



Topic 1.5: State Building in Africa

Unit 1: Global Tapestry

Part of this presentation was made by E. Adamson.

Explain how and why states in Africa developed and changed over time.

Historical Developments

In Africa, as in Eurasia and the Americas, state systems demonstrated continuity, innovation, and diversity and expanded in scope and reach.

State systems in Africa:

- Ghana, Mali, and Songhai
- Great Zimbabwe
- Ethiopia
- Hausa kingdoms



Africa's geography was very diverse & Africans were lived differently based on where they lived.

The Sahara is the world's largest desert & acted as a barrier to separate North Africa from sub-Saharan Africa.

Geography of Africa



2 Sahel means "coastline" in Arabic. African people may have named it this because the Sahara seemed like a vast ocean of sand.



1 The dense trees and lack of edible vegetation in the humid rain forest make it an unwelcoming environment for most people.

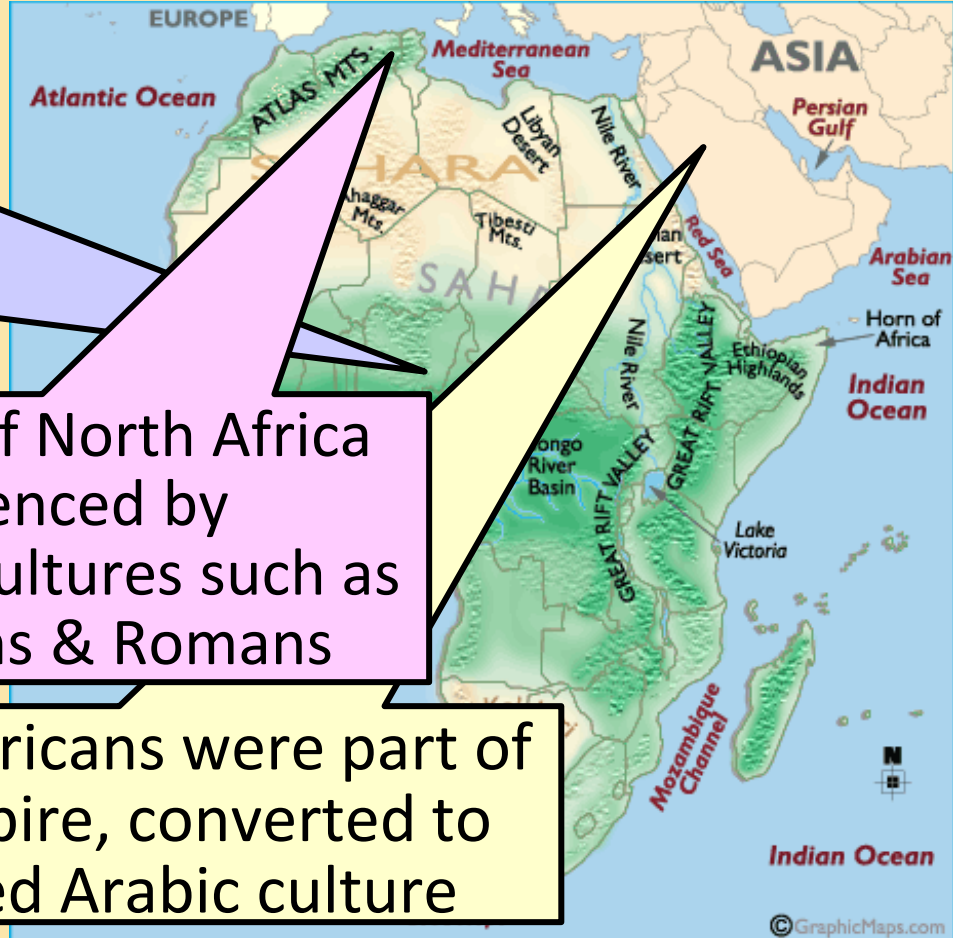


Early Societies of Africa

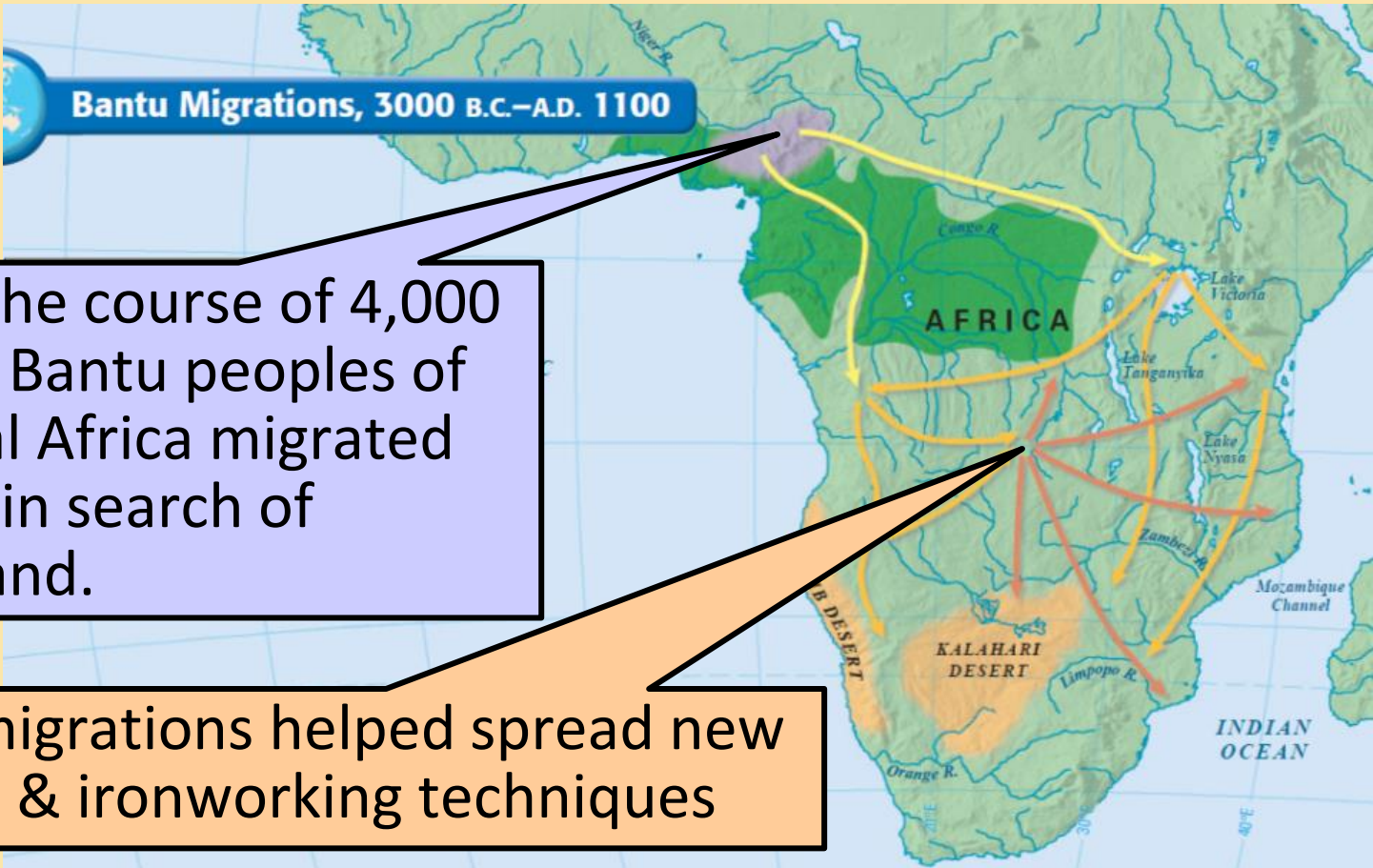
African societies south of the Sahara were isolated & missed out on the cultural diffusion of the Classical Era

Early societies of North Africa were influenced by Mediterranean cultures such as the Phoenicians & Romans

By 750, North Africans were part of the Islamic Empire, converted to Islam, & shared Arabic culture



The Bantu Migration



Over the course of 4,000 years, Bantu peoples of central Africa migrated south in search of farmland.

These migrations helped spread new farming & ironworking techniques

Bantu Migrations

Migrated south and disseminated:

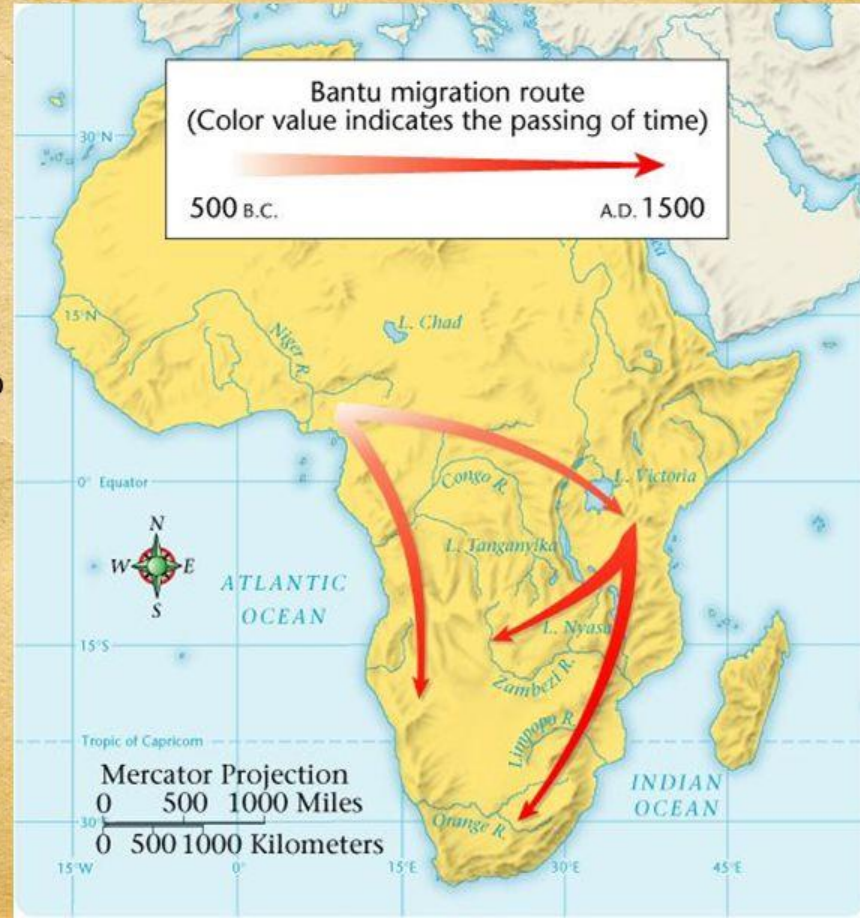
- Linguistics
- Iron metallurgy
- Agricultural techniques

The Bantu Migrations

About 2500 B.C., the **Sahara** began to dry out.

