

CHAPTER

**11**

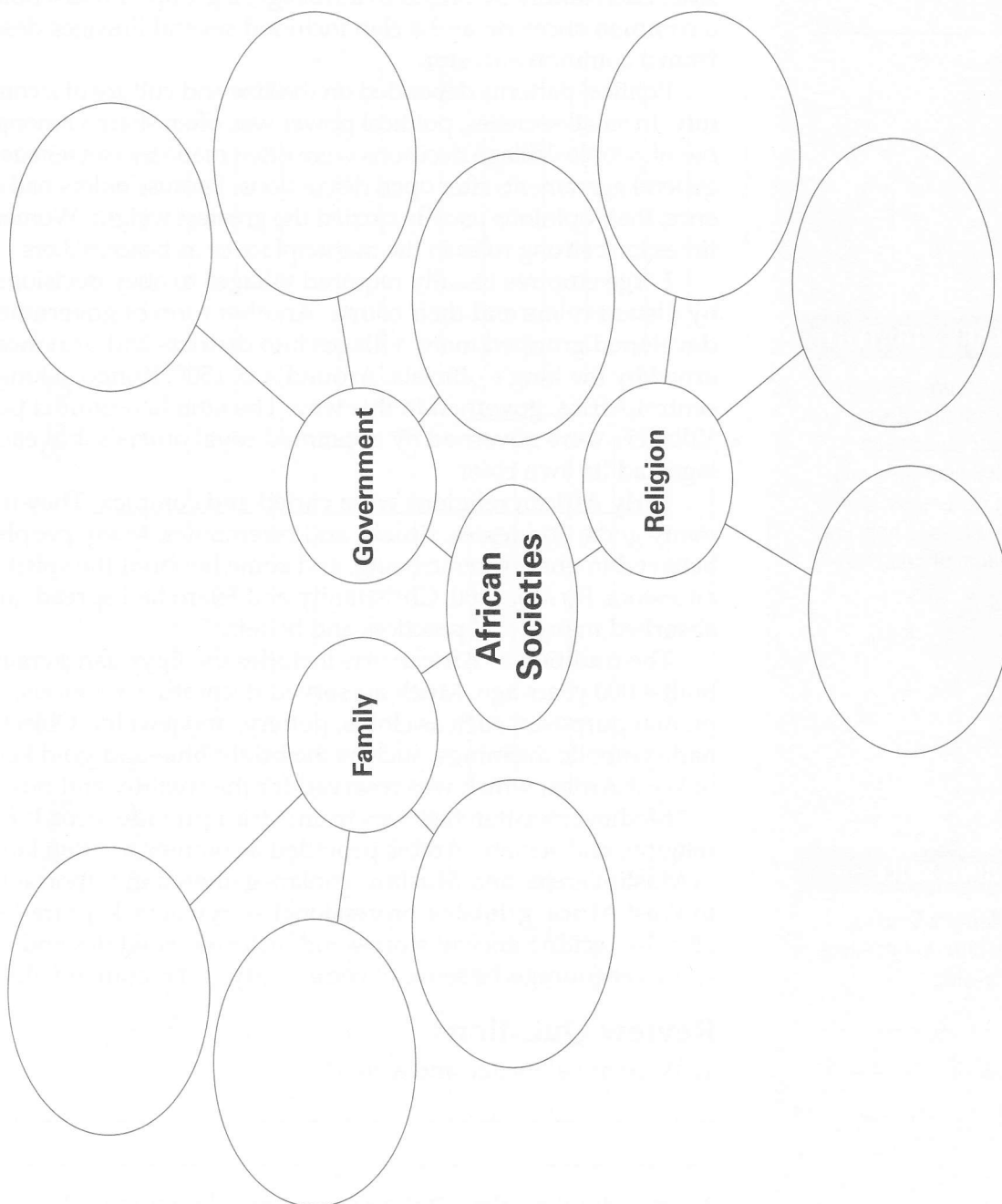
SECTION 4

# Note Taking Study Guide

## SOCIETIES IN MEDIEVAL AFRICA

**Focus Question:** What factors influenced the development of societies in Africa?

*As you read this section in your textbook, complete the following concept web to record the factors that influenced the development of African societies.*



## CHAPTER

## 11

## SECTION 4

## Section Summary

## SOCIETIES IN MEDIEVAL AFRICA

## READING CHECK

Who were the griots?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## VOCABULARY STRATEGY

What does the word *complex* mean in the underlined sentence? Look for clues to its meaning in that sentence and the following sentences. Use these context clues to help you write a definition of *complex*.

## READING SKILL

## Recognize Multiple Causes

What caused different political patterns to develop?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

In small societies in medieval Africa, the **nuclear family**, or one set of parents and their children, lived and worked together. In other societies, the family included several generations. **Patrilineal** families passed inheritances through the father's side of the family, while **matrilineal** families passed property down through the mother's side. Each family belonged to a **lineage**, a group of households with a common ancestor, and a clan included several lineages descended from a common ancestor.

Political patterns depended on the size and culture of a community. In small societies, political power was often shared among a number of people. Village decisions were often made by **consensus**, or general agreement, after open discussions. Because elders had experience, their opinions usually carried the greatest weight. Women sometimes took strong roles in the marketplace or as peacemakers.

Large empires usually required villages to obey decisions made by distant rulers and their courts. Another form of government that developed grouped many villages into districts and provinces governed by the king's officials. Around A.D. 1500, Kongo, a kingdom in central Africa, governed in this way. The king had limited powers. Villagers were governed by appointed royal officials, but each village had its own chief.

Early African religions were varied and complex. They involved many gods, goddesses, rituals, and ceremonies. Many people believed in one supreme being, and some honored the spirits of ancestors. By A.D. 1000, Christianity and Islam had spread and absorbed many local practices and beliefs.

The tradition of African arts includes the Egyptian pyramids, built 4,000 years ago. Much art served decorative, religious, or ceremonial purposes, such as cloths, pottery, and jewelry. Objects often had symbolic meanings, such as the bright blue-and-gold kente cloth of West Africa, which was reserved for the wealthy and powerful.

Medieval written histories from Africa provide records of laws, religion, and society. Arabic provided a common written language in Muslim areas, and Muslim scholars gathered in important cities. In West Africa, **griots**, or professional storytellers, kept traditions alive by reciting ancient stories and histories. Folktales and other stories encouraged a sense of community and common values.

## Review Questions

1. What are a lineage and a clan?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. How did the rulers of the Kongo control their lands?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_