

African Kingdoms

A Middle Ages
Investigation &
Comparison
Response Group
or Centers
Activity



Kingdom of Ghana

In West Africa, the Kingdom of Ghana formed around **200 A.D.** and quickly grew as a result of learning the skill of **smelting iron**. This skill allowed them to create strong **weapons** and to then expand their **territory**.

More importantly, they controlled the area's **trade routes**, bringing in wealth to the kingdom.



Wealth in Ghana



Ghana gained wealth due to their location between the **gold and salt mines** of Western Africa. This prime location allowed them to control the **trade routes**, exchanging their metals, gold, and salt for goods from other regions, and to charge great **fees** to the other groups who travelled through the region, such as the **Muslims and Moroccans**.

Leadership of Ghana

The word **ghana** means king, and the region was named for its powerful and wealthy leaders. They gained their **power** from the **wealth** they gained from the **trade** and the **taxes** they imposed on the people. This power and wealth was often flaunted by the kings, showing off their **status** to the people and those who travelled through.



Decline of Ghana

As the **Muslim groups** came into Ghana to trade, they also spread their religion of **Islam** to the people there. For a while, this strengthened Ghana, but eventually, groups of **converted Muslims** broke away from the kingdom to form their own **smaller states**.

Finally, around 1000 A.D. a Muslim group in North Africa took over Ghana's trade centers, **weakening** the empire and allowing it to fall as a stronger group entered.

Kingdom of Mali

Mali was originally a small state that broke away from the Kingdom of **Ghana**. It encompassed much of the region of Western Africa by the mid **1200s**, and defeated many rivals to **conquer** surrounding regions, making themselves stronger and larger.



Wealth in Mali



During the reign of **Mali**, wealth was accumulated through the development of **agriculture**, the re-development of **the Trans-Saharan trade routes**, and by protecting the **travellers** that came along the routes. The Palace at **Timbuktu** became a great showplace for Mali as travelers came into the region to see its wealth.

Leadership of Mali

Mali became a great kingdom due to its great and powerful leaders.

Sundiata Keita build up a great army and established **generals** to maintain and protect their own regions of the kingdom.

Mansa Musa opened up new trade routes, encouraged and protected visiting **caravans**, and maintained economic gains by keeping the **standing army**. He also had built the capital of **Timbuktu**, encouraged **learning and art**, and invited others into the kingdom to share their knowledge.



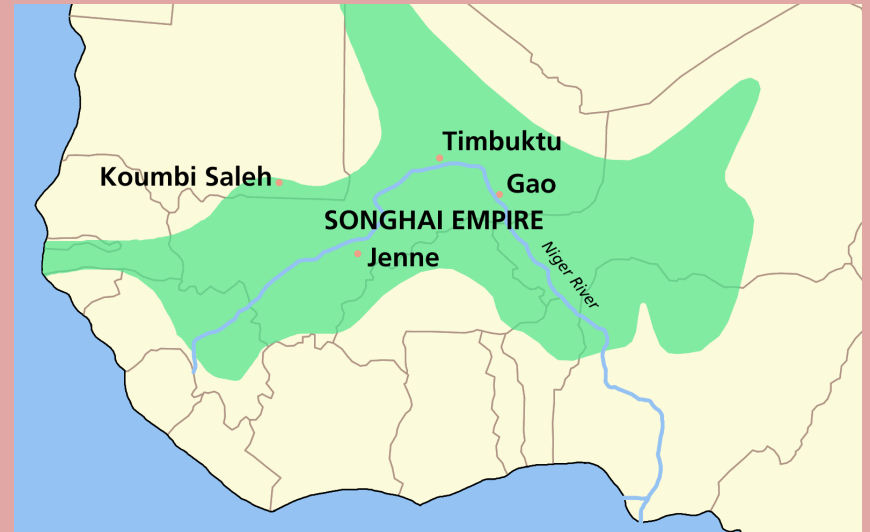
Decline of Mali

Mali continued to strengthen and grow into the 1300s. After a visit by the traveller, **Ibn Buttata**, Timbuktu was known as a desired destination.

In the mid-1300s, Mali became **under attack** in three different directions: Berbers from the North, rain forest warriors from the South, and people from **Songhai rebelled** against the kingdom. **By 1500**, the once vast and wealthy kingdom no longer existed as one unified group.

Kingdom of Songhai

The Kingdom of Songhai developed after its **rebellion** from the Mali Kingdom. **By 1500**, it had become the largest of the Western African kingdoms, spanning across the **Sahara**. Development in **art, education, and trade** made the kingdom vast and great.