Through the process of **desertification**, the land became dry and parched and the desert spread. Desertification encouraged migration, as people were forced to seek new places to live.

Over thousands of years, migration has contributed to the rich diversity of people and cultures in Africa. These peoples spoke many different languages that came from one root language. We call that language **Bantu**.

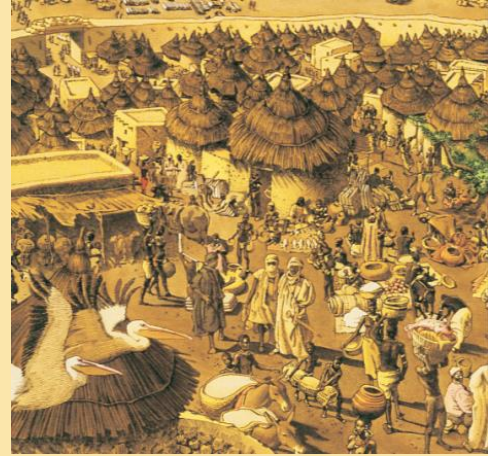




Characteristics of Sub-Saharan Africa

While the societies of sub-Saharan Africa were diverse, they shared some similarities:

- Most lived in farming villages (family-based clans)
- Few societies had written languages;
Histories were shared orally by storytellers (Griots: gree-oh)
- Made iron tools

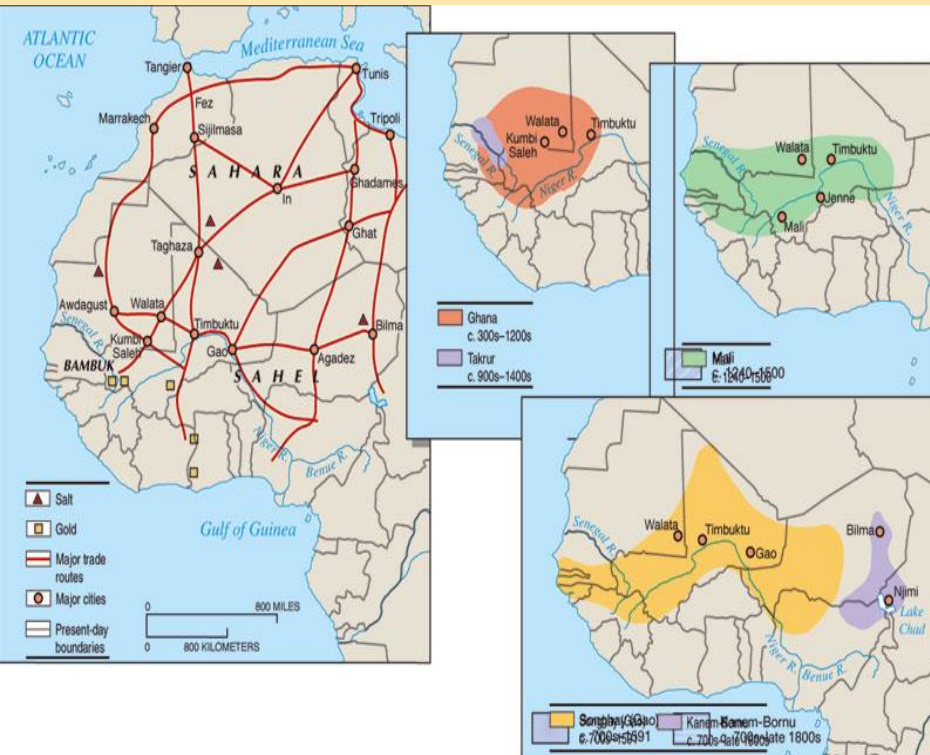


Sub-Saharan people were polytheistic:

- Practiced animism, a religion in which spirits exist in nature & play a role in daily life



Empires of the Western Sudan (West/Northwest Africa)



