

Geography & Early Civilizations in Africa

Preview

- [Starting Points Map: Environments of Africa](#)
- [The Geography of Africa](#)
- [Early African Societies](#)
- [Africa's Iron Age](#)
- [Map: Bantu Migrations](#)
- [Three Kingdoms of West Africa](#)

An aerial view of a savanna landscape with a green banner at the top and a light blue box containing a preview list. The background shows a savanna landscape with a blue sky and a sunset.

Main Idea

Africa's earliest people adapted to a wide range of geographic conditions to establish societies based on family ties, religion, iron technology, and trade.

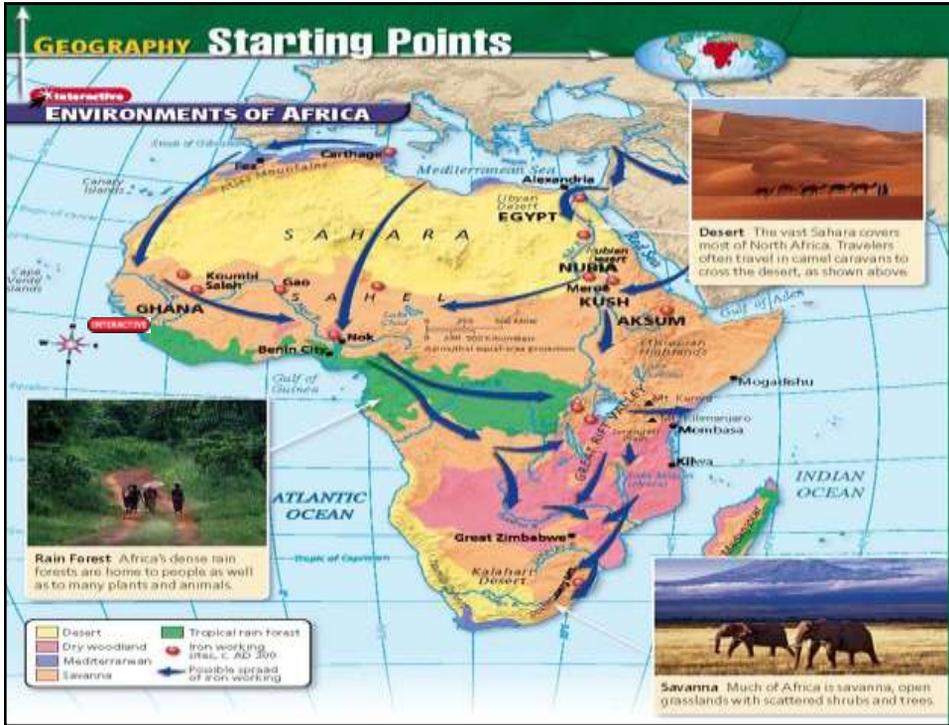
ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- How does Africa's diverse geography shape life on the continent?
- What cultural patterns did Africa's early societies share?
- What major changes affected societies during Africa's Iron Age?
- Why did the Kingdoms of West Africa prosper during the Medieval period?

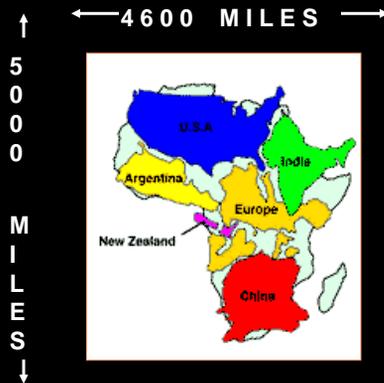
A Satellite View



Q/ What can this map tell us about the geography of Africa?



Africa's Size

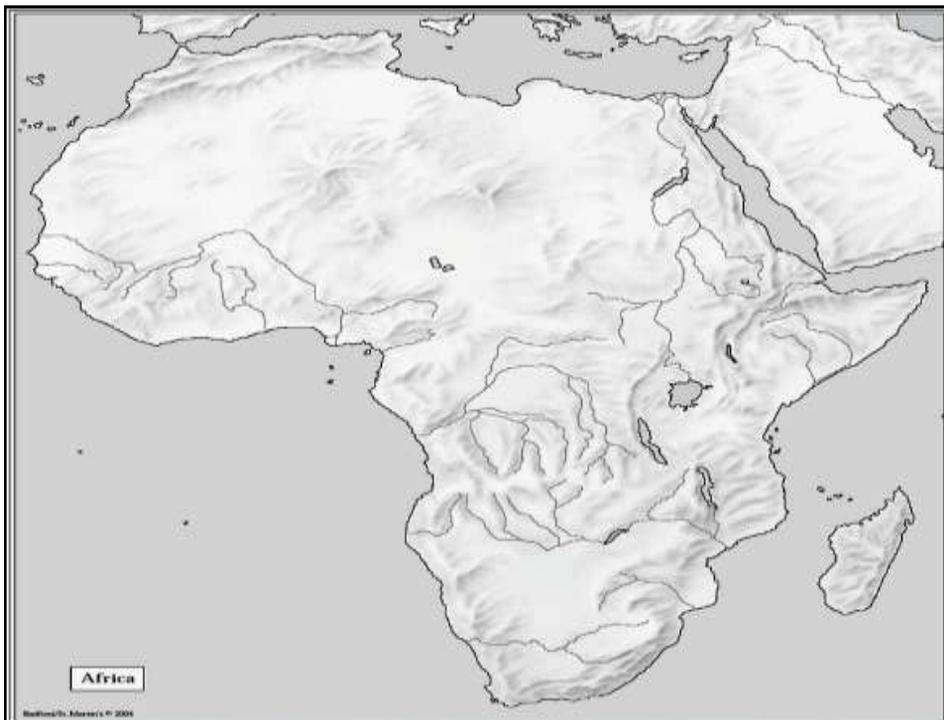


- # Second largest continent → 11,700,000 sq. mi.
- # 10% of the world's population.
- # 2 ½ times the size of the U. S.

"The Geography of Africa"

- On the physical map provided, label the following **NEATLY** and **CLEARLY** as directed below: [Use a map, atlas or online resources such as this URL address: http://www.interopp.org/interopp/html/cg_reg_af.htm. Click on the "Physical map of Africa, large"]
 - BODIES OF WATER** --> use a **BLUE**-ink pen

* Nile River	* Pacific Ocean
* Congo [Zaire] River	* Indian Ocean
* Zambezi River	* Red Sea
* Niger River	* Lake Victoria
* Orange River	* Lake Albert
* Limpopo River	* Lake Chad
* Mediterranean Sea	* Lake Tanganyika
* Atlantic Ocean	* Gulf of Aden
 - MOUNTAINS & PEAKS** --> use a **BLACK**-ink pen
 - * Atlas Mountains
 - * Drakensburg ~~Mountains~~
 - * Mt. Kenya
 - * Mt. Kilimanjaro
 - * Ruwenzori Mountains
 - DESERTS** --> use a **RED**-ink pen
 - * Sahara Desert
 - * Kalahari Desert
 - * Namib Desert
 - * Sahel
 - VALLEYS/PLAINS** --> use a **GREEN**-ink pen
 - * Great Rift Valley
 - OTHER** --> use a **PURPLE**-ink pen
 - * Tropic of Cancer
 - * Tropic of Capricorn
- TERMS TO KNOW:** sub-Sahara savanna ~~sahel~~ arid vertical climate desertification
- RESEARCH AND ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS:**
 - Which two vegetation zones of Africa are welcoming and which two are not? Why?
 - Why might herders have remained nomadic?
 - How did agriculture develop in Africa?
 - How does the size of the Sahara compare with that of the United States?
 - How do you think the population of Africa compares with that of the countries shown?