Wealth in Songhai



Wealth in Songhai came in many forms. With the control of the **trade routes**, the sales of **salt, gold, agriculture, and metals** made the kingdom rich. In addition to material wealth, the kingdom saw great development in **culture** with advancements in **education, art, medicine**, and in the growth of **Islam**.

Leadership of Songhai

Sunni Ali was responsible for conquering the city of **Timbuktu** from the **Mali** kingdom, and continued many of the policies of Mali in his rule. He also established the religion of **Islam** throughout his kingdom.

Askia Muhammad brought the kingdom to its height. He invited in **teachers, doctors, poets, and religious leaders** from around the region to help bring cultural development to the kingdom. He also divided the kingdom to establish better ways to **collect taxes, protect the kingdom, and inspect and value the trade**. He ruled with attention to **Islamic law**, and ordered harsh punishments for those who violated the Islamic law.



Decline of Songhai

The kingdom of **Songhai** only lasted around **100 years** due to **internal problems** and **conflict** after the **death of Askia Muhammad**. His sons fought for control of the kingdom, eventually **weakening** it to the point that **Moroccan soldiers** were able to easily invade the region with their **guns and canons**. **By 1600**, the kingdom was gone.

East African Kingdoms

Most of the stronger kingdoms in **East Africa** began as coastal city-states. As early as **500 B.C.**, some of the regions were trading with sailors from **India, Arabia, and Southwest Asia.**

Kilwa, a port city, had a monopoly over their area, while **Malindi and Mombasa** were important centers in the north. **Zanzibar**, an island just off the coast, served as a significant stopping point for many sailors.



Wealth in East Africa



As **coastal port cities**, many of the East African city-states gained their wealth by serving as the **middle man** in trade between the inner African kingdoms and other Eastern regions. By **taxing** the goods that came through, they had great **profits** and were able to have access to **ivory, gold, iron, cotton, silk, and more.**

Leadership of East Africa

East African leaders are not well known for their rule, but are better known for their leadership as **merchants** and in building accepting **cultures** where **trade** could flourish. Most were **Arab governors**, but some were **African chieftains**. They all took advantage of their wealth and built magnificent **mosques**, **palaces**, and more.



Decline of East African Kingdoms

While many of the East African Kingdoms **continued to grow and prosper** through the Middle Ages, a few even growing into **modern day port cities**, some fell into **decline** as the Europeans took over the **trade** throughout the region and the emphasis shifted to other areas.

Central & Southern African Kingdoms

In the **Central and Southern** parts of Africa, kingdoms grew and developed based on their available **natural resources**.

From **900 A.D.**, many kingdoms arose to **mine** those resources, and to **trade** with those passing through to reach the coastal kingdoms.

Zimbabwe established itself as a major trading kingdom inland, while Southern kingdoms were often ruled by **tribal groups** looking to maintain their **traditions**.



Wealth in Central & Southern Africa



Natural resources that could be **mined** provided great wealth for the inner kingdoms of Africa, as did the **trade** from the **travelling merchants** from the coastal regions. Rich deposits of **copper** and **gold** supported the kingdoms, and traders brought items like ivory, Arab carpets, Chinese porcelain and silk, and more.

Cattle herding also provided the Central African groups with **food stability**, allowing them to grow and prosper.

The **Southern** regions did see great trade opportunities, but the **conflict** and chaos among the tribal groups often interfered with their profits.

Leadership of Central & Southern Africa

Zimbabwe kings and chiefs are not well known by name, but they are responsible for **growth and development** of the region. They ordered the **mining of the valuable resources, established trade agreements** with travelling merchants, and called for the **building of the Great Zimbabwe**, a political and religious center for the kingdom.

In **Southern Africa**, the **tribal chiefs** led their kingdoms, and fought to maintain their **traditions**, but often **waged wars** against other kingdoms, limiting their stability and changes for growth through trade.



Decline of Central & Southern African Kingdoms

Through the **1500s**, the **Central African** region remained relatively stable, but **internal division** and competition eventually led to its **division** and **disrupted trade**. An eventual **civil war** led to the territory being split into two separate kingdoms, but they never saw the same success as had the Great Zimbabwe.

The **Southern regions** fought hard to **maintain** their control of the region as the Europeans started coming into the area for control. Eventually, the weak tribal kingdoms **fell** to the more powerful and better weaponed **Europeans** in the early **1800s**.