers enormously contributed to the ever-changing African economy, culture, language, politics, and environment.

The outcome of Afro-European contact during the exploration era was the opening of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

Activity 5.9



1. Why did Europeans consider Africans uncivilised? Discuss in groups.

Unit Summary



Africa is a vast continent inhabited by peoples who speak various languages that belong to Niger-Congo, Afro-Asiatic, Nilo-Saharan and Khoisan.

Indeed, all languages spoken in Africa are not native to the continent. Arabic, English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese are a few.

Before 1500AD, several historical developments took place in different parts of Africa. Consequently, some big Islamic empires were established in the northern African region.

In North Africa, Egypt became great under the Turkish origin Mamluk rule, who founded their dynasty that ruled Egypt from 1250 to 1517. However, the Funj state was a loosely united sultanate and continued to exist until Egypt conquered it in the 1820s. During Mamluks, Ethio- Egyptian relations was full of conflicts. Like Mamluks, the Fuji sultanate fought against the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia due to rivalry over trade routes.

After politico-religious rivalries in the 11th century, there was a revival of Islam in North Africa. This was also followed by the expansion of the West African Empires. By controlling the Trans -Saharan trade, several small states grew into powerful empires in western Africa: Ancient Ghana, Mali, Songhay, Hausa States and Kanem Bornu. In southern Africa, the civilisation in great Zimbabwe was of a high standard. After 1450AD, the Rozwi clan kings of the Shona people established an empire called MweneMutapa.

Nevertheless, the Portuguese conquered Mwene Mutapa in the late sixteenth century. The trans-Saharan trade contributed to developing robust economic and political systems on both sides of the Sahara. The spread of Islam in tropical Africa further strengthened the relationship with the peoples of North Africa. Africa has maintained relations with the outside world since ancient times.

The most important link was trading. Next, the introduction of Christianity and Islam to Africa shaped Africa's relations with the outside world. Europeans, especially Portugal and Spain, were determined to dominate Africa. Most of the kingdoms and empires of Africa came to an end in the sixteenth century, which was also when the Atlantic slave trade began.

Unit Review Questionns

Part I: Write true if the statement is correct and write false if the statement is in correct.

1. All languages spoken in Africa are native to the continent.
2. Egypt became great under the Turkish Mamluk rule, who founded their dynasty from 1250 to 1517.
3. By controlling the Trans -Saharan trade, several small states in the Saharan region grew into powerful empires.
4. Britain and France were the first countries determined to dominate Africa.

Part II: Match items under column A with those under B

A

1. Mansa Musa
2. Kano
3. Mwene Mutapa
4. Khoisan

B

- A. The first phase of the Atlantic slave trade
- B. Hausa city-state
- C. King of Mali Empire
- D. King of Songhai empire
- E. Language spoken by the Khoi-Khoi and San people
- F. Great Zimbabwe

Part III: Choose the correct answer from the given alternatives.

1. Which of the following was the main factor that contributed to the greatness of Ghana?
 - A. The trans-Saharan trade
 - B. Agricultural wealth
 - C. Tax income from conquered peoples
 - D. The trans -Atlantic trade
2. Who ruled Egypt between 969 and 1171?
 - A. Fatimids
 - B. Ottoman Turks
 - C. Mamluks
 - D. the British

3. Which European country reached the Congo first?
 - A. Belgium
 - B. Spain
 - C. Portugal
 - D. Germany
4. Since 1000AD the Khoi-Khoi mainly practiced:
 - A. hunting and gathering
 - B. cattle breeding
 - C. farming
 - D. fishing