Geography of Africa

Africa's large size—more than three times the size of the United States—and its location have led to a wide variety of climates and vegetation. As a result, distinct cultures and ways of life developed.

Landforms

- Continent has varied landscape
- Plateaus cover much of central, southern interior
- Low, wide plains across northern, western interior

Valleys, Mountains

- East, region of deep, steep-sided valleys, narrow lakes
- Mountain ranges rim Africa, example Ethiopian Highlands in northeast

Coastal Plains

- Near coastline, land drops off to coastal plains
- Some provide fertile farmland, others desert, swamp, sandy beaches

Bodies Of Water



The Mighty Nile River: "Longest River in the World"



The Congo River Basin



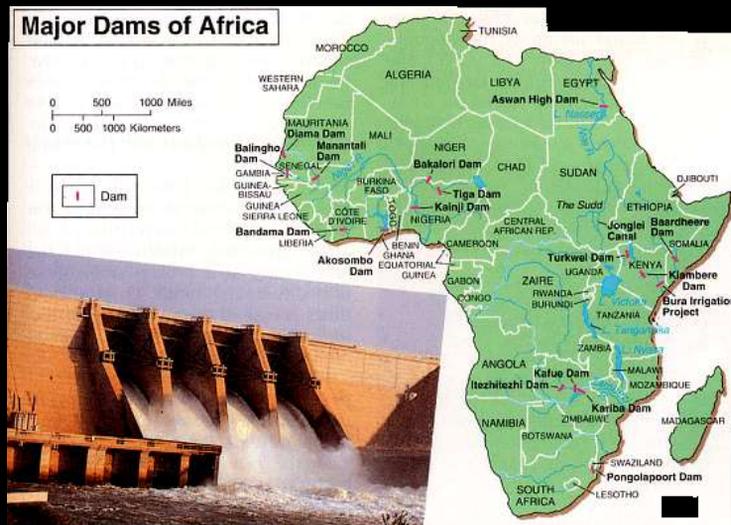
- # Covers 12% of the continent.
- # Extends over 9 countries.
- # 2,720 miles long.
- # 99% of the country of Zaire is in the Congo River basin.

The Niger River Basin



- # Covers 7.5% of the continent.
- # Extends over 10 countries.
- # 2,600 miles long.

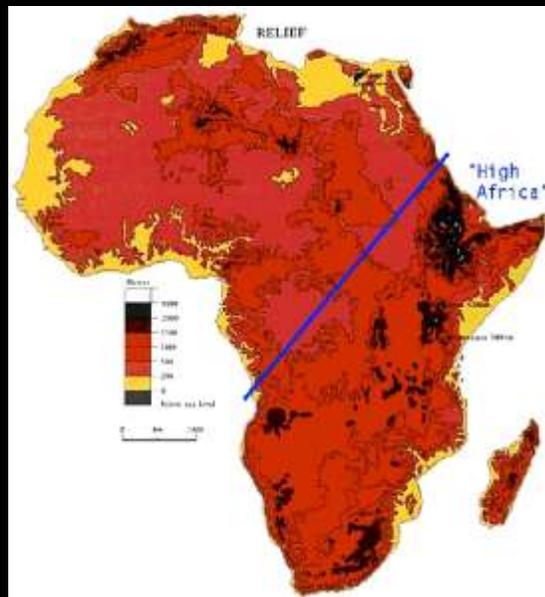
Hydroelectric Power



**Mountains
&
Peaks**



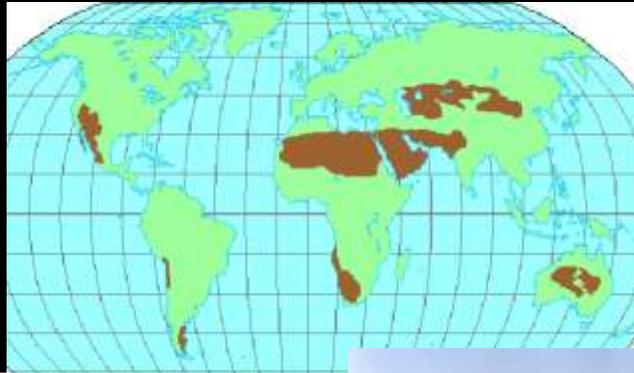
The African Plateau



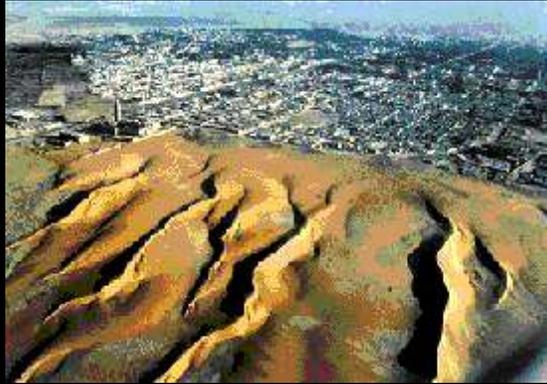
Deserts



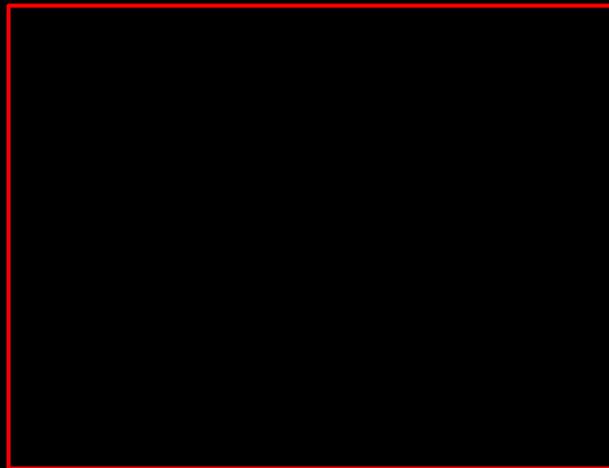
The Sahara Desert



Desertification

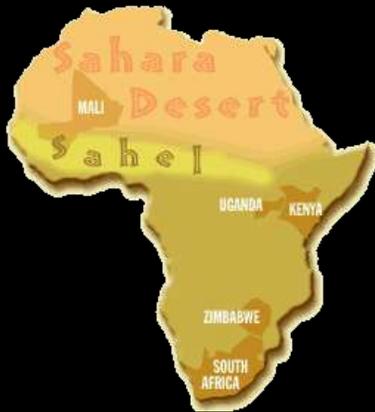


Video Clip on Desertification



- Q. How does desertification affect people's lives in Africa?

