

The Sudanic African Empires: Ghana / Mali / Songhay & The Swahili City States of East Africa

AP World History – Mr. Blankenship

<u>Ghana</u>	<u>Mali</u>	<u>Songhay</u>	<u>Swahili States</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Kingdom of Ghana emerged c. 5th century C.E. around the Senegal River. Became one of the most powerful and influential Empires in West Africa because of the richness provide by the huge deposits of <u>Gold close to its borders</u> (it did not produce the gold but the trade routes from the mines). It is estimated that until 1400 <u>2/3 of the World's supply in circulation came from this region</u>. It was obtained in rivers but also mined – they built mine shafts as deep as 100 ft – where small girls and boys would obtain the gold. Other commodities that were provided by Ghana were <u>Ivory and Slaves</u> which were sold to merchants who took them to North Africa. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the early 1200's as the Ghana Empire was weakening – a group of people known as the Makinke – who lived in towards the east of Ghana – began to create a new Empire. The creation of this new state would be achieved by the ruler called <u>Sundiata</u> (Sun – JAHT – ah) – legend has it that he was one of 12 brothers – but when he was young an invading tribe came and killed all of them except for him – they wanted to eliminate their rivals – after a period of interfamily and regional fighting he was able to prove himself as a great warrior and then leader and eventually leader of a new empire: the Kingdom of Mali. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As the power of the Mali continued in the 1400's a state within the Empire was able to obtain its independence – this was called the Songhay Empire with its capital in the trading city of Gao. The height of the Empire came under the leadership of <u>Sunni Ali</u> who ruled from 1464-1493. He built an elaborate administrative and military apparatus to oversee affairs in his realm. He appointed <u>governors to oversee provinces</u> and maintained a <u>professional army</u>, with a <u>cavalry and navy of small boats and canoes</u> – which were able to patrol the Niger River. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Swahili coast refers to a string of Islamicized African ports tied to the trade across the Indian Ocean. The term “Swahili” is an Arabic term meaning: “coasters” – and it refers to cities on the Eastern African coast such as: Mogadishu, Zanzibar, Mombasa and Sofala. The language – Swahili – is an example of cultural diffusion – in this case – Bantu speaking peoples adopting words from Arabic.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rulers of Ghana became very rich because of the taxing of the trade that traveled through their Empire. They created large bureaucracies to help govern and raised large standing armies – the empire had superior techniques in <u>iron making</u> and were able to subdue nearby peoples who had weapons made from wood, bone or stone. <u>Rulers demanded tribute / taxes from Chiefs of surrounding lands but left them in place</u> as long as they recognized the supreme power of the Ghana ruler and paid their tribute. • C. 10th century the rulers of Ghana <u>converted to Islam</u> – which expanded the relationship between Islamic traders from North Africa and themselves. They made little attempt to convert their subjects and they still retained much of their African religious beliefs. The Muslim concept of a ruler who united civil and religious authority reinforced traditional ideas of kingship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As Mansa – or emperor /king of this Empire he was able to set up a <u>bureaucracy</u> with able administrators in charge of Mali’s finances, defense and foreign affairs. He also re-established the gold-salt trade routes which made Mali even more powerful and richer than Ghana. • Even though he allowed local Chiefs to rule over their subjects he did create <u>garrisons</u> throughout the empire to maintain loyalty and security – this made travel secure as crime was severely punished. • Like Ghana many rulers of Mali either <u>converted to Islam</u> or honored it. They also did not actively attempt to convert their subjects. • The height of the Empire came under the leadership of <u>Mansa Musa</u> who may have been the grandnephew of Sundiata. He ruled from 1312-1337. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He extended his empire over the areas formally controlled by the Mali rulers – he conquered the cities of Timbuktu and Jenne (which took him 7 years of siege warfare – he finally married its Queen to solidify his rule). • From the capital city of Gao the Songhay rulers presided over a prosperous empire that participated in the trans-Saharan trade that brought: Salt, textiles and metal goods in exchange for gold and slaves. • Despite the fact that the rulers were Islamic and supported Islamic institutions: mosques / universities – the vast majority of the populace remained non-Muslim. • The Songhay meet their demise in 1591 when they took on a Moroccan army armed with musket gun – the defeat left open an opportunity for regions to revolt against Songhay administration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These cosmopolitan trading towns were a mixture of: Arabian, Persian, Indian, Chinese and African cultures and peoples. • The ruling families of these cities were very rich as they oversaw the movement of: gold, ivory, iron, slaves, and exotic animals in exchange for silks and rugs from Persia, porcelain from China and spices from Southeast Asia. • The ruling families and the merchants tended to be Muslim and sponsored the construction of mosques and places of learning – however – the majority of the people remained non-Muslim.
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The empire was eventually weakened by invaders out of the Sahara in the 13th century which eventually brought the empire down. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between the rule of Sundiata and Musa there had been political turmoil as Mali saw 7 different rulers in 50 years – but Musa brought an end to this. He was a skilled military leader who as ruler maintained a strict controlled empire. • He kept a <u>standing army of close to 100,000 men</u> and as the empire grew – to over twice the size of Ghana – he divided it into <u>provinces and appointed governors</u> who reported to him. • As a devout Muslim he went on a hajj to <u>Mecca</u> from 1324/1325 – this trip became legendary since it brought the attention of the Islamic world to the Kingdom of Mali and its ruler. It is said that he lavished the areas that he visited so much with gold that it actually devalued the metal's worth in local markets! When he came back he took his religion more serious than before and began creating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Songhay empire crumbled into a series of small regional kingdoms – and with the arrival of the Europeans and the redirection of trade towards the coastline – the Sudanic Empires ceased to play a prominent role in West African politics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The arrival of the Portuguese in the early 1500's the Swahili states fell into a decline from which they never recovered– The Portuguese established trading posts of their own – and led attacks against several Swahili states.
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Mosques and universities
in cities like: Timbuktu,
and Gao.

- They became some of the most important cities in the empire where Muslim judges, doctors, religious leaders and scholars were attracted. The “book” was the symbol of “civilization” in the Islamic world – and the **book trade was one of the most lucrative businesses in Timbuktu.**
- Despite the riches of the Empire of Mali and Ghana – away from the trading centers with markets and thriving trading networks – most of the people in the empire were small agricultural farmers – where between **80% - 85% of the people were farmers.** Life was difficult but villages worked under the “commune” system.
- After the rule of Mansa Musa the successors lacked the ability to govern and the empire resided in power and influence.

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