

## **CONCLUSION: FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS**

The WASSCE History examination is designed to give students a sound grounding in the regional history of West Africa. It introduces students to many important themes:

- 1, the methods through which the past can be studied;
- 2, the layers of changes which have shaped the region to be as it is today;
- 3, precolonial history as it relates to Islam, Atlantic and Saharan Trade, Economic History and the History of slavery;
- 4, colonial history as it relates to the Scramble for Africa by European colonisers, resistance, and independence;
- 5, postcolonial questions relating to the difficulties of independence and the relationship of West African nations to world organisations.

This syllabus goes together with the national histories which students must take in each country which sits the WASSCE exam. The combination is important. A regional understanding is vital for the following aims:

- 1, building bridges between different countries;
- 2, understanding what is held in common;
- 3, and thereby to build a common shared future path of peace and prosperity.

This path will be much harder without this shared understanding. This is why the regional paper is so important – not only in terms of passing the exam, but also in terms of the knowledge that it can bring.

History can be seen as a “useless subject”, one that is not going to help in making your way in a difficult world. Yet History is also the foundation of a number of other subjects: a historical understanding can help in a wide range of topics, including (but not limited to):

Environmental Change; Economic Development; Urban infrastructure; Health Policy; Political relations of West Africa to the world.

Thus a thorough grounding in History can help to shape a deeper understanding of some of the problems which arise in very different fields, and which are vital to the future of West African countries. The WASSCE syllabus offers this grounding: it is not just a programme with the exam as an end point, but also a beginning for building new awareness of the historical origins of the problems of today.

Thus this textbook does not pretend to be comprehensive, and nor should it be. It invites future questions, by teachers and students alike; and from these future questions, new insights can emerge into what matters in the West African past, and how teachers and students in West Africa can shape this understanding.

The authors of this textbook want to be very clear. For too long, the study and analysis of West African history has been shaped by concerns and funding mechanisms located outside of West Africa. They hope that this textbook can offer a platform for the generation of new questions and criticisms which are much closer to the historical interests and needs of students and teachers who sit the WASSCE exam.

That also means that this textbook is a work in progress. The authors do not consider it completed, and welcome questions and comments as to how it can be improved and what materials and topics might also be covered.

We are aware, for instance, that while the European presence in Africa has been addressed, the many African influences in shaping global cultures have not been discussed. This is vital in shaping an understanding of African contributions to world history, and the reciprocal dynamics which have shaped and continue to shape the world. For just a few examples:

- 1, Recent research has shown the influence which Africans had from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards in developing agricultural technologies, social structures, and also forms of music and dance in the Americas;
- 2, Folk songs still sung in southern Portugal today derive from oral narratives of the Guinea-Bissau region;
- 3, Some of the artistic motifs used in earlier times were linked to sculptors in Sierra Leone.

Similarly, there is a need to understand histories of health in the region, to see how indigenous knowledge systems and Western medicine have overlapped. This is especially relevant in the area of medical infrastructure laboratory research, as well as diverse colonial and post-colonial responses to diseases, epidemics and pandemics in the regions of Africa and beyond. There are other essential themes like medical racism, colonialism and imperialism which must be loudly explored in the Senior High School literature. This will ensure the consciousness about the need to encourage extension and expansion of the knowledge of science, technology and medicine within the space of history. It will also enable students and teachers to critique the evolving of African states within the broader context of Africa's interaction with Europe.

It is also pertinent to emphasize that this textbook highlights the continuities and discontinuities within the history of the African people and projects further to make the subject relevant to contemporary times. Again, the authors believe that, this is a living document and must evolve with additions and continuous fine-tuning when it is necessary. The historiography of African history has crossed the borders of what would be referred to as "traditional histories" to other specialised themes in medicine, science and to a larger degree interdisciplinary research and writing. With this understanding among other things, we believe that the story of the African people must be told to reflect their own ontology, epistemology among others.

On this note, we envisage that this resource will serve as a teaching and learning tool as well as an agency to develop the interest for the writing of African history that has much relevance to the African people in the first instance and also to the wider world in the second instance.