The Sahel



Valleys & Plains



Great Rift Valley



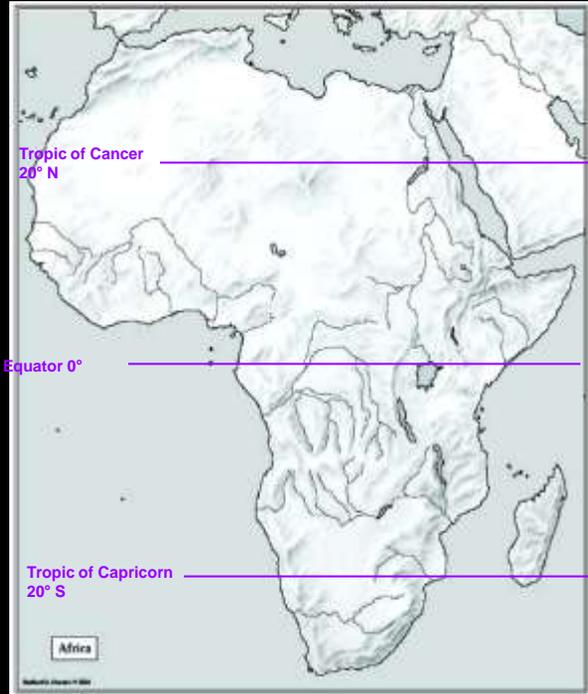
3,000 miles long



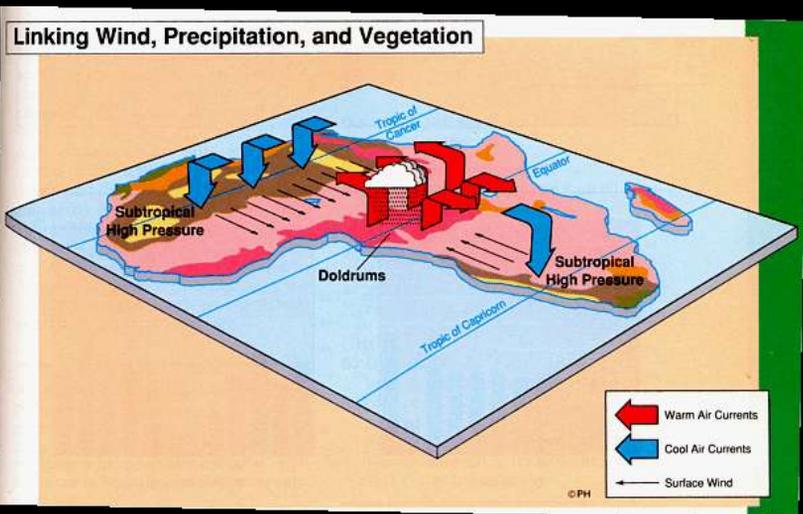
Seismic Activity in Africa



Africa: The "Tropical" Continent



African Trade Winds



Africa's Varied Climate

- Africa's climate also quite varied
- Northern Africa dominated by Sahara, largest desert in world
- Stretches 3,000 miles between Atlantic Ocean, Red Sea
- Barren landscape includes mountains, plateaus, plains, sand dunes
- Temperatures in desert climb above 120°F, rain rare
- Number of oases scattered throughout desert, some support villages

The Sahel

- South of Sahara, mighty rivers flow across plains, including Congo, Zambezi, Niger
- Region called the **Sahel**, strip of land dividing desert, wetter areas
- Sahel fairly dry, but has vegetation to support hardy grazing animals

The Savanna

- Farther south, band of tropical **savanna**, open grassland
- Extends east from Central Africa, wraps back toward south
- Tall grasses, shrubs, trees grow there; variety of herd animals, majority of Africans live there

The African Savannah: 13 million sq. mi.



The Equator and farther South

Tropical Rain Forests

- Tropical rain forests found near equator and on Madagascar, island off southeast coast
- Hot, humid climate, year-round rainfall of rain forest supports broad range of plant, animal life

Southern Africa

- Southern Africa consists mainly of hilly grasslands, deserts, high coastal strip of land
- Region experiences mild Mediterranean climate, warm temperatures and both summer, winter rains

African Rain Forest



- # Annual rainfall of up to 17 ft.
- # Rapid decomposition (very humid).
- # Covers 37 countries.
- # 15% of the land surface of Africa.

How does the climate affect Africa's people?

Varied Climates

- First people to live in Africa had to adapt to varied climates, features
- Insufficient water supplies, poor soil in some places made farming difficult
- Rainfall—too much, too little—presented problems that continue today

Rains

- Heavy rains erode soil, wash away nutrients important for growing crops
- Insufficient rainfall leads to drought, poor grazing land
- Farmers must decide which crops to grow based on expected rainfall

Insects, Parasites

- Parasites thrive in tropical areas; transmitted by mosquitoes to humans, animals; can lead to deadly diseases like malaria
- Tsetse fly, sub-Saharan Africa, carries parasite that can kill livestock, infect humans with sleeping sickness, potentially fatal illness

Mt. Kilimanjaro: Snow on the Equator?



The Complete Topography Of AFRICA

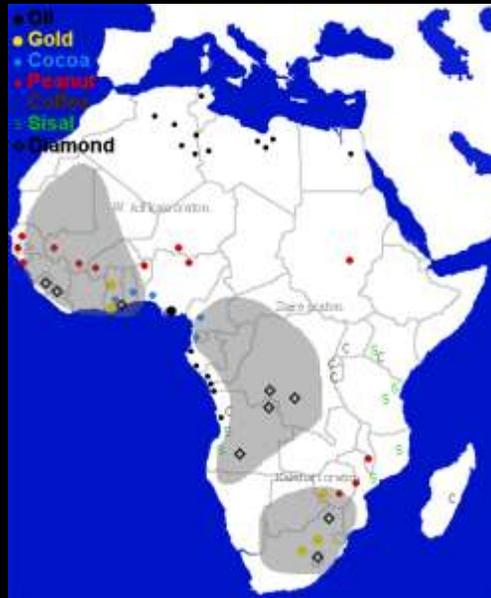


Analyze

What challenges can Africa's environment pose to people living there?

Answer(s): Insufficient water supplies, poor soil, and too much or too little rain can cause problems for farmers; tropical parasites can spread disease.

Natural Resources



Research Project: The Sahara and Desertification!

- **Background**

In the world today, 1/6 of the population is being affected by desertification that is forcing people to relocate to other regions and change their lifestyles. For those unable to move away from deserts, such as residents of the Sahara and Sahel regions of northern Africa, the effects can be devastating. Countries such as Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Sudan and many others are suffering the effects of long-term drought and devastating famine. In the world today, 5 million children are dying of hunger each year. Many of these are from the Sahara and Sahel regions of northern Africa. Continued desertification will only cause these numbers to grow. World organizations are working to develop plans to stop desertification and to tap into underground aquifers that could offer people in these areas relief from the drought and famine they have been experiencing.

