

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

HISTORY A

H505

For first teaching in 2015

Y209/01 Summer 2024 series

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of candidate answers is also provided. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

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Paper Y209 series overview

Y209 is one of twenty four units in Paper 2 for the A Level examination for GCE History. This unit tests an extended period of History of about 100 years through a short answer essay question and a traditional essay question. The paper contains two questions, each having two parts, a short answer essay and a traditional essay. Candidates have to answer both parts of one question.

To do well on the short answer essay question, candidates need to consider the significance or importance of both issues, factors, individuals or events mentioned in relation to the question. Having analysed or explained both they must reach a supported judgement as to which is the most important or significant.

To do well on the traditional essay, candidates need to address the issue in the question, using detailed supporting knowledge. To reach the higher levels candidates need to assess the issues they discuss and reach a supported judgement, at least in the conclusion.

There was an even split between responses addressing Question 1 and those that looked at Question 2.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> gave equal consideration to the two issues in the short answer essay reached a developed and supported judgement as to which issue was more significant or important linked their knowledge of the issues to the focus of the question discussed at least two issues in depth when answering the essay question gave supporting detail that was both accurate and relevant to the question set, not just the topic reached a supported judgement about the issue in the question made a series of interim judgements about the issues discussed in relation to the question. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> considered only one of the issues or discussed one in a superficial way produced a judgement that was not supported and was therefore assertion or a judgement that did not follow logically from the response were unable to use their knowledge to address the issue in the question showed a poor understanding of the major issues relevant to the essay were unable to support their response with relevant or accurate material did not focus on the precise wording of the question made unsupported comments about issues which were no more than assertions.

Question 1 (a) (i) and (ii)

1

(a) Which of the following contributed more to the strength of the Songhay Empire?

(i) Centres of learning

(ii) The economy

Explain your answer with reference to both (i) and (ii).

[10]

Candidates were largely able to provide analyses of both factors with the use of reasonably detailed relevant knowledge. For centres of learning, candidates tended to focus on Timbuktu and the cultivation of Islamic scholarship under Askia Muhammad I. This was often contrasted with the more repressive policies of Sonni Ali in the aftermath of the city's conquest. Some candidates recognised the broader value of the development of centres of learning as the training grounds of the officials who would administer the empire.

For the economy, candidates often noted Songhay's advantageous geographical position which allowed it to benefit from the region's trade routes. These trading connections were also enhanced by the reputation of cities like Timbuktu as centres of Islamic scholarship, since many of the traders who visited the empire were from Islamic communities.

As in Exemplar 1, stronger responses provided relevant knowledge and were evaluative in their approach, arguing that one factor was more important than the other.

Exemplar 1

1	a	<p>The economy contributed more to the strength of the Songhay empire because of the benefits that this entailed for the rest of the empire's quality. For example, the Songhay was strategically located, having access to the Niger river and the trans-Saharan trade routes. This was significant because it meant that Songhay could develop its two most important cities, Gao in the east and Timbuktu in the west to act as major tax collection points, which boosted Songhay's ability to expand further and, for example capturing Timbuktu in 1469 and Djenné in 1473. Furthermore, adding to this, the economy contributed to its strength as it meant these provinces (Sonni Ali established 8 each with their own provincial leader) were tied to paying tribute, ensuring loyalty too. However, although this is the main contribution to the strength of the Songhay empire, it does have weaknesses too. For example, the economy was dependent upon a good relationship with Arab traders, highlighting also the importance of centres of learning and a strong economy could not save the Songhay empire upon the 1591 Moroccan invasion. Nevertheless, the economy contributed more to the strength of the Songhay empire because</p>
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a state without a strong economy and a strategic ability to control this can not even begin to develop. After all, the Songhay empire really only started because of a particularly strong trading centre in Gao, allowing the Sunni / Sonni dynasty to expand. Therefore, the economy of Songhay contributed more to the strength of the Songhay empire than centres of learning.

Although centres of learning contributed less to the strength of the Songhay empire, it was still a relevant factor in terms of the Empire's growth. For instance, upon the 1469 taking of Timbuktu, Sonni Ali killed or ~~sent away~~^{alienated} many of the Muslim scholarly class, which was not good for the unity of the empire. Upon the succession of Ashia Mohammed in 1493 though, he invited the scholars back to Timbuktu to practice. In addition, he established the University of Sankore, which housed 25,000 students and opened 180 Koranic schools, housing in excess of 20,000 students. This allowed for the education of the upper classes of Songhay and the cultural capital of the empire to increase. These centres of learning were important to Songhay's strength because it allowed

		<p>Songhay to become renowned for opportunity, increasing its significance. However, these centres of learning were not as important to Songhay's strength as the economy as they were supplemented this. For instance, Songhay was very strong with 30,000 infantry and 10,000 cavalry under Sonni Ali, without these centres of learning, meaning that it was really the economy and trading advantage which allowed Songhay to become an imperial power. Therefore, the centres of learning didn't contribute as much to the strength of the Songhay empire as the economy did.</p>
		<p>In conclusion, the economy contributed more to the strength of the Songhay empire than the centres of learning. This is because whilst centres of learning allowed Songhay to develop culturally, the economy was the main factor in actually strengthening more immediate parts of the empire like the military and trade relationships.</p>

In Exemplar 1 there is an analysis of both factors with generally detailed knowledge. The approach is evaluative and a judgement is provided.