Ghana

4th – 13th centuries

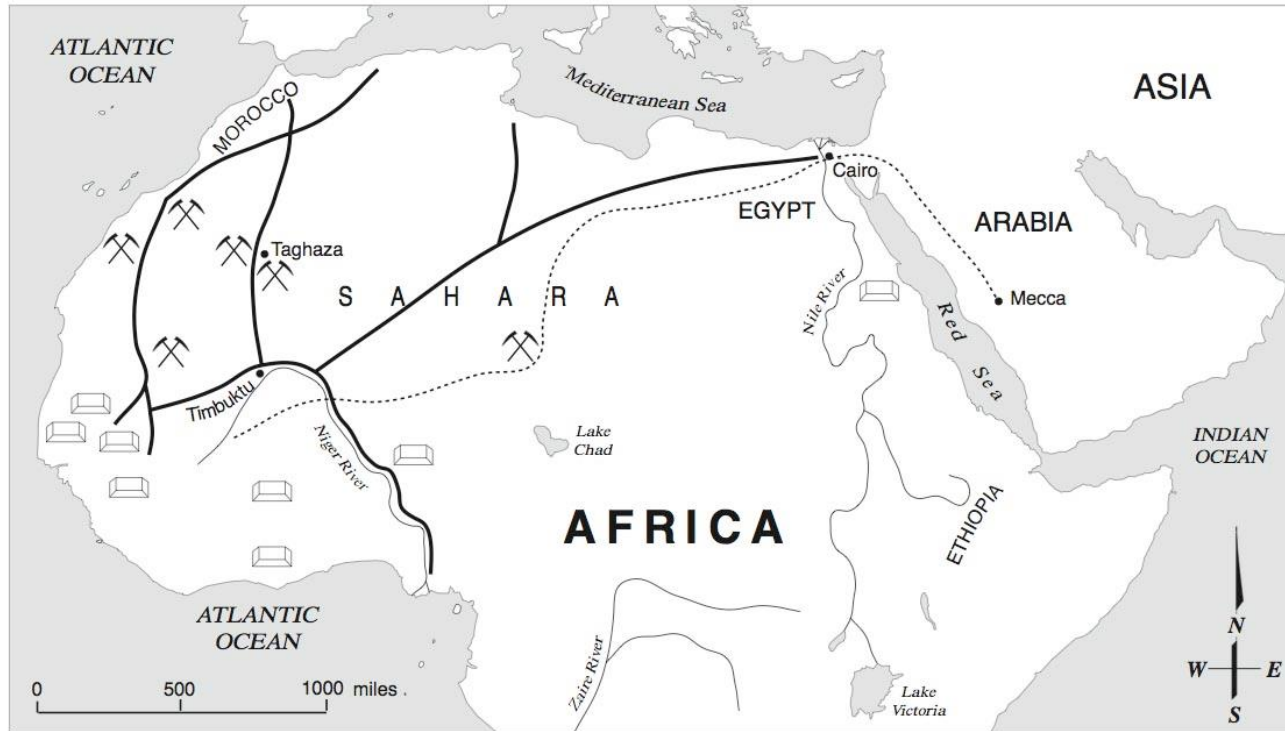
Mali

13th – 15th centuries

Songhai

15th – 16th centuries

Timbuktu: A Center for Trade



Legend

----- Mansa Musa's route to Mecca, 1324

— trade route

 salt mine

 gold mine



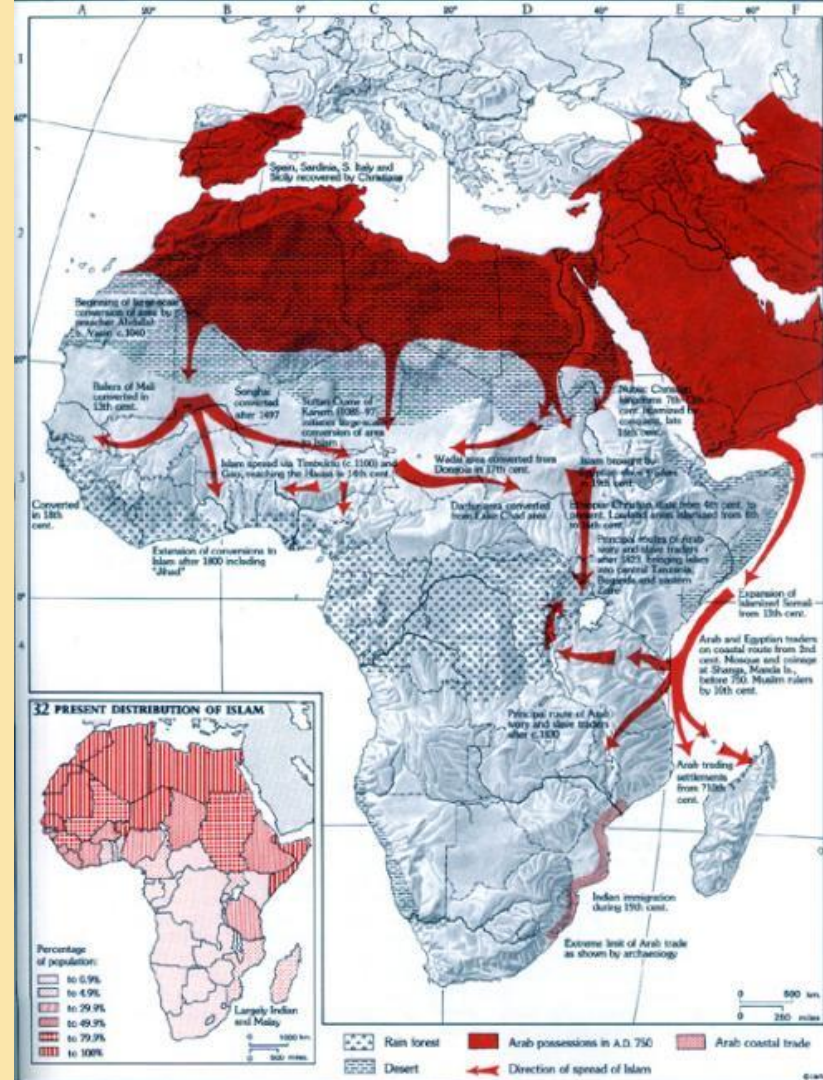
West Africa

- West Africa was shaped by the trans-Saharan trade network:
 - West Africans had large deposits of gold, but lacked salt
 - The gold-salt trade connected North & West Africa



West Africa

- The gold-salt trade increased cultural diffusion with Muslim merchants:
- Islam was introduced in West Africa & slowly gained converts
 - Many Africans blended Islam with animism or never converted



Ghana - West Africa

- The gold-salt trade led to wealth & empires in West Africa
 - By 800, Ghana became an empire by taxing merchants, building a large army, & conquering surrounding people
 - Ghana kings served as religious leaders, judges, & generals



The Kingdom of Ghana emerged c. 5th century C.E. around the Senegal River.

Became one of the most powerful and influential empires in W Africa because of the huge deposits of gold close to its borders.

- Did not produce the gold but regulated the trade routes from the mines.**
- Estimated that until 1400 CE 2/3 of the world's supply in circulation came from this region.**
- Obtained in rivers but also mined**
 - Built mine shafts as deep as 100ft – where small girls and boys would mine the gold.**

Other commodities traded were ivory and salt.

Slaves were sold to merchants and taken to N Africa and the Middle East.

(mostly female for domestic work)

- **Rulers of Ghana became very rich because of the taxing of the trade that traveled through their empire.**

- **Created large bureaucracies to help govern and raised large standing armies.**

- **Had superior iron making techniques and subdued nearby peoples who had wood, bone, or stone weapons.**

- **Demanded tribute/taxes from Chiefs of surrounding lands but left them in place as long as they recognized the supreme power of the Ghana ruler and paid their tribute.**

- **Rulers of Ghana (c.10th century) converted to Islam, which expanded the relationship between Islamic traders from N Africa and Ghana.**

- **Made little attempt to convert their subjects and retained much of their African religious beliefs.**

- **Muslim concept of a ruler who united civil & religious authority reinforced traditional ideas of kingship.**

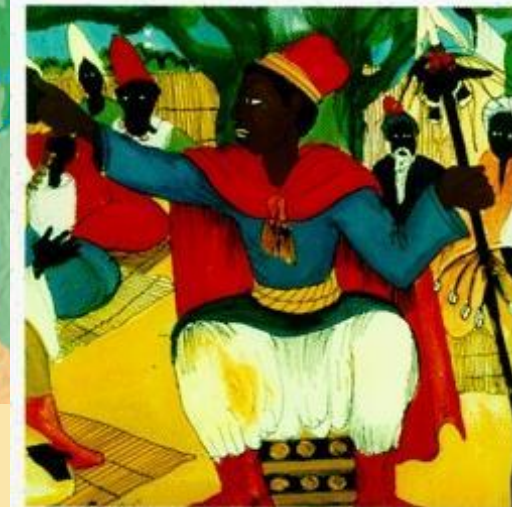
Downfall of Ghana

- **Ghana was eventually weakened by invaders out of the Sahara in the 13th century which eventually brought the empire down.**

Mali - West Africa

Eventually Ghana was overthrown & the Mali empire emerged

- Mali's King Sundiata took over the Ghana kingdom & trade cities in West Africa
- Sundiata created an efficient gov't, promoted farming, & controlled trade



While the Ghana Empire (early 1200's) was weakening, the Malinke (lived east of Ghana), began to create a new empire.

Creation of this new state would be achieved by the ruler called Sundiata (Sun – JAHT – ah).

Legend – he was one of 12 brothers

- 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 regional fighting, he was able to prove himself as a great warrior and leader**
- Eventually lead the new empire – the Kingdom of Mali.**

- As 'Mansa' or emperor/king of the Empire, Sundiata (Sun – JAHT – ah) was able to set up a bureaucracy with administrators in charge of defense & foreign affairs.

- Re-established the gold-salt trade routes → made Mali even more powerful and richer than Ghana.

- Allowed local Chiefs to rule over their subjects and created garrison posts throughout the empire to maintain loyalty and security

 - Made travel secure, crime was severely punished.

- Like Ghana, many rulers of Mali either converted to Islam or honored it.

 - They also did not actively attempt to convert their subjects.

Mali - West Africa

- The kings who ruled Mali after Sundiata converted to Islam
- The most important king was Mansa Musa:
 - He built a 100,000 man army to keep control over Mali
 - He divided Mali into provinces ruled by appointed governors



■ The height of the Empire came under the leadership of Mansa Musa who may have been the grandnephew of Sundiata. He ruled from 1312-1337.

■ Between the rule of Sundiata and Musa there had been political turmoil as Mali saw 7 different rulers in 50 years.

— Musa brought an end to this.

— He was a skilled military leader who as ruler maintained strict control of the empire.

- He kept a standing army of close to 100,000 men.

- Empire grew to over twice the size of Ghana.

- Musa divided it into provinces and appointed governors who reported to him.

- As a devout Muslim, he went on a hajj to Mecca from 1324/1325.

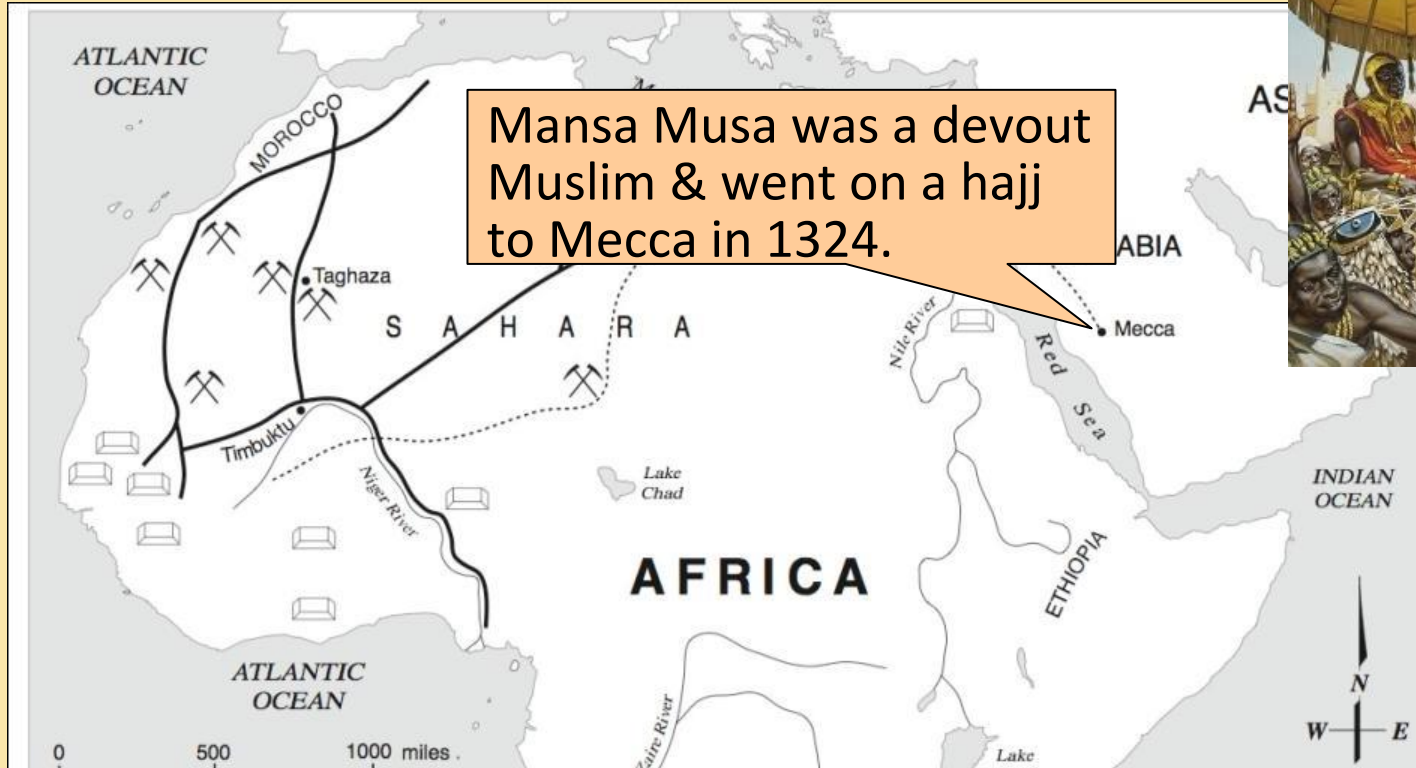
- His hajj brought the attention of the Islamic world to the Kingdom of Mali and its ruler, Mansa Musa.