PowerPoint Project on African Countries

- **INTRODUCTION:** How does geography affect the lives of the people of Africa? Compare and contrast various countries of the world. How would your life be different if you lived in another country and not in the United States of America? What is the most effective way to learn and gather information on another country and its citizens?
- **PROJECT:**
 - Students will use the Internet and other sources to research information on a country in Africa. Students will then use that information to create a PowerPoint presentation which they will present to the class.
 - **PLEASE SEE HANDOUT FOR FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS...**



100–1500

African Kingdoms

THE BIG PICTURE The early peoples of Africa adapted to many different environments and created a variety of societies. As these societies grew, different forms of government arose to lead them. In time, great trading kingdoms and empires developed in West and East Africa. In addition to trade, strong rulers and religion shaped the accomplishments, characteristics, and culture of African kingdoms and empires.

Theme **Connect**
Consider how physical geography shaped the history of Africa. In this chapter you will learn how the trade of natural goods and the control of trade contributed to the economic development and wealth of early African kingdoms and empires.

Main Idea

Africa's earliest people adapted to a wide range of geographic conditions to establish societies based on family ties, religion, iron technology, and trade.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- How does Africa's diverse geography shape life on the continent?
- What cultural patterns did Africa's early societies share?
- What major changes affected societies during Africa's Iron Age?
- Why did the Kingdoms of West Africa prosper during the Medieval period?

Anthropologists think that the first humans lived in East Africa. Over thousands of years, people spread out over the continent, forming distinct cultures and societies.

Early Farming Societies

- During early phase of their history, Africans lived as hunter-gatherers
- About 9,000 years ago, some began to grow native crops
- In some parts, pastoralism, practice of raising herd animals, arose before farming

Pastoralists in Sahara

- First farmers likely pastoralists of Sahara—wetter 8,000 years ago
- 5,000 years ago climate changed, Sahara became drier
- As land became desert, people migrated to Mediterranean coast, Nile Valley, parts of West Africa

By about 2500 BC many people in these regions practiced herding and mixed farming.



The spread of iron technology after the 500s BC changed farming practices in sub-Saharan Africa. As a result, African society changed.

Iron Technology

- 500 BC, techniques for refining iron from iron ore changed
- Now possible to produce tools, weapons superior to those they had made before
- **Nok**--one of earliest known peoples to practice ironworking
- Lived in what is now Nigeria, West Africa; learned to make iron tools, weapons

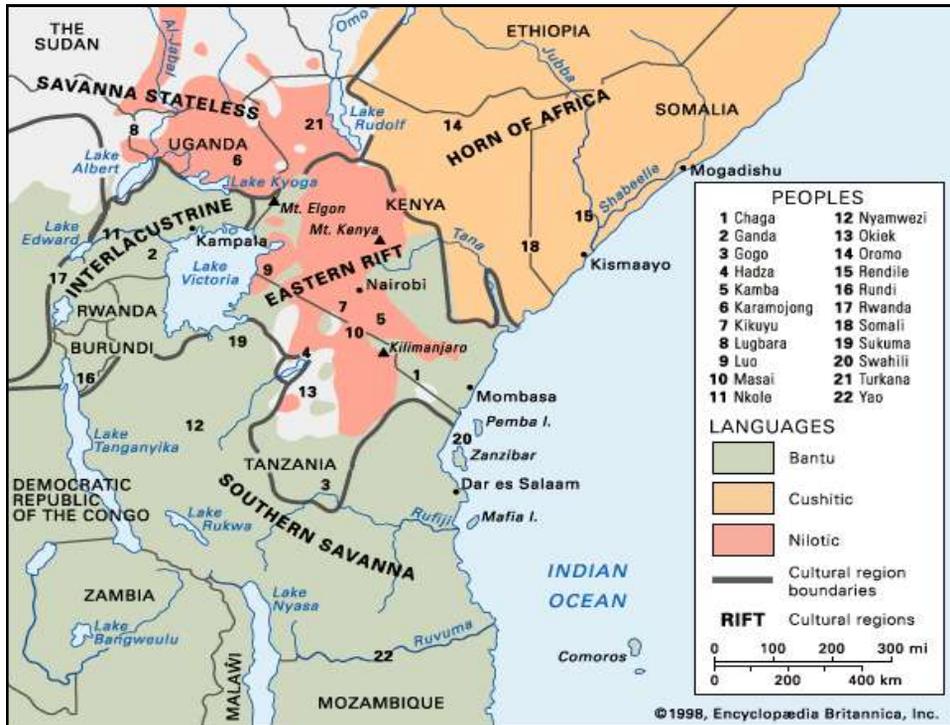
Population Growth

- As better-equipped farmers, hunters, warriors, Nok grew in power
- Became known for making fine sculptures out of terra-cotta
- Iron tools enabled Africans to cut down trees, clear land, and live in new areas
- Survival easier, Africa's population increased



Agriculture, ironworking technology spread throughout Africa because of migration

- **Number of groups in Africa spoke related languages**
 - Originated from language called Proto-Bantu
 - Developed in what is now Cameroon, Nigeria
 - Over time more than 2,000 **Bantu** languages developed



Bantu-speaking Peoples

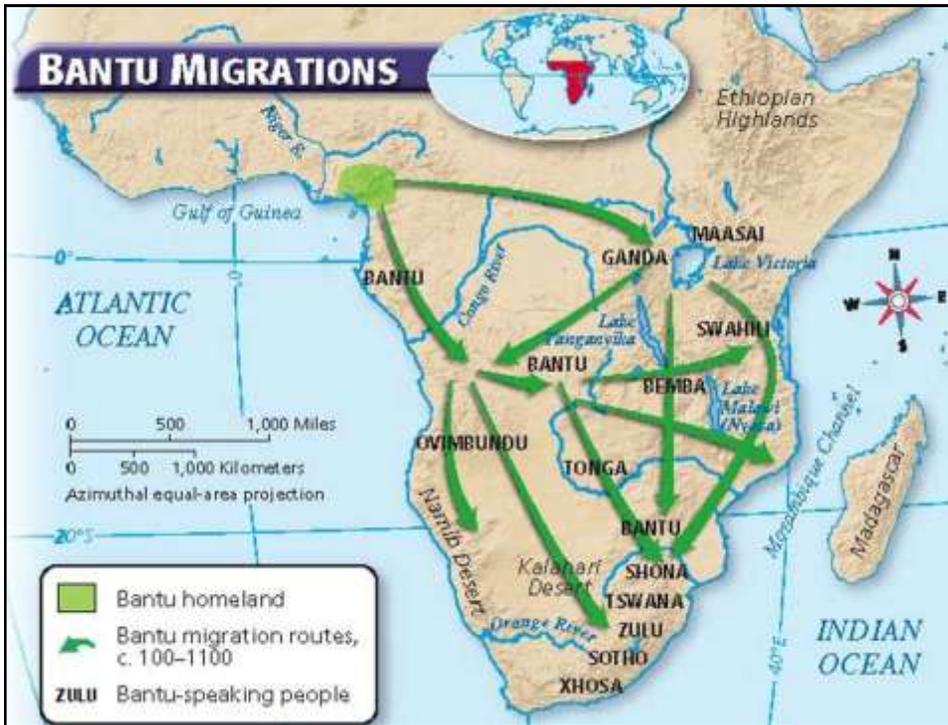
Migration

- Bantu-speaking people gradually migrated east, south during first centuries AD
- As they traveled, Bantu speakers carried knowledge of agriculture, ironworking
- Because of knowledge, established themselves as dominant group when they reached southern Africa

