

WEST AFRICAN EMPIRES: GHANA, MALI, SONGHAI

Standard(s): 6-4.1 Compare the major contributions of the African civilizations of Ghana, Mali, Songhai, including the impact of Islam on the cultures of these kingdoms.



I. GEOGRAPHY OF WEST AFRICA

A. Ecological Zones - 5 Zones - The following are in order from North to South on the continent of Africa.

1. **Mediterranean**- This zone was the highest north in Africa next to the Mediterranean Sea

2. **Sahel** - (means "shore" in Arabic) - Strip of land that provides little rainfall that divides the desert from wetter areas. There is one on either side of the desert.

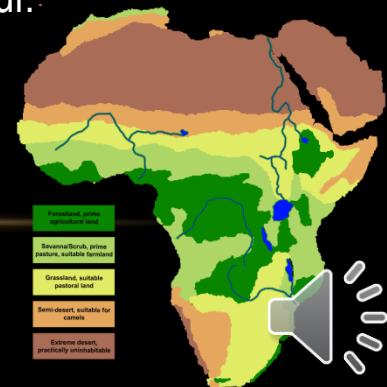
3. **Desert** - (The Sahara Desert) - Rain is very rare here.

4. **Savannah** - Open grasslands with scattered trees.

5. **Tropical Rain Forest** - Near the Equator with heavy rain, and moist, densely wooded areas.

B. **Niger River** - Source of water, food, and transportation. Fish was plentiful.

1. The Niger River was the lifeline of West Africa.



II. WEST AFRICAN RESOURCES BY ZONE

A. Mediterranean Zone - provided cloth, spices, and weapons for trade.

B. Desert Zone - Provided rock salt. It is a necessary mineral for human health. It was traded south into the Savanna and Tropical Rain forest Zones.