Question 1 (b)*

(b)* How important was Mbanza Kongo in the centralisation of power in Kongo?

[20]

Many candidates had a clear understanding of the importance of Mbanza Kongo in the centralisation of power in Kongo. Its location and the fact that it was a walled city suggested its importance, not to mention the fact that the Manikongo and the ruling elite resided there. As such, it was also the centre of government, where tribute payments and taxes were collected.

Candidates were able to compare its importance against that of other factors, such as the importance of the ruling elite, the Mwissikongo, and the kanda structure of lineages, the role of the slave trade, the contribution of the Portuguese in enhancing the power of the Manikongo, and the role of Christianity in consolidating the Manikongo's position and even in adding to the lustre of Mbanza Kongo, through the construction of churches, as the seat of royal power.

Some candidates found it difficult to link some of these factors, such as the role of Christianity, to the issue of the 'centralisation of power'. As a result, these essays had a more general focus on the topic area. A few candidates thought that Mbanza Kongo was the name of a Manikongo rather than a city.

Assessment for learning



Candidates should aim to address the issue in the question clearly in their response. In this case, the issue was the 'centralisation of power' rather than simply the location of power.

Question 2 (a) (i) and (ii)

2

(a) Which of the following was of greater importance in maintaining the power of the *Oba* in Benin?

(i) Military developments

(ii) Religion

Explain your answer with reference to both (i) and (ii).

[10]

Candidates had a reasonable knowledge of the role of military developments in maintaining the power of the *Oba*. The size of the standing army was often highlighted as the foundation of this power which underpinned territorial expansion under such *Obas* as *Ozoluwa*. Some responses expanded on this point by providing a precis of the military achievements of individual *Obas*, the impact of which varied depending on the quality of knowledge provided. The control exercised by the *Oba* over the military was often pointed out, although it was noted that this power had devolved to the *iyase*, the leader of the *eghaevo n'ore*, by the end of the sixteenth century.

Religion was perhaps better known. The mythical descent of the *Oba* from the divine ruler (*Ooni*) and his son (*Oranmiyan*) was well known, as was the *Oba's* role in instituting cults. *Oba Ewuare* was sometimes used as an example here, with his introduction of the cults of *Ake* and *Oza*.

As noted, stronger responses adopted a more evaluative approach, in which one factor was argued as more important than the other. Candidates often favoured religion in their judgements since it provided the foundation of the *Oba's* pre-eminent position in society.

Question 2 (b)*

(b)* How similar were the economies of *Oyo* and *Dahomey*?

[20]

Many candidates were able to identify similarities and differences between the economies of *Oyo* and *Dahomey*. Engagement with the slave trade, for example, was often cited as a similarity, as well as the agricultural element in both economies. Some candidates, as in Exemplar 2, also recognised similarities in the way wealth was redistributed in both kingdoms.

In terms of differences, candidates noted the different geographical positions of each kingdom, with *Dahomey* having direct access to trade routes with European countries whereas *Oyo* found it more difficult to do so. While both economies had a certain dependence on agriculture, *Oyo* specialised in the production of cloth. Another difference was the extent of central control over the economies, with the *Dada* of *Dahomey* exercising more direct control (through his officials) over markets and trade, as noted in Exemplar 2.

In Exemplar 2, several factors are explained with some links to the question. Knowledge is reasonably detailed and there is a judgement focused on the question. These features push the response into Level 5. For a mark in Level 6, a more consistent level of detailed knowledge is needed, as well as further evidence of judgement throughout the response.

Exemplar 2

2	B	<p>While the economies of Oyo and Dahomey were, to an extent, similar with regards to their similar own dependences on the slave trade and their sharing of the customs of wealth redistribution from the king amongst society, the kingdoms were ultimately more different due to their antithetical approaches to the management of their own economies.</p> <p>A fundamental similarity can be seen between the two kingdoms with regard to their reliance on the slave trade as a primary source of income for the economy. This reliance is evident in the fact that half of the slaves exported from West Africa by the 1800 were originated from Oyo - this is significant in suggesting that with regard to the trans-Atlantic slave trade, Oyo were key players in the export of enslaved people. This dependence is seen similarly in Dahomey, as by 1750, 9000 slaves were being exported out of the kingdom to just Portugal and France alone, with a ship of goods being worth 16 slaves in the 1760s and 21 slaves in 1803. This significant supply of slaves reveals the similar position of Dahomey regarding the slave trade, given that it was able to meet demand despite significant</p>
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provisions being necessary. However, a fundamental difference between the kingdoms is seen in the fact that whilst Dahomey primarily relied on the slave trade, Oyo was able to profit off of a diversity of exports, particularly its cloth exports, given that in many of its provinces, such as Ibe-Ife, were significant in the weaving industry, with Ibe-Ife having 100-600 acres dedicated solely to weaving its weaving ~~map~~ production. However, this difference becomes less significant over time due to the rise of the Dutch and Indian cloth trade, leading up to return to a significant reliance on the slave trade just as its neighbour, Dahomey.