Bantu Social Systems

- By AD 900s, Bantu-speaking peoples had established complex social systems
- Women farmed, men mostly tended cattle
- Cattle important food source, used in ritual sacrifices
- Status in Bantu societies determined by size of cattle herds

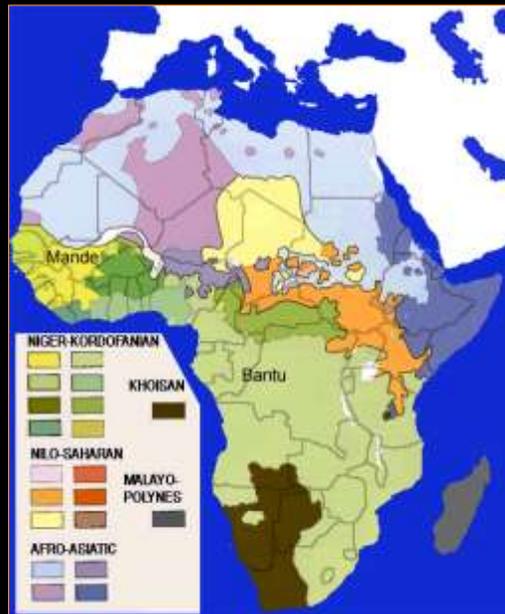
An Ancient Bantu Village



Summarize

How did African societies change with the spread of ironworking?

Answer(s): Ironworking enabled Africans to live in places where they could not before the population grew.



1000 different languages; 1000+ different tribes

Traditional African Society



The Life Cycle and Sex Roles:

Common Features

- Many societies developed village-based cultures
- At heart, extended family living in one household
- Families with common ancestors formed clans to which all members loyal

Age-Sets

- In some areas, people took part in type of group called age-sets
- Men who had been born within same two, three years formed special bonds
- Men in same age-set had duty to help each other

Specific Duties

- Loyalty to family, age-sets helped village members work together
- Men hunted, farmed; women cared for children, farmed, did domestic chores
- Even very old, very young had own tasks; elders often taught traditions to younger generations

An African's "Search for Identity"



1. Nuclear Family
2. Extended Family
3. Age-Set
4. Clan
5. Lineage (ancestry)

TRIBE (communal living)

Mask With Headcloth, Zaire (19c)



Tribal Mark → scarification

Kisokolo Initiation Costume, Democratic Republic of the Congo



Kisokolo Initiates, Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1990



African Culture & Identity

Griots

- Many early societies did not develop systems of writing
- Maintained sense of identity, continuity through oral traditions
- Included stories, songs, poems, proverbs
- Task of remembering, passing on entrusted to storytellers, **griots**

Music and Dance

- In many societies, music, dance central to many celebrations, rituals
- Carving, wearing of elaborate masks part of these rituals as well
- Early Africans excelled in sculpture, bronze as well as terra cotta
- Traditional music performed with variety of wind, stringed instruments

Generalize

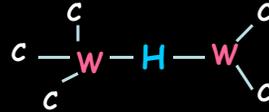
What role did family ties play in early African culture?

Answer(s): Families were the heart of village life. Each person was expected to be loyal to his extended family, and each member of a family had his or her own tasks.

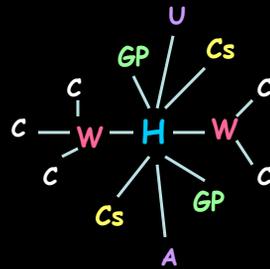
Africa : Tribe :: America : Ethnic Group

Traditional Family Structures

Nuclear Family:



Extended Family:



Woman & Child, Kongo



Family Group, Tanzania



Problems of Tribalism Today

1. The tribe is more important than the nation.
2. Communication problems.
3. Inter-tribal warfare → civil wars.
4. Tribal favorites for government jobs:

Nepotism

Urbanization:

- Breaks down tribal traditions.
- Tribal intermingling on the job.

Many early Africans shared similar religious beliefs and shared common features in the arts as well.

Examples of Beliefs

- Many believed that unseen spirits of ancestors stayed near
- To honor spirits, families marked certain places as sacred places, put specially carved statues there
- Families gathered to share news, food with ancestors, hoping spirits would protect them

Animism

- Many Africans also practiced form of religion called animism—belief that bodies of water, animals, trees, other natural objects have spirits
- Animism reflected Africans' close ties to natural world

Traditional African Religion



ANIMISM

1. **Belief in one remote Supreme Being.**
2. **A world of spirits (good & bad) in all things.**
3. **Ancestor veneration.**
4. **Belief in magic, charms, and fetishes.**
5. **Diviner → mediator between the tribe and God.**

African Diviner (Shaman)



World of the Spirits



Dogon "Spirit House"

Ancestors



Fetishes



Fetishes



Rubbing Oracle, wood



Other Religions in Africa

ISLAM → 25%

* Nigeria

→ largest sub-Saharan
Muslim countries.

CHRISTIANITY → 20%

Common Traits or Characteristics of Traditional African Tribal Life

1. The good of the group comes ahead of the good of the individual.
2. All land is owned by the group.
3. Strong feeling of loyalty to the group.
4. Important ceremonies at different parts of a person's life.
5. Special age and work associations.
6. Deep respect for ancestors.
7. Religion is an important part of everyday life.
8. Government is in the hands of the chiefs [kings].

Video Clip on the Maasai



- Q. How do the Maasai continue to maintain their traditional way of life through ceremonies, such as bloodletting? What's the importance of this?

