

SSWH6 Describe the diverse characteristics of early African societies before 1500 CE/AD.



Element A: Describe the development and decline of the Sudanic kingdoms (Ghana, Mali, Songhai); include the roles of Sundiata, and the pilgrimage of Mansa Musa to Mecca.

SSWH6 Overview

□ Students will be expected to describe the development of African societies with a focus on the role of trade in fostering growth and cultural exchange. Special attention should be placed on the religious, economic, and political developments that left an enduring legacy and contributed to the diversity of the continent. Student learning should stress that Africa’s size and geography contributed to a high degree of diversity on the continent.



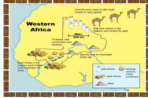

Ghana Kingdom/ Empire

- States emerged in West Africa with the arrival of the domesticated camel in third century CE.
 - With the camel as a beast of burden and war, lucrative trade developed across the Sahara Desert.
 - Salt and manufactured goods were transported south and gold, kola nuts, and forest products were transported north.
 - Merchants meet in the Sahel region just south of the Sahara Desert.
- This region was inhabited by the Soninke, and agricultural people ruled by a warrior chief called the ghana.
 - The ghana grew wealthy and powerful by taxing this trade and by the 700s the ghana was a king and his title was used to describe the entire region.
- The Kingdom of Ghana, as it was now known, developed an extensive bureaucracy that allowed it to tightly regulate the highly lucrative salt and gold trade.
 - This control, allowed the kings of Ghana to acquire vast wealth which they used to develop the military power necessary to become an empire in the 800s.
 - Trade brought Islam to the region which spread slowly eventually leading to the conversion of the king in the eleventh century.
- In 1076 Almoravids from North Africa conquered Ghana and severally disrupted the salt and gold trade.
 - The Kingdom of Ghana was unable to recover despite the withdrawal of the Almoravids.







Mali Empire

- ❑ With Ghana's power severely reduced a new group of people emerged to dominate the region, the Malinke.
- ❑ New gold mines opened to the east, out of the reach of Ghana but easily accessible to the Malinke.
- ❑ The ruler of the Malinke, Sundiata, used this new found wealth to build an empire to replace Ghana.
- ❑ After a series of military victories, Sundiata established the Empire of Mali in around 1235.
 - This empire was much larger than its predecessor and much more Islamic in character.
- ❑ Sundiata established his capital at Niani; from here he directed a highly effective bureaucracy that instituted successful reforms that promoted agriculture and the reestablishment of the salt and gold trade.
 - The empire generally prospered for the rest of Sundiata's reign but after his death in 1255 it slipped into a 50 year period of turmoil.

Mali Empire

- ❑ Order was restored in 1312 when Mansa Musa took power.
 - A highly effective administrator and military leader, Mansa Musa substantially increased the size of the empire.
 - To administer this enlarged empire, Mansa Musa divided it into provinces with appointed governors.
- ❑ Mansa Musa also created important links between his empire the larger Muslim world.
 - In 1324, Mansa Musa took a pilgrimage to Mecca.
 - While traveling, he recruited Islamic scholars to return with him to Mali.
 - With the help of these scholars and the vast wealth from the salt and gold trade, Mansa Musa transformed the city of Timbuktu into a center of Islamic scholarship.
- ❑ After Mansa Musa, Mali had a series of weak and ineffective leaders leading to its decline.
 - In 1433 the city of Timbuktu was sacked by Tuareg invaders and by 1500 the Malinke controlled only their homeland.

Songhai Empire

- ❑ The Songhai people stepped into the power vacuum left by the decline of Mali.
- ❑ Like Ghana and Mali, the Songhai used the wealth from the salt and gold trade to build a vast Islamic empire in 1464.
 - This wealth paid for a highly effective professional military equipped with cavalry and freshwater naval units.
- ❑ The Songhai Empire surpassed Mali in size.
 - To administer this territory the emperor established a highly centralized bureaucracy with ministries of the treasury, army, navy and agriculture.
- ❑ Technological advances made in the heart of the Islamic world proved to be Songhai's undoing.
 - Gunpowder diffused across the Silk Road and Muslim armies in the Middle East weaponized it. In 1591 a Moroccan army equipped with cannon and muskets invaded and defeated Songhai.