- He lavished the areas that he visited so much with gold that it actually devalued the markets.

- When Musa returned, he began building Mosques and universities in cities throughout the empire, including Timbuktu.

- This trade city attracted scholars, doctors, religious leaders.

Mansa Musa

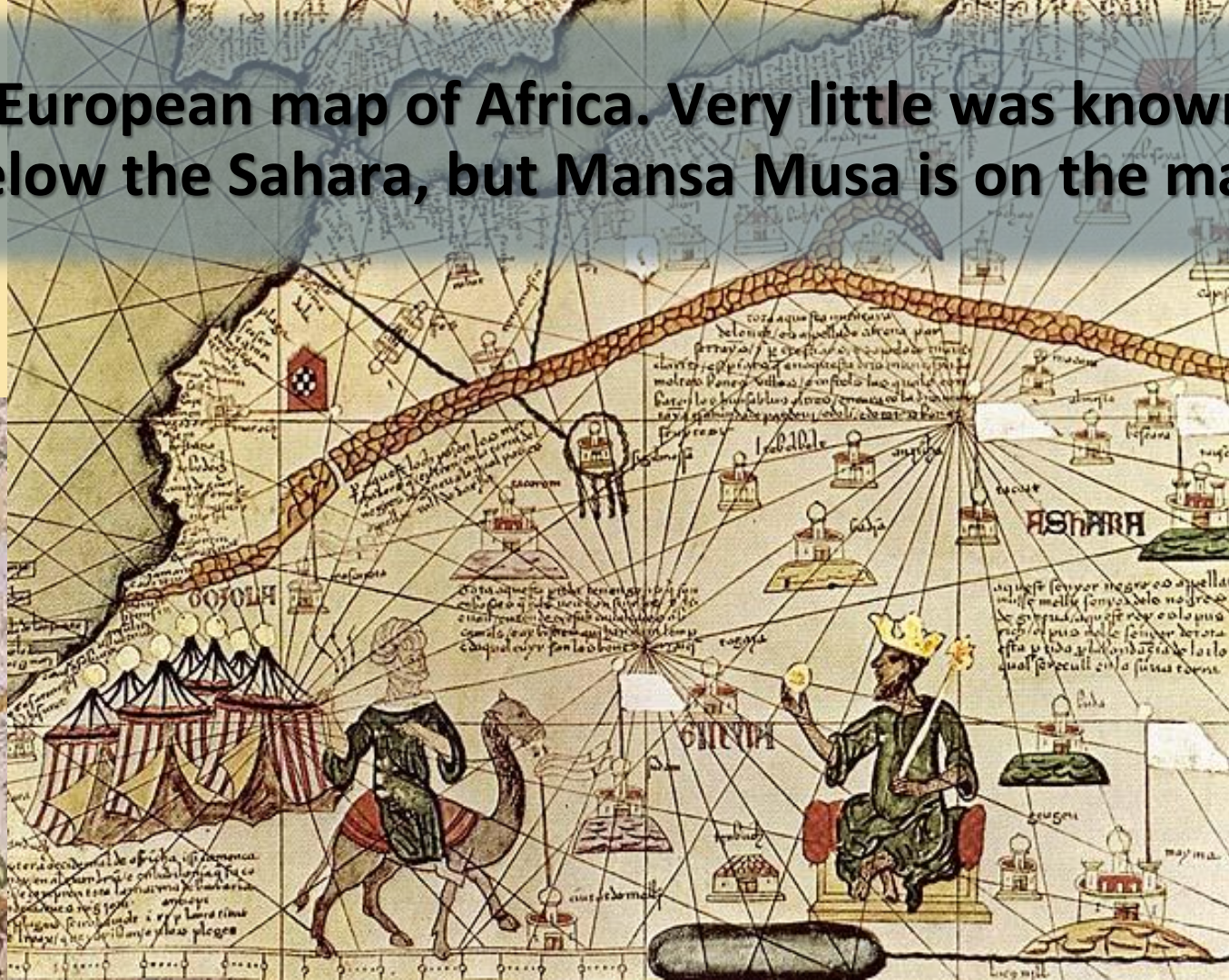


Mansa Musa passed out gold nuggets to the people he met along the way.

Mansa Musa



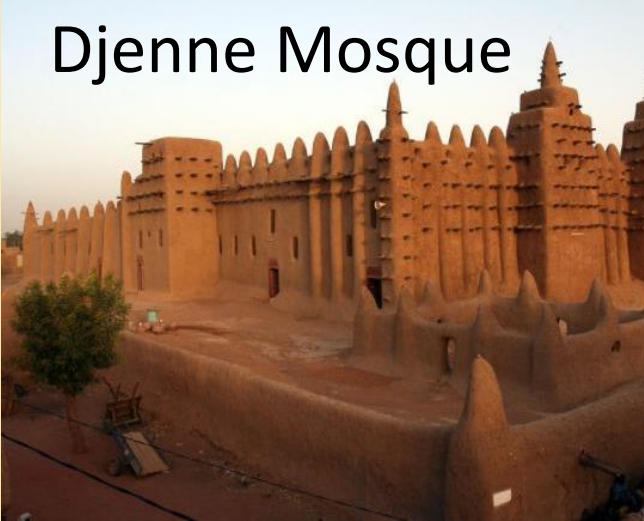
This is a European map of Africa. Very little was known about Africa below the Sahara, but Mansa Musa is on the map.



Timbuktu



Djenne Mosque



University



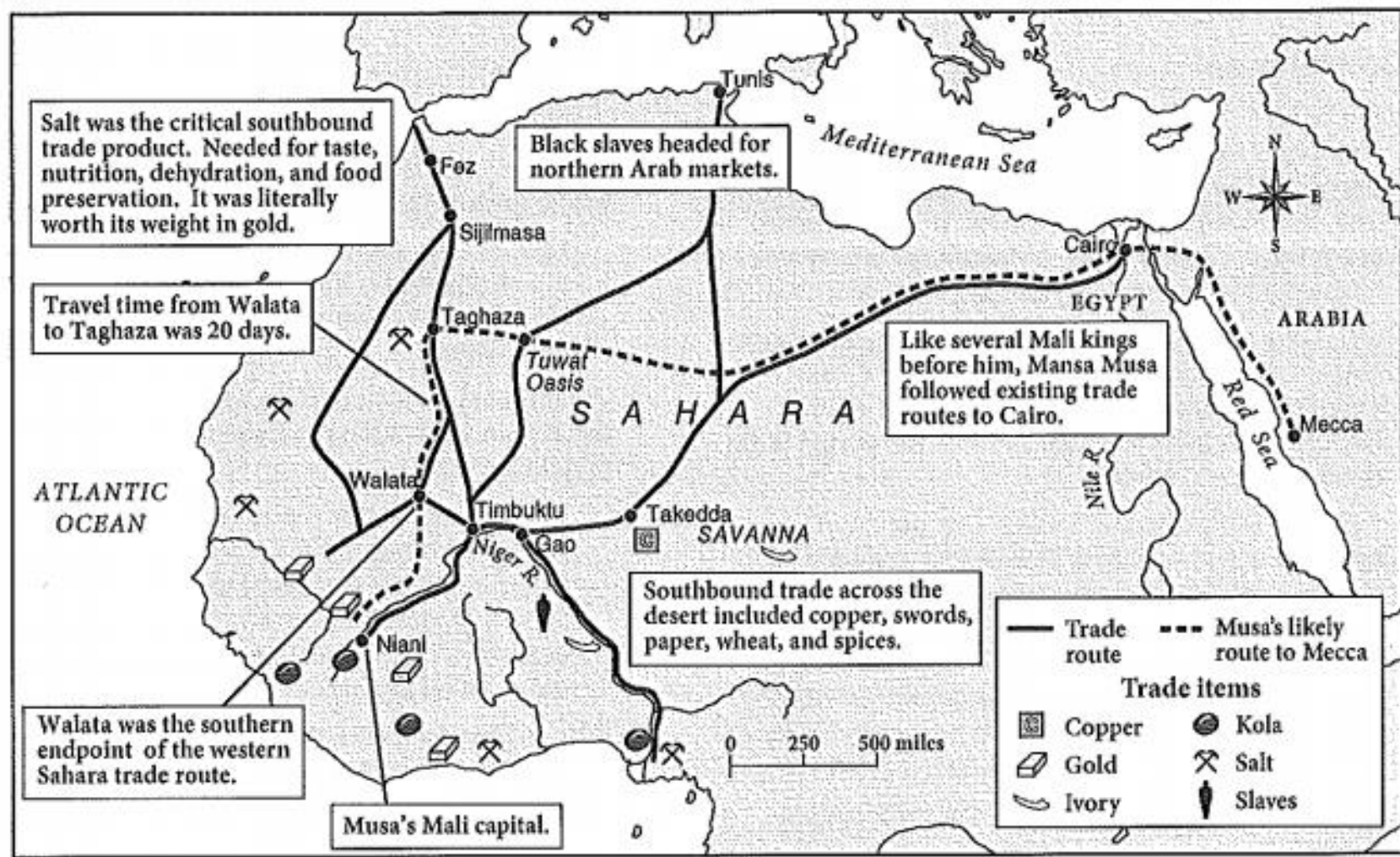
■ Mali trading cities became the most important cities in the empire where Muslim judges, doctors, religious leaders and scholars were attracted.

- Books were the symbols of civilization in the Islamic world and the book trade was one of the most lucrative businesses in Timbuktu.**
- Griots (gree-oh): oral historians who served as keepers of traditions and advisors to kings**

■ Despite the riches of the trading centers & networks, most of the people in the empire were small agricultural farmers (80% - 85% farmers).