ASSIGNMENTS:

- Complete the following:
 - 1) “African Tribalism”
 - 2) “African Art”



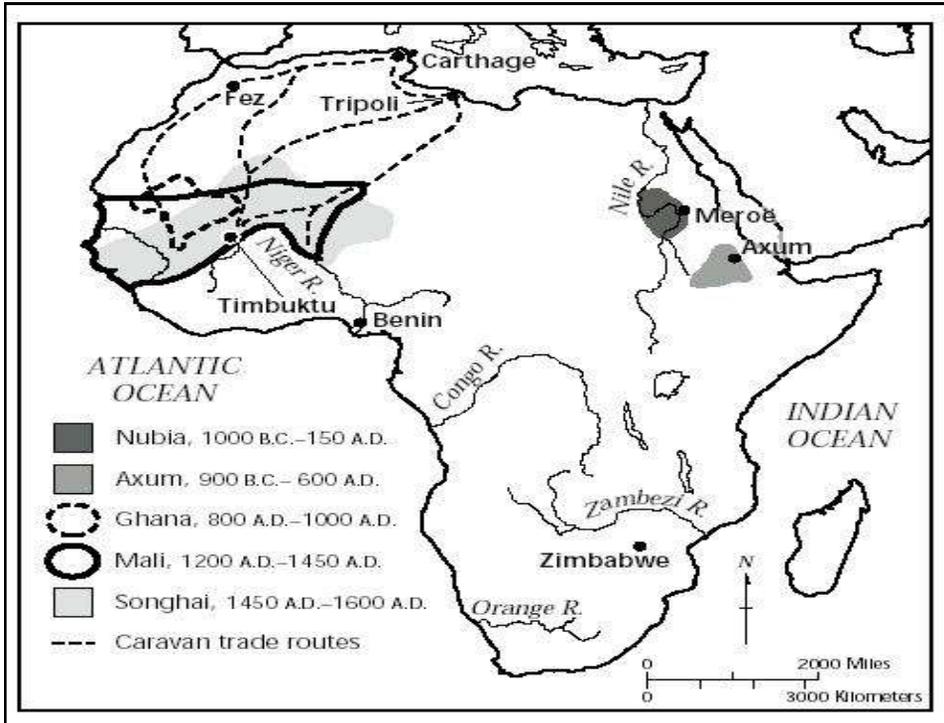
The Golden Age of African Kingdoms

- Q. What made these Kingdoms so successful before the arrival of Europeans?

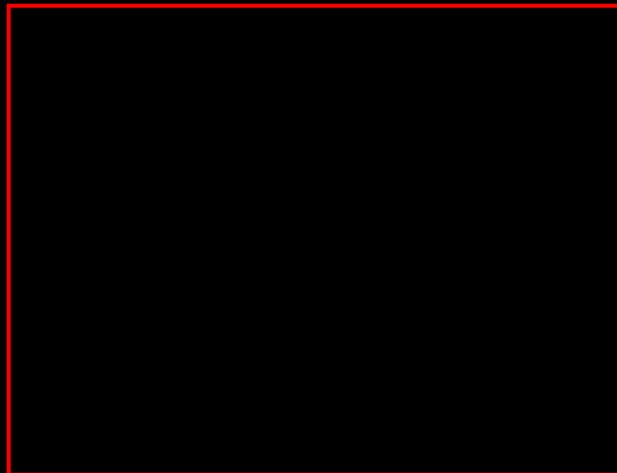


African Kingdoms Timeline:

Ghana	
100 AD	Shona people leave Nigeria because of a population explosion.
200 AD	Ghana founded
350 AD	Ghana learns to smelt iron.
400 AD	Trading centers arise in West Africa
700 AD	Ghana was the first trading kingdom.
800-1000 AD	"Golden Age" of Ghana.
1042 AD	Arabs from North Africa start war with Ghana
Mali	
1240 AD	Ghana part of Mali
1324-1325	Mansa Musa pilgrimage to Arabia.
Songhai	
1400's	Songhai controlled land that had been part of Mali.
1464 AD	Sultan Sunni Ali rules Songhai from city of Gao.
1493 AD	King Askia Muhammad, who succeeded Sunni Ali
1591 AD	1591 Morocco seizes Songhai's gold mines.
1700 AD	Shona people settle in Zimbabwe



Video Introduction: “Three Kingdoms in West Africa”

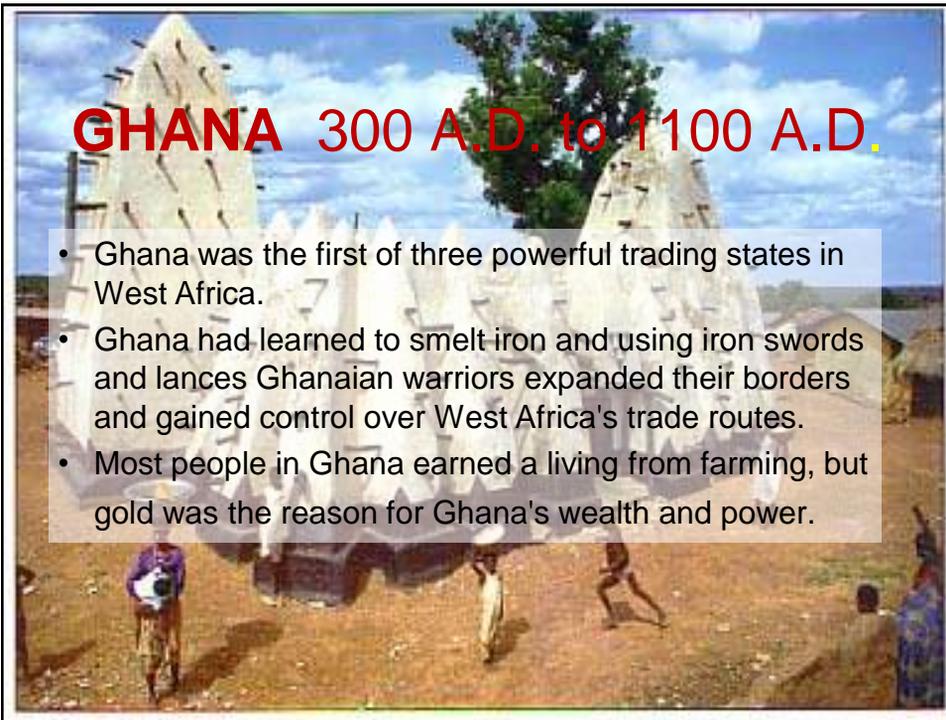


Ancient African Kingdoms: Ghana, Mali, Songhai

- Ancient African trading kingdoms developed in West Africa. Ghana was the first.
- Ghana was later absorbed into the larger kingdom of Mali, which was later replaced by the Songhai Empire.
- Some of the kingdoms in the Sudan were rich in salt, while others were rich in gold. The Sahara Desert had rich salt deposits. Salt was valued because it was used for flavoring and preserving food and for keeping moisture in the body.

GHANA 300 A.D. to 1100 A.D.

- Ghana was the first of three powerful trading states in West Africa.
- Ghana had learned to smelt iron and using iron swords and lances Ghanaian warriors expanded their borders and gained control over West Africa's trade routes.
- Most people in Ghana earned a living from farming, but gold was the reason for Ghana's wealth and power.



Gold and Salt Trade

- Arab merchants traveled to Ghana by camel caravan from North Africa to trade salt, copper, clothing, tools, and figs. The Arabs traded their goods for gold, slaves, ivory, jewelry, and leather goods. Only gold dust could be used in trade.
- Nuggets became the property of the king. Legend has it that one nugget was so heavy it was used as a hitching post for the king's horses. Some have called the Kingdom of Ghana the "land of gold."
- The Ghanaian kings controlled the gold that was mined in their kingdom and implemented a system of taxation for their people.
- The Ghana Empire enjoyed its "Golden Age" between 800 and 1000 A.D. It had an efficient government and an army to guard its trade routes.



