Early Societies in West Africa

What was the most significant factor in the development of early societies in West Africa?

Examine the following images.

The Savanna

Climate: The savanna has hot, dry winters and warm, wet summers. The year-round temperatures remain warm, ranging from 70°F to 100°F.  
Vegetation: At places where there is more rainfall, there are trees and grasses. In the drier spots, bushes replace trees.

The Forest

Climate: The forest is wetter than the savanna and gets rainfall year-round. Temperatures vary greatly between the summer and the winter months.  
Vegetation: Many trees and shrubs grow here, such as oil palms, yams, and kola trees.

In which environment do you think a city was most likely to develop?  
Give two reasons for your answer.
Section 1

1. Below is an outline map of West Africa. Label the Sahara, the Sahel, the savanna, and the forest. Then draw and label the types of vegetation found in each area. Also label the Niger River. You can use the maps in the Setting the Stage feature at the beginning of this unit to help you.

2. How did geography affect trade in West Africa?
Section 2

1. Create a drawing and caption that describe the earliest communities in West Africa.

2. Create a drawing and caption that describe how and why villages formed from these early communities. Be sure to include the reasons why family-based communities joined together to form villages.
Section 3

1. Create a drawing and caption that describe how and why some villages became trading sites and eventually grew into larger towns and cities.

2. Describe the process of smelting used by the Nok to make iron tools.

3. How did the ability to make iron tools affect food production and the types of jobs that villagers performed in West Africa?

4. How did the location of Jenne-jeno cause it to become a large, busy city?
Section 4
1. Create a drawing and caption that describe how and why some of the wealthiest cities were able to conquer more territory and become a kingdom.

2. What is tribute? What did it mean when a conquered group paid tribute?

3. List at least one advantage and one disadvantage of being part of a kingdom.

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<th>Advantage</th>
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Several factors led to the development of early societies and kingdoms in West Africa. These factors include geography, the spread of ironworking, the specialization of labor, and increased local trade. Which of these factors do you think was most important to the development of a settlement into a city and, later, a kingdom?

In the space below, write a paragraph in which you argue what factor you think was most significant in the development of early societies in West Africa. Your paragraph should include:

- a topic sentence that clearly states your choice
- at least two specific examples that show how your choice was important
- a closing sentence that restates your position

Make sure that your paragraph is free of spelling and grammatical errors.