■ Life was difficult but villages worked under the commune/provincial government.

■ Mansa Musa's successors lacked the ability to govern and the empire's power and influence disappeared.





Songhai - West Africa

- After Mansa Musa, Mali declined and was replaced by Songhai.
- Kings gained control of trade cities along the gold-salt routes
- Songhai grew into the largest of the West African empires
- It's fall in 1591 ended a 1,000 year era of empires in West Africa



A state within the Mali Empire (1400s) obtained its independence → the Songhai (song-ghuy) Empire - capital/trading city of Gao (Gou).

Height of the Empire came under the leadership of Sunni Ali (ruled from 1464-1493).

Built an elaborate administrative and military apparatus to oversee affairs.
(similar to Mali)

- Appointed governors to oversee provinces**
- Maintained a professional army with a cavalry and navy of small boats/canoes to patrol rivers.**

Extended the Songhai empire over areas formally controlled by Mali

- Conquered the cities of Timbuktu and Djenne (Took him 7 years of siege warfare and married a Queen to solidify his rule in the area)**

Songhai rulers presided over a wealthy empire.

— Participated in the trans-Saharan trade

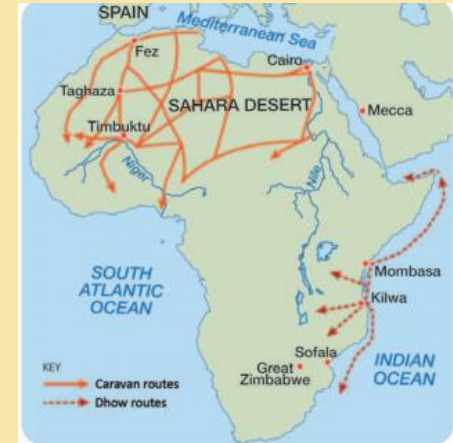
— Salt, textiles, and metal goods in exchange for gold and slaves.

**Rulers were Islamic and supported Islamic institutions:
mosques/universities**

— Majority of the populace remained non-Muslim.

**Fell in 1591 → fought the Moroccan military armed with
musket guns**

**The defeat left an opportunity for regions to revolt against the
Songhai administration.**



■ The Songhai met their demise in 1591 when they took on a Moroccan army armed with musket guns - the defeat left open an opportunity for regions to revolt against Songhai administration.

■ The Songhai 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.

Marco Polo

*His home was in Venice, Italy,
Europe
Traveled from 1271 to 1295 (24
years)*

*Journeyed when he was 17 years old
to 41 years old.*

*His route consisted of the Silk Roads;
he went from Italy through the
Mediterranean and India to China.
He returned from more sea routes
than he came from, was arrested in
Genoa, and then returned home.*

*His aim was originally to deliver
documents and holy oil from
Jerusalem on behalf of the Pope to
Kublai Khan.*

Ibn Battuta

*His home was in Tangier, Morocco,
Africa.*

*Traveled from 1325 to 1354 (29
years).*

*Journeyed when he was 21 years old
to 50 years old.*

*His route went as follows: Alexandria
and Cairo -> Damascus -> Mecca ->
Persia and Iraq -> Arabia and East
Africa -> Anatolia and the Black Sea
Region -> Central Asia and
Afghanistan -> India, the Maldives,
and Ceylon -> Southeast Asia and
China -> Tangier -> North Africa,
Spain, and West Africa.*

*His reason for traveling was to find
the best teachers and libraries.*

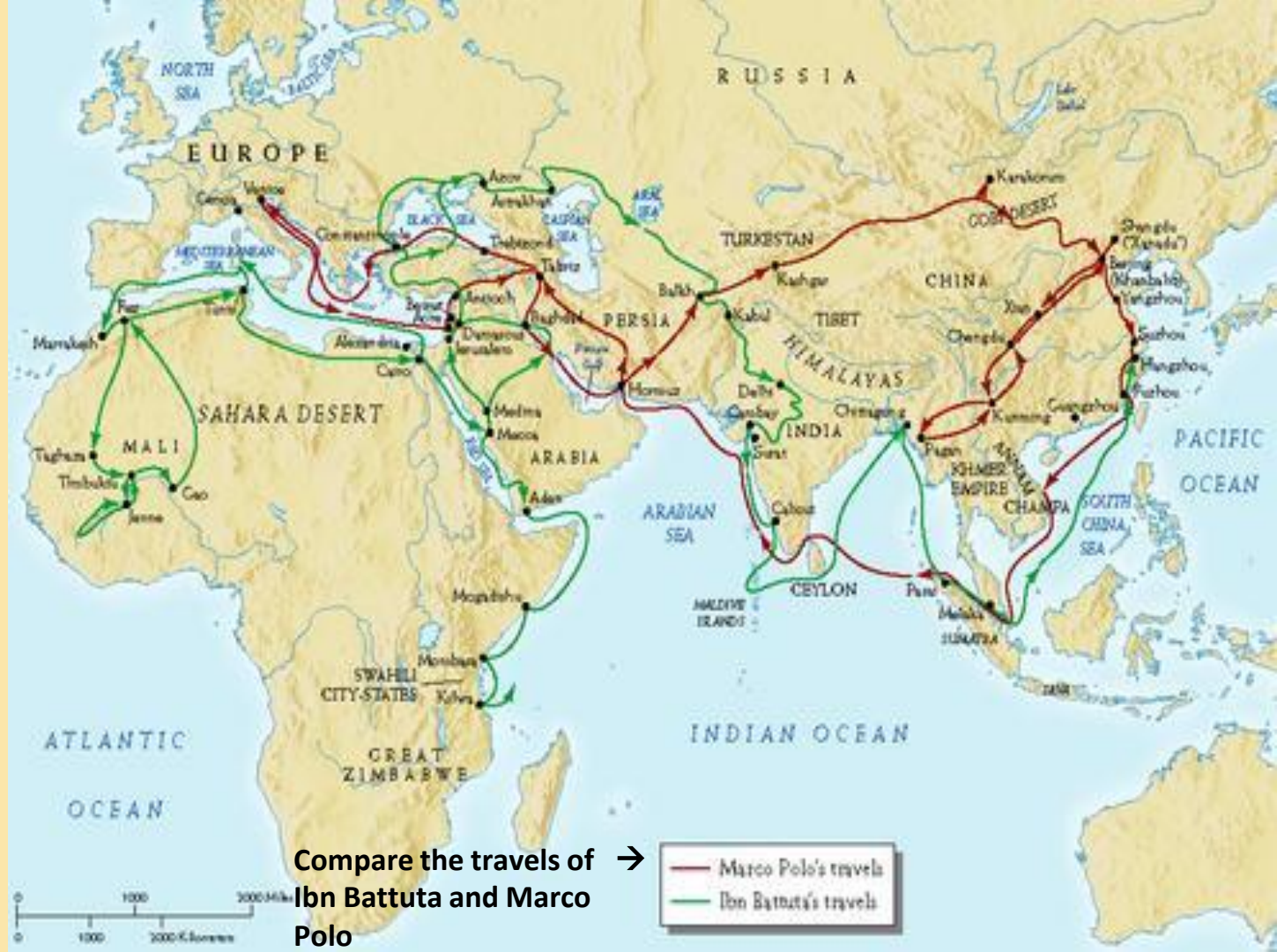
*Traveled
within a 162-
year time
period.*

Visited China.

*Crossed astounding
distances.*

*Traveled for more
than a decade.*

*Had their travels
recorded.*



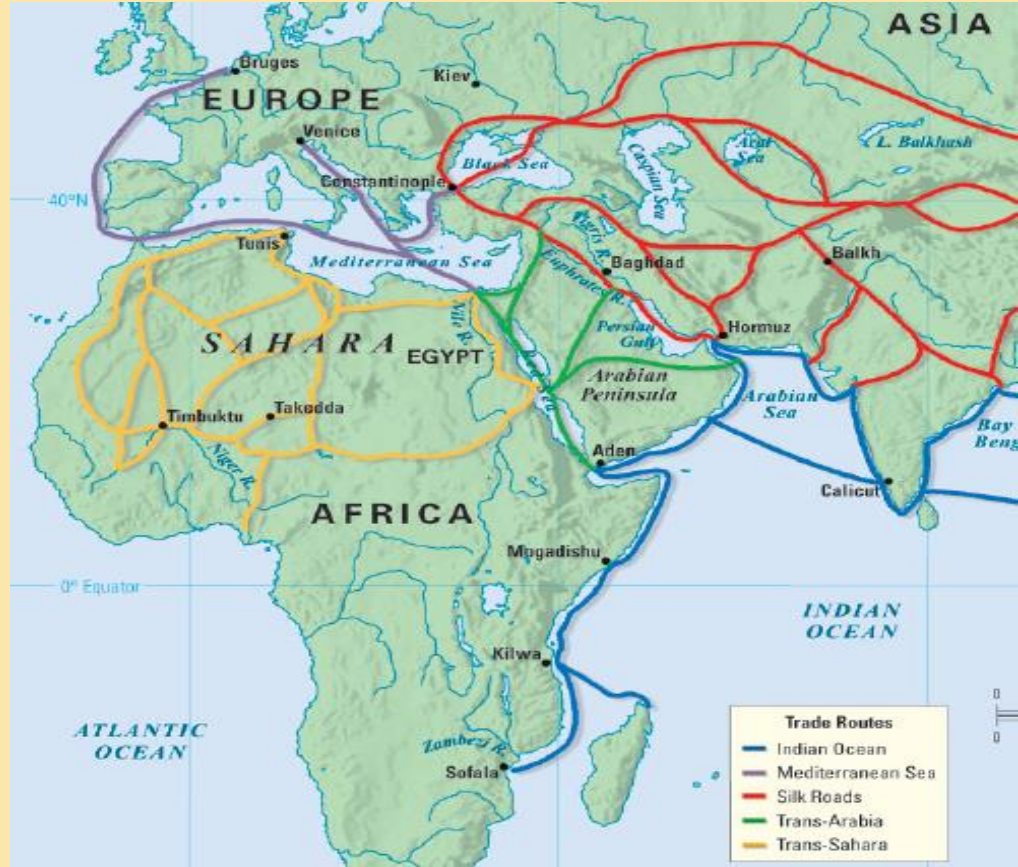
Compare the travels of →
Ibn Battuta and Marco
Polo