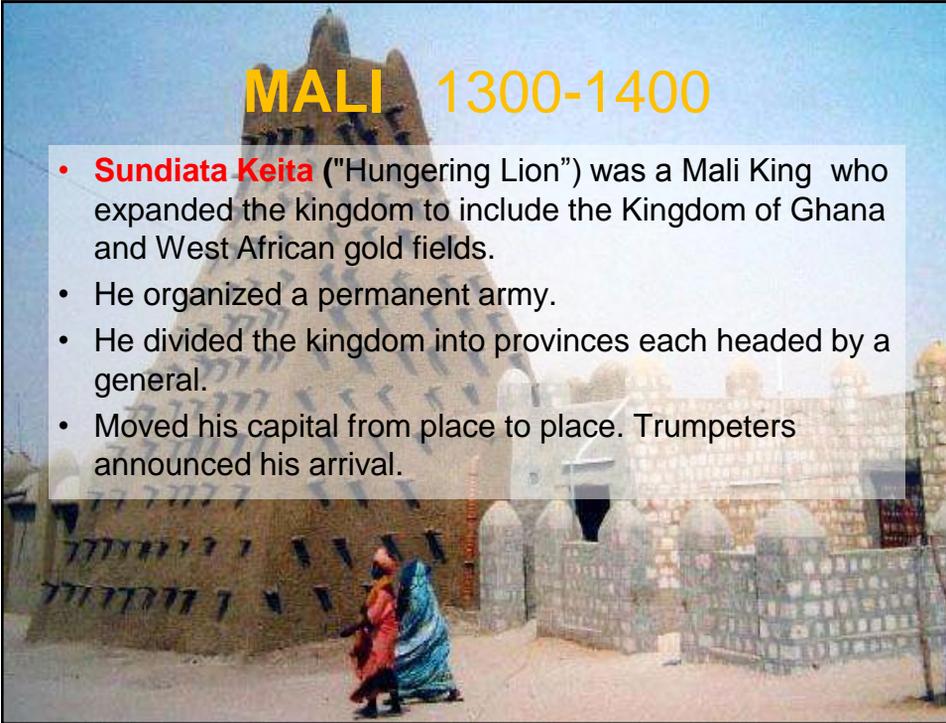
Tenkamenin - King of Ghana 11th Century AD

End of the Empire

- In 1042 AD Arabs from North Africa started a war against Ghana. They destroyed the capital and made Ghana give them tribute.
- In 1054 AD, the **Almoravid rulers** came south to conquer the Kingdom of Ghana and convert the people to Islam. This opened the way for the Kingdom of Mali to gain power.

MALI 1300-1400

- **Sundiata Keita** ("Hungering Lion") was a Mali King who expanded the kingdom to include the Kingdom of Ghana and West African gold fields.
- He organized a permanent army.
- He divided the kingdom into provinces each headed by a general.
- Moved his capital from place to place. Trumpeters announced his arrival.



Gold and Salt Trade

- The rulers of Mali grew rich from the gold-salt trade.
- Mali controlled the salt trade in the north and many caravan trade routes.

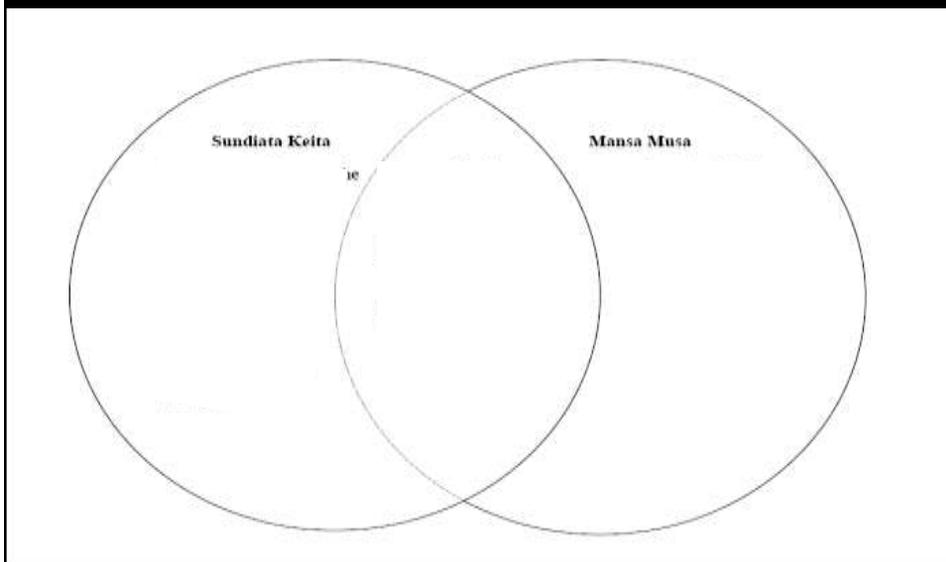


Mansa Musa

- The empire reached its peak during the 1300's under **Mansu Musa**, was one of the most famous Mali kings.
- He made a pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324-1325 AD.
 - 60,000 people accompanied him, with eighty camels each carrying 300 lbs. of gold (24,000 lbs.)
 - 12,000 servants each carried a 4 lb. bar of gold. (48,000 lbs)
- Mansa Musa handed out gold on the streets of Cairo.
- A Spanish architect built a university in Timbuktu.
- The emperors after Mansa Musa lacked the skill and power necessary to hold the empire together.



VENN DIAGRAM—Complete!



Timbuktu



- **Timbuktu**, the capital city, became the center of government, learning, and trade

Religion

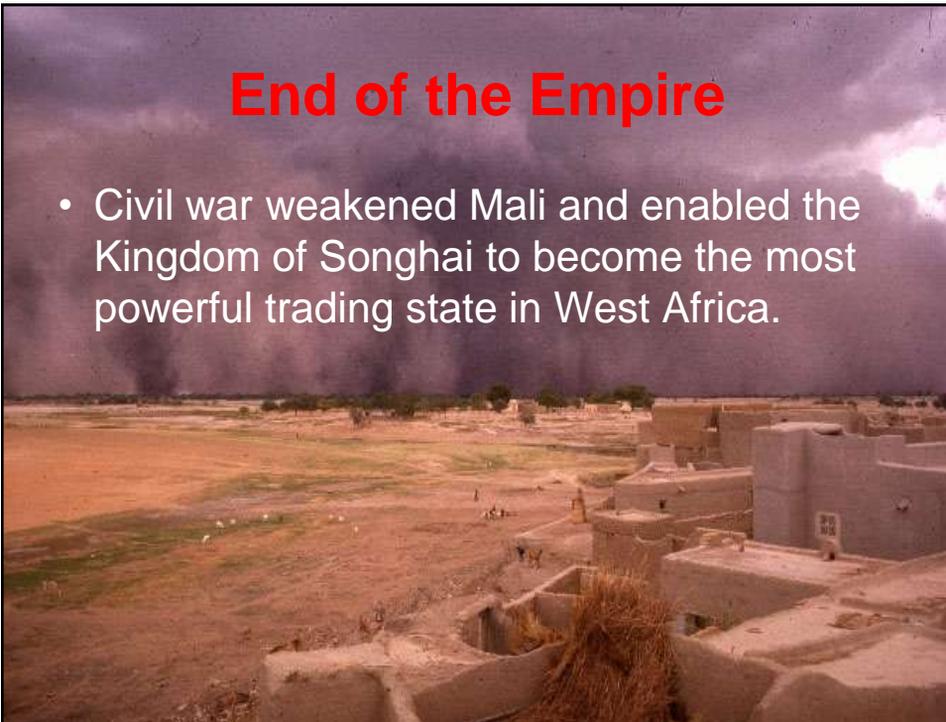
- The emperors of Mali became Muslims, but most people continued to worship tribal religions.
- Although many people in Mali still practiced the old religions, Islam was becoming well established throughout the kingdom

Learning

- The Kingdom of Mali established several great centers of Islamic learning.
- Among them were the legendary Timbuktu. Scholars came to study religion, mathematics, music, law, and literature.