Another significant similarity between the kingdoms is evident in the significance placed on the ~~the~~ principle of redistributing ~~wealth~~ the wealth of the alafin and daadla respectively. In Oyo, this was evident through one of the 3 major festivals of the kingdom and one of the only 3 times the alafin would be expected to leave his palace: the Igbere festival. The festival, orchestrated by the Basorun, ~~and~~ consisted of donations to citizens and provinces, which served in turn to dilute ~~by~~ and the ~~promise~~

of a three year tree. This festival had its equal in Dahomey, with the Annual Customs festival ~~mean~~ allowing the dodo to redistribute the taxes of citizens and provinces in the form of ~~good~~ gifts, thus encouraging conviviality. However, a fundamental difference between the kingdoms is seen in the necessity of the celebrations. While in the here festival of Oyo represented an opportunity for the adepts to maintain peace with their provinces, therefore inadvertently raising ~~the~~ the status of their vassal oracles to one of equal footing, the Annual Customs festival was not necessary to maintain peace and/or ability in the kingdom of Dahomey, given the fundamentally different ~~own~~ authoritarian system as opposed to its federal neighbour-~~man~~ thus entirely challenging the ~~un~~ inter-kingdom-level similarity of the kingdoms. Furthermore, this custom was prevalent in various ~~own~~ West African kingdoms, including the empires of Songhai and Kongo, and is therefore not unique to Oyo and Dahomey, thus further discrediting the similar nature of the kingdoms regarding their economies.

finally, ~~the~~ the most ~~from~~ significant difference with regard to the economies of ~~ayy~~ and Dahanuq is seen in ~~the~~ the extents of government intervention. In ~~ayy~~, the governance operated on a quasi-laissez-faire system, with little intervention from the ~~alaph~~ himself. The only real sense of ~~an~~ ruling presence was seen in the fact that the ~~trader~~ ~~king~~ on behalf of the ruling class - the ~~alaph~~, ~~ayy~~-~~mes~~ and ~~basurans~~ - would be given certain benefits such as tax-exemptions, and free lodgings upon ~~being~~ proclaiming that they operate on behalf of the ~~king~~ - usually the ~~mes~~ of the ~~ajele~~. In Dahanuq, however, the ruling ~~and~~ Dada has far more intervention with regard to the economy. The ~~magar~~, a group of 100 judges who operated on behalf of the Dada, were personally tasked with ensuring that market affairs ~~were~~ would run smoothly, sorting out any potential conflicts and collecting taxes on behalf of the Dada - a system of relative similarity to that of the ~~alaph~~ of ~~ayy~~ ~~ajele~~. Furthermore, ~~the~~ under ~~Dadan~~ Tegheer the Dada exercised a full monopoly over the ~~state~~

trade in 1550, highly antithetical to the situation in Ayo where not only the ruling class, but also common merchants, were involved in the slave trade. This difference ultimately arises from the kingdoms' fundamentally different systems of governance. Whilst Benin operated on a more federal system, with the Oyo Meni, Basorun and Oroni jointly playing exercising significant checks and balances on the Alafin, Dahomey adopted a far more totalitarian approach, with the conception of all Dahomians being inherent slaves to the Dada, and thus permitting him to act as he please, with regard to the regulation of the economy. However, some similarity may be distinguished in Ayo's similarly authoritarian position with regard to the collection of taxes from its vassal states, with Dahomey paying over £560,000 yearly prior to its break-off from Ayo, however even this collection operates on a delegated-power system, with the ~~basorun~~ Oyo Meni seeing to its regulation. Therefore, the economies of Ayo and Dahomey are fundamentally more different with regard to their

		intervention due to the differences in the nature of the kingdoms power balance.
		Overall, whilst there are clear similarities with regard to the economies of dyn and dan Danomey seen primarily in their similar engagements with trade and an economic customs of their respective kingdoms, they are fundamentally more different due to the contrasting approaches and motivations behind their actions, which stem from the difference of the nature of kingdom imperial power in each kingdom.

Exemplar 2 is a Level 5 response. Several factors are examined with detailed knowledge, although discussion of the workings of the economies themselves is less developed in places. There is a substantiated judgement.

Assessment for learning



Candidates should provide a judgement in response to the question which is focused on the key issue and substantiated with a convincing explanation.

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