West Africa Conclusions

African societies were transformed by 2 powerful forces:

— Trade with outsiders

Introduction of Islam

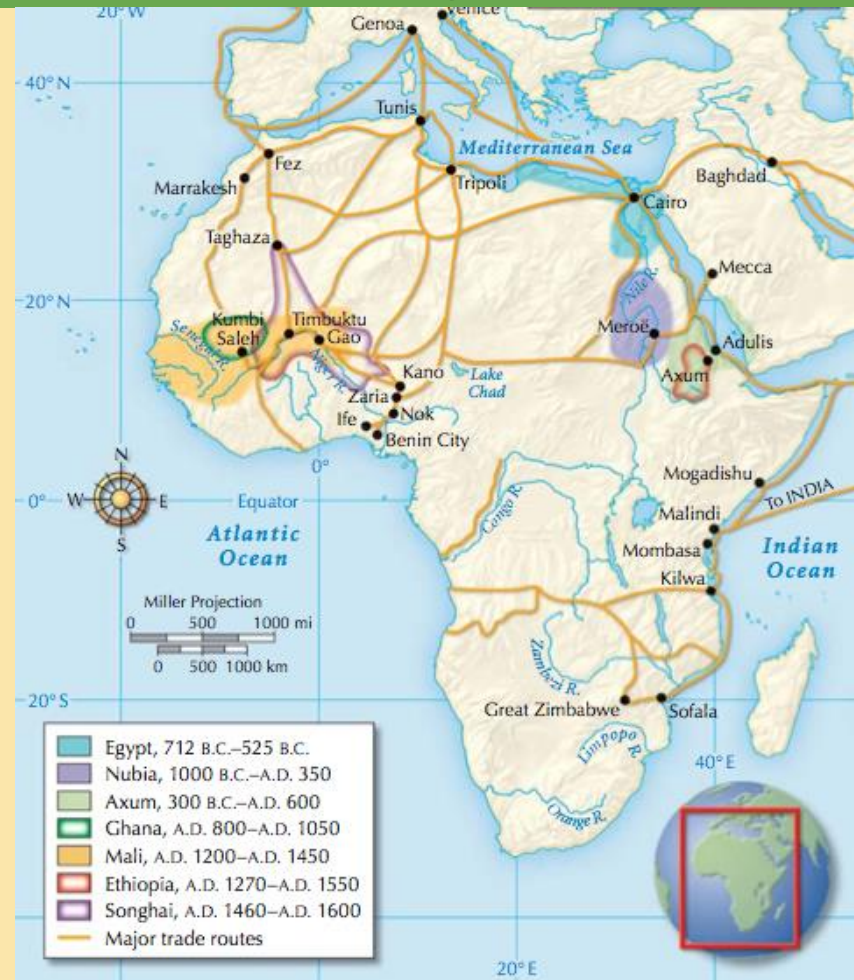




The Sudanic Kingdoms & Swahili City-States

Why do you think West and East Africa saw a series of kingdoms develop within the same general areas?

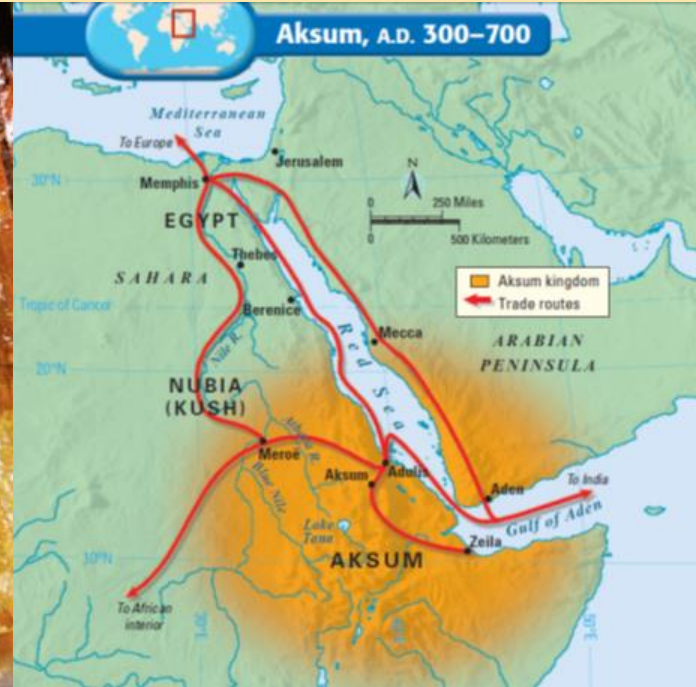
How was southern Africa connected to the trans-Saharan trade system?



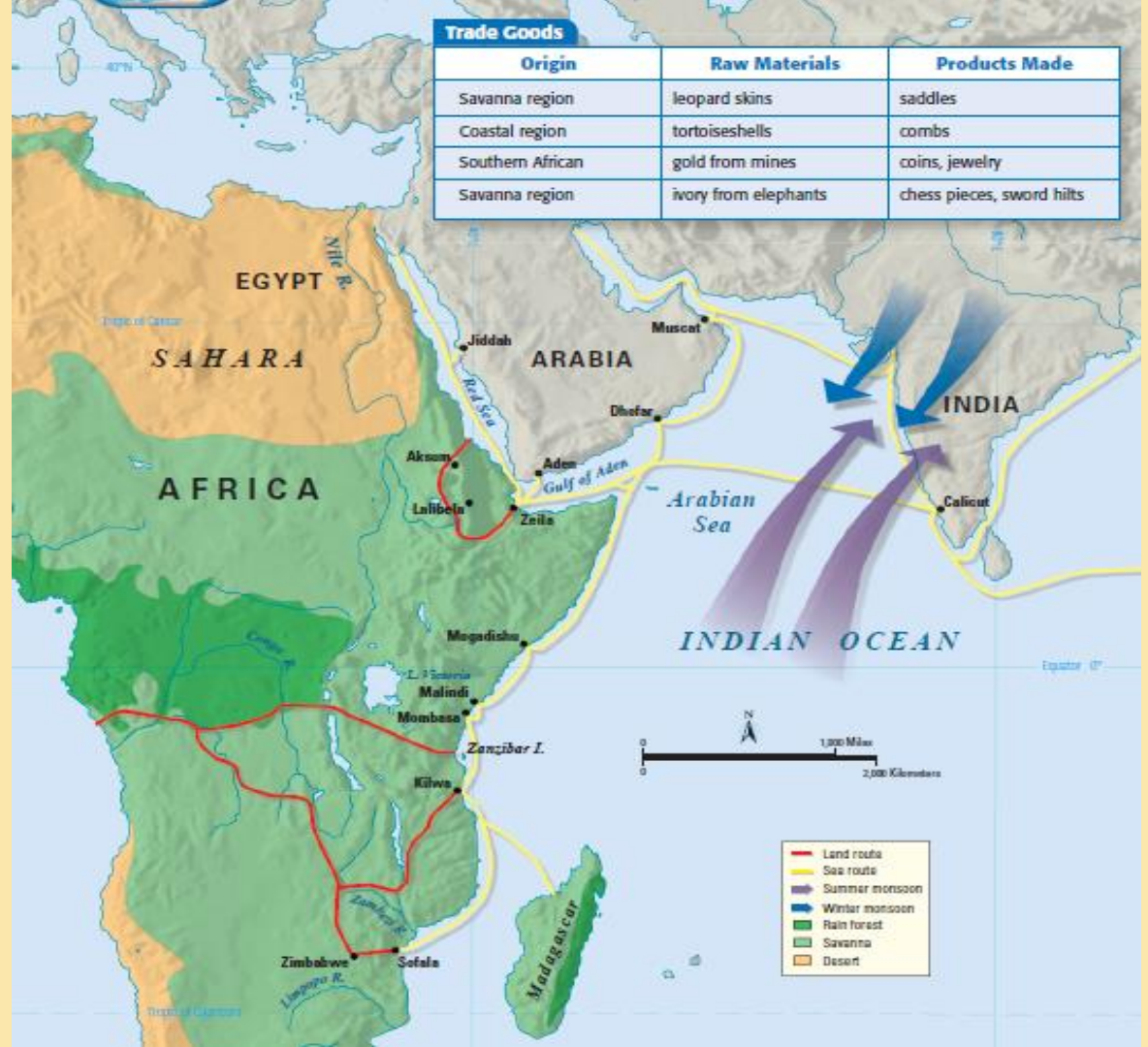
East Africa

The societies of East African participated in the Indian Ocean trade network & were shaped by cultural diffusion:

- The kingdom of Aksum traded with Persia, India, Arabia, & Rome; Aksum became a Christian kingdom



Factors that shaped the culture of East Africa



East Africa Background: The Kingdom of Nubia/Kush

- Heavily influenced by ancient Egyptian culture
- Lasted for 1000 years 3000 BCE–2000 BCE
- Kush - 2000 BCE emerges from Nubia
- King led the Kingdom in the conquest of Egypt
- City of Meroe - center of trading empire of Kush
- Nubians resisted Muslim incursions until the 13th cen.
- Nubia, Kush, Axum, and the Nok all served as a basis for later civilizations that formed Islamic Africa



East Africa Background:

AKSUM (AXUM)

- Great geographic location – African and Arabic culture
- **Aksum** – (1st – 6th cen.) Developed in the Ethiopian highlands; traded with India and the Mediterranean areas to gain Greek and Arabian cultural influences
- Why a “great” geographic location? – **HINT** = red lines
- King Ezana made Christianity the official religion of the Askum in 350 C.E. and laid the basis for Ethiopian Christian culture

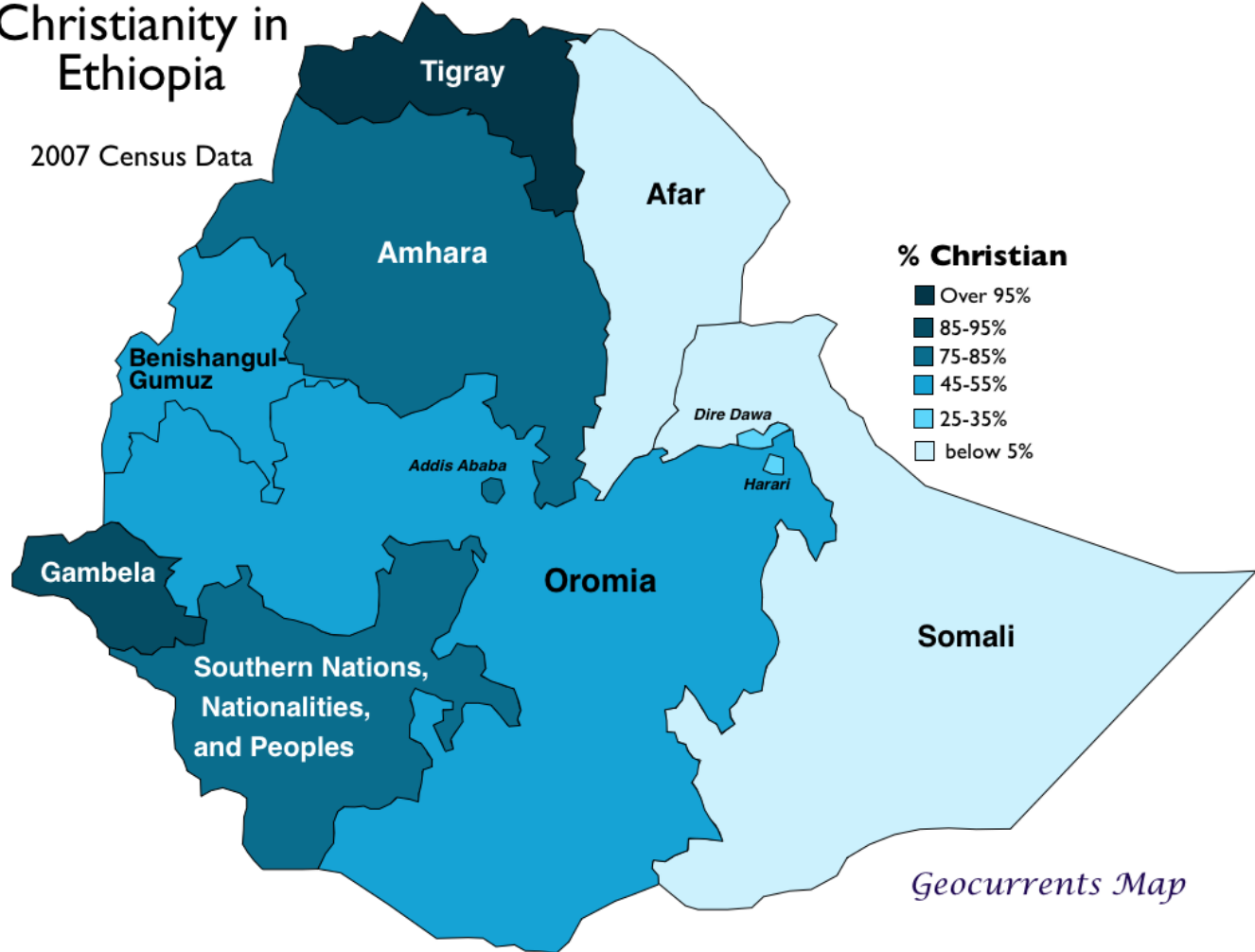


ETHIOPIA



Christianity in Ethiopia

2007 Census Data



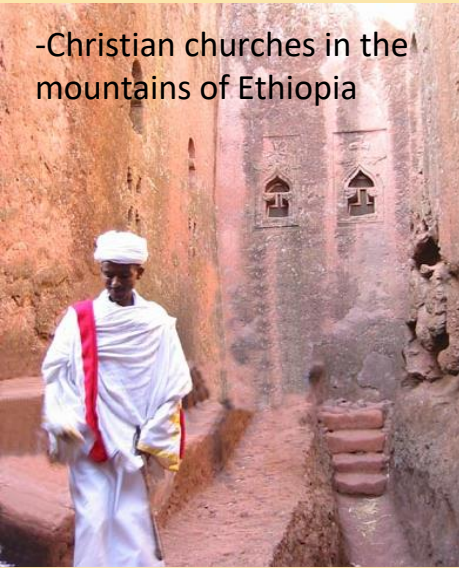
Christianity in Ethiopia

- Rulers of Axum had adopted Christianity in the 4th century
- Over the centuries of Islamic expansion, Ethiopia became a Christian island in a Muslim sea
 - Protected by mountainous geography
 - Distance from Muslim powers
- Islam cut Ethiopia off from the Christian world
- Fascination with Judaism and Jerusalem
- Believed they were descended from King Solomon
- 12 linked underground churches were constructed in the 12th century attempting to create a new Jerusalem on Ethiopian soil
- 60% of modern Ethiopia maintains ties to this ancient Christian church



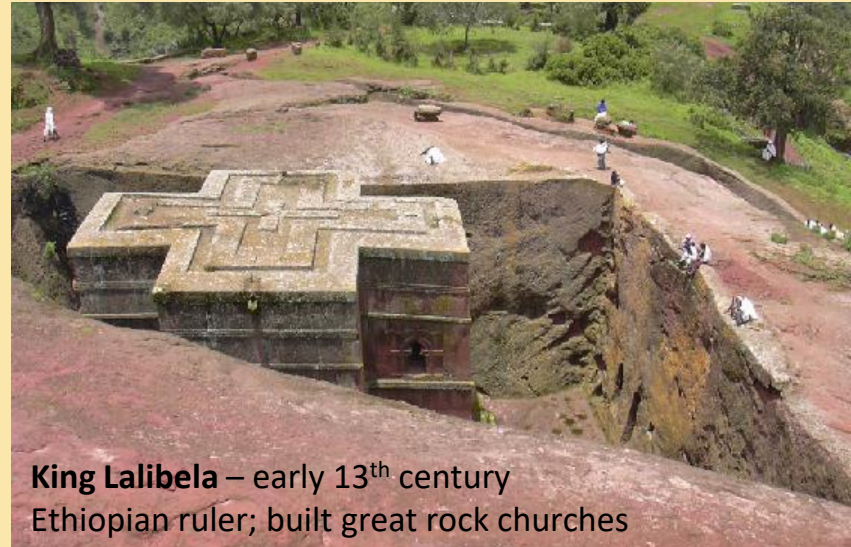


- **Sahel** – extensive grassland belt at the southern edge of the Sahara; an exchange region between N & S Africa
- **Coptic Christian** influence from Egypt to Nubia (Kush)
 - main Christian Church in Egypt - most Copts (kaapts) live in Egypt, around a million members outside Egypt; there are over 100 churches in the USA and a cathedral in the UK.
 - Church dates back to around 50 AD, when the Apostle Mark is said to have visited Egypt. Mark is regarded as the first Pope of Alexandria. This makes it one of the earliest Christian groups outside the Holy Land.
 - suffered persecution under the Roman Empire - intermittent persecutions after Egypt became a Muslim country.
- **Ethiopia** – A Christian kingdom in the highlands of E Africa



-Christian churches in the mountains of Ethiopia

- **Ethiopian** successors to Christian Axum formed their state during the 13th & 14th century.
- **Ethiopia** retained Christianity despite increasing pressure from Muslim neighbors.



King Lalibela – early 13th century Ethiopian ruler; built great rock churches

Rock-Hewn Churches of Lalibela (12-13th centuries)



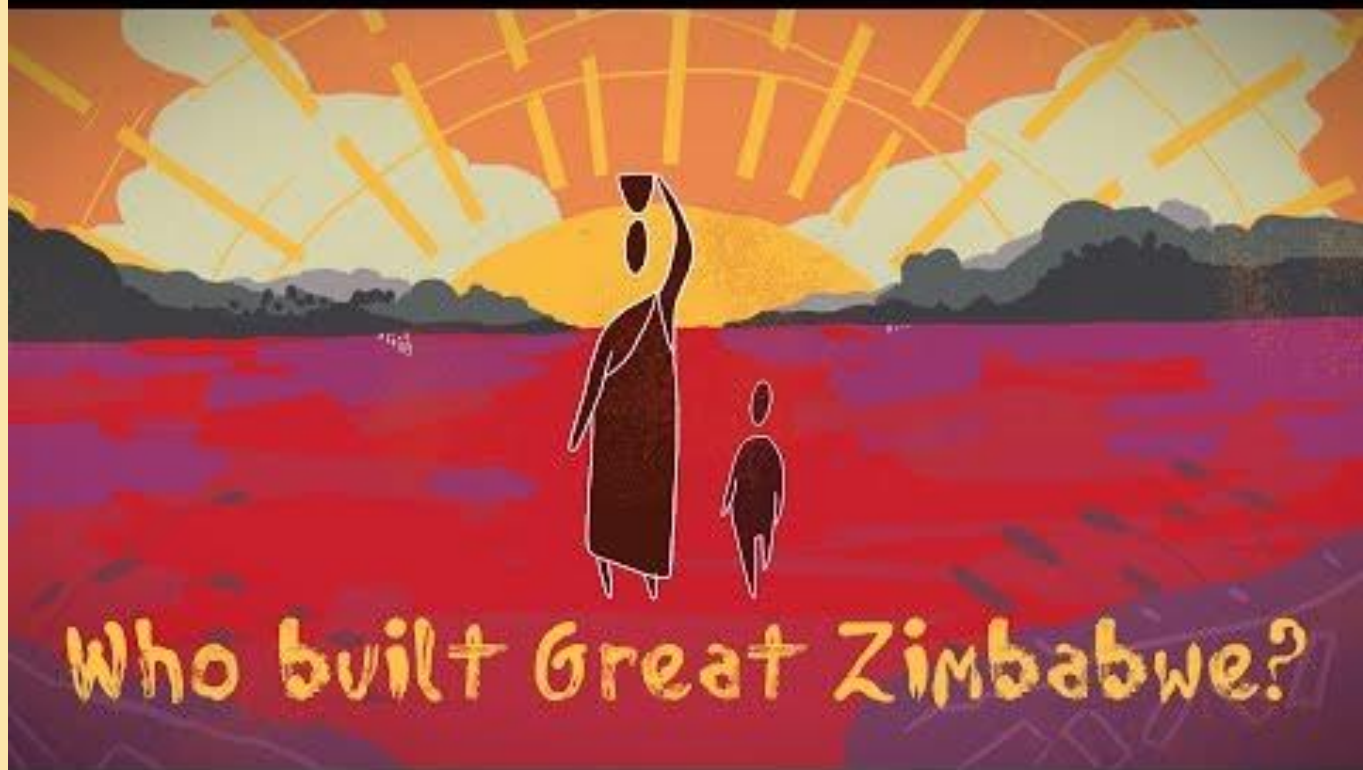




Great Zimbabwe







Great Zimbabwe (11th – 15th centuries)

- A medieval city in the south-eastern hills of Zimbabwe
- It was the capital of the Kingdom of Zimbabwe during the country's Late Iron Age.
- Construction on the monument began in the 11th century and continued until the 15th century. The edifices were erected by the ancestral Shona.
- The stone city spans an area of 7.22 square kilometres (1,780 acres) which, at its peak, could have housed up to 18,000 people.
- Great Zimbabwe is believed to have served as a royal palace for the local monarch. As such, it would have been used as the seat of political power.
- Among the edifice's most prominent features were its walls, some of which were over five metres high. They were constructed without mortar (dry stone).
- Eventually, the city was abandoned and fell into ruin.

East Africa



The map illustrates the trade network in East Africa. A table titled 'Trade Goods' lists raw materials and products made from them. The map shows the Nile River, the Sahara Desert, and the Arabian Sea. Key locations include Jiddah, Muscat, Dhofar, Aden, Aksum, Lalibela, Zeila, Mogadishu, Malindi, Mombasa, Kilwa, Zanzibar I., Sofala, and Zimbabwe. The Indian Ocean is to the east, and the Atlantic Ocean is to the west.

Trade Goods	
Raw Materials	Products Made
leopard skins	saddles
tortoiseshells	combs
gold from mines	coins, jewelry
ivory from elephants	chess pieces, sword hilts

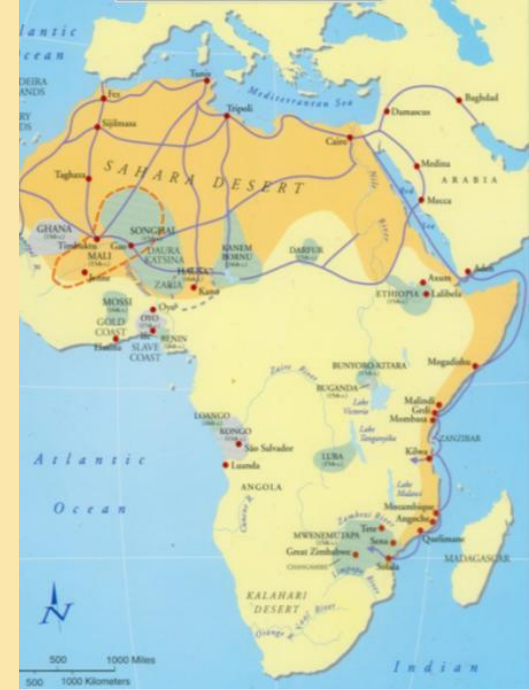
- Arab merchants introduced Islam to East African trade cities
- The mix of African & Arab cultures led to a new Swahili language
- Towns had mosques & were ruled by a Muslim sultan
- But many people kept their traditional religious beliefs



The map shows the continent of Africa with various trade routes and goods. Key locations include Jiddah, Muscat, Dhofar, Aden, Aksum, Lalibela, Zeila, Mogadishu, Malindi, Mombasa, Kilwa, Zanzibar I., Sofala, and Zimbabwe. The Indian Ocean is to the east, and the Atlantic Ocean is to the west. The map also shows the Sahara Desert, the Nile River, and the Arabian Sea.

Trade Goods	
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The map illustrates the Indian Ocean region, including Africa, Arabia, and Madagascar. A red line traces a trade route from the interior of Africa, passing through the Sahara, to the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, then around the Horn of Africa, and finally to the East African coast. Key locations marked include Egypt, Jiddah, Muscat, Dhofar, Aden, Zeila, Aksum, Lalibela, Mogadishu, Malindi, Mombasa, Zanzibar I., Kilwa, Sofala, and Zimbabwe. The map also shows the Nile R., Congo R., Limpopo R., and the Indian Ocean. A scale bar and a north arrow are included.



Indian Ocean Trade

- Began with small trading settlements around 800 A.D.
 - Declined in the 1500's when Portugal invaded and tried to run the trade for its own profit.
- Trade intensified between Africa and Asia, prosperous city-states flourished along the coast of E Africa.
 - City-states traded with inland kingdoms - Great Zimbabwe traded gold, ivory, and iron → sold to places like India, SE Asia, and China. (Africa's exports in the Indian Ocean Trade)
 - Could be sold at a profit → they were scarce in Asia.
- E African city-states were buying items from Asia.
 - Were willing to pay high prices for cotton, silk, and porcelain objects. (Africa's imports in the Indian Ocean Trade)
 - Expensive because items were not available in Africa.

Indian Ocean Trade

- E Africa coast → centers of trade due to gold obtained from the inland.
 - needed mainly for coins, also used for art, building ornamentation, and jewelry.
- Easy to reach from Asia by ship → favorable wind and ocean currents.
 - Ships docked at excellent ports → easy to unload/load cargo.
 - Tired sailors enjoyed lodging & entertainment offered in the ports.
- E Africa was a peaceful region, few conflicts that occurred were brief.
- Interracial marriages were common → distinct ethnic group = Swahili
- Swahili city-states steadily grew and prospered → major world economic power by the 1400's.
- City-states were famous thruout Africa/Asia - no European countries knew.
- Portuguese captain Vasco da Gama (1498) was surprised he sailed up the coast of E Africa.
 - Were welcomed by most of the cities
 - Neither his ships nor the European items they attempted to trade were of much interest in the E African city-states.

Swahili States

- The Swahili coast refers to a string of Islamic African ports tied to the trade across the Indian Ocean.
- The term “Swahili” is an Arabic term for “coasters” – and it refers to cities on the Eastern African coast such as: Mogadishu, Zanzibar, and Mombasa.
- The Swahili language is an example of cultural diffusion → Bantu speaking peoples adopting words from Arabic.
- These multinational trading towns were a mixture of Arabian, Persian, Indian, Chinese and African cultures and peoples.



- **East African trading ports** – Urbanized commercial centers mixing African and Arab cultures
- **The Swahili Coast of East Africa** – A series of trading ports, part of the Indian Ocean network, developed along the coast and islands between the Horn of Africa and Mozambique

The Coastal Trading Ports:

- **With the rise of Islam**, individuals from Oman and the Persian Gulf settled in coastal villages
- They **exported raw materials** in return for **Indian, Islamic, and Chinese luxuries**.
- All were tied together by coastal commerce and by an inland caravan trade.





Mixture of Cultures on the Swahili Coast:

- **Expansion of Islamic influence** in the Indian Ocean facilitated commerce/trading.
- A **dynamic culture** developed , using Swahili as its language, and incorporating African and Islamic practices.
- Family lineages passed through **both** maternal and paternal lines
- **There was not a significant dissemination of Islam into the interior of Africa.**



- Swahili ruling families of the trading cities were very rich.
 - Traded gold, ivory, iron, slaves, and exotic animals in exchange for silks and rugs from Persia, porcelain from China and spices from SE Asia.
- Ruling families and merchants tended to be Muslim and sponsored the construction of mosques and places of learning.
 - Majority of the people remained non-Muslim.
- Arrival of the Portuguese (early 1500's) → Swahili states fell into a decline - they never recovered.
 - Took immediate interest in the Swahili city-states → Sent more ships to the E Africa with 3 goals:
 - to take anything of value they could find,
 - to force the Swahili to pay taxes to Portuguese tax collectors
 - to gain control over the entire Indian Ocean trade
- Portuguese established trading posts & led attacks against the Swahili.
- Swahili never needed forts or huge armies → unprepared for the attacks.
- Portuguese captured ports, wrecked, looted, & burned them to the ground.
- Residents of the cities who were unable to escape were killed.
- Shiploads of priceless goods were sent to Portugal.
- Portuguese failed to take over and run the Indian Ocean trade.