End of the Empire

- Civil war weakened Mali and enabled the Kingdom of Songhai to become the most powerful trading state in West Africa.



SONGHAI 1400's to 1500's

- Songhai, another west African trading state, took control of the West African caravan routes during the 1400's and 1500's.
- Traders from Songhai exchanged gold and other products for goods from Europe and the Middle East. Most of the people of Songhai were farmers, fishermen, and traders.



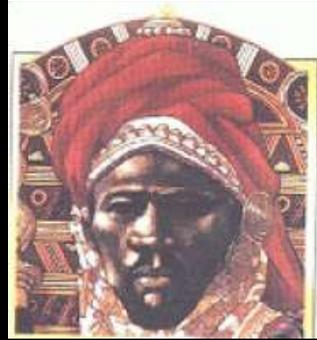
Sultan Sunni Ali

- **Sultan Sunni Ali** came to power in 1464 AD and ruled from the city of Gao.
- He maintained a huge army equipped with armor, camels, and horses. he also had a navy that patrolled the Niger River.
- He strengthened his empire by establishing a central government and unified system of law and order.
- He seized Timbuktu and Djenne, which had been parts of the Kingdom of Mali.
- He appointed officials to oversee trade, agriculture, and justice. Sonni Ali was not a devout Muslim himself, but was sympathetic to indigenous religious practices.



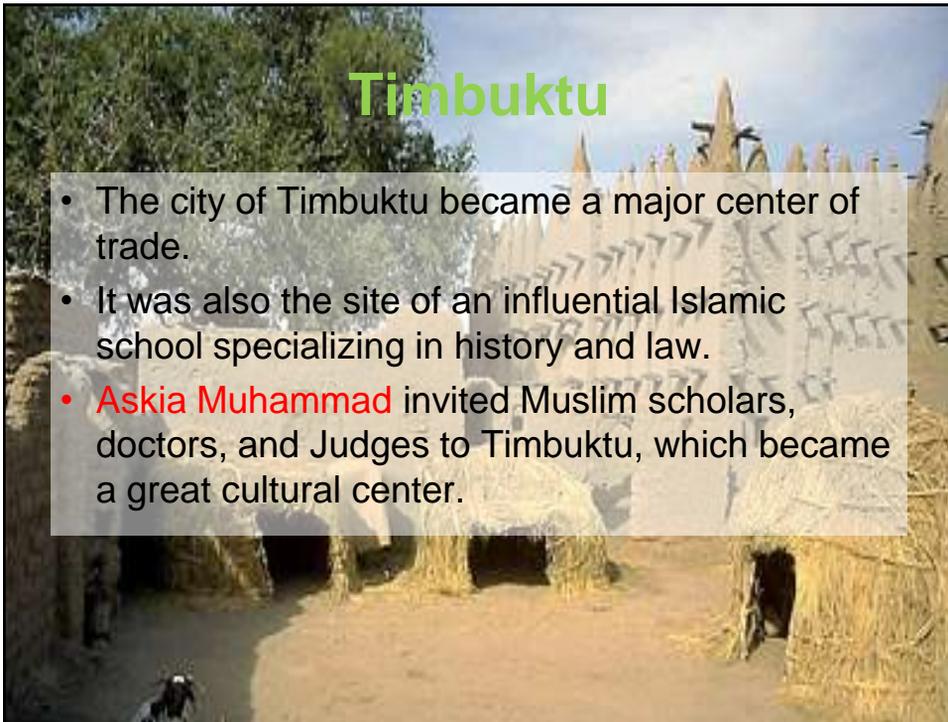
King Askia Muhammad

- **King Askia Muhammad** succeeded Sunni Ali in 1493 AD.
- He expanded the kingdom even further and set up an even more advanced and strongly centralized government.
- He developed a new system of laws, expanded the military, and encouraged scholarship and learning.
- He invited Muslim scholars, doctors, and Judges to Timbuktu, which became a great cultural center.
- He was a devout Muslim, who used the combination of Islam and commerce to build his kingdom.
- Askia Muhammad brought peace and stability to the kingdom during his reign.



Timbuktu

- The city of Timbuktu became a major center of trade.
- It was also the site of an influential Islamic school specializing in history and law.
- **Askia Muhammad** invited Muslim scholars, doctors, and Judges to Timbuktu, which became a great cultural center.



End of the Empire

- In 1591 AD, an army from Morocco crossed the Sahara and seized Songhai's gold mines.
- Only ½ of the Moroccan soldiers survived the trip across the desert.
- The Moroccan soldiers had guns and defeated the Songhai soldiers who only had swords and spears.
- By 1600 AD, the days of the great kingdoms of West Africa were over



On a Safari to an African Kingdom

An Internet Social Studies WebQuest

- **Introduction:** You and a team of explorers have the opportunity to explore one of the following African kingdoms - Axum, Ghana, Mali, Songhai, Zimbabwe, or Benin. Your group will investigate the kingdom using the Internet. In this WebQuest, you will use the power of teamwork and the abundant resources on the Internet to learn all about one of these African kingdoms. Each explorer on your team will be responsible for examining one aspect of the kingdom. Then you will come together to present your findings to the class in a *PowerPoint* presentation.
- **The Quest :** How have the geographic, historic, economic, and cultural characteristics of your African kingdom influenced Africa and the world?
- **The Process and Resources:** In this WebQuest, you will be working together with a group of students in class. Each group will represent a group of explorers sent to Africa to study the kingdom.

FINAL ASSESSMENT!:

Document-Based Essay Question [50 points]

This task is based on the accompanying documents (1-9). Some of these documents have been edited for the purposes of this task. This task is designed to test your ability to work with historical documents. As you analyze the documents, take into account both the source of each document and the author's point of view.

Directions: Read the documents and answer the questions after each document. Then write your answer to the essay question below, using the information from those documents and your general knowledge of Global Studies.

Question:

It has been said that African culture did not exist until the coming of the Europeans. Evaluate the achievements of the African empires, kingdoms, and cities before the arrival of European traders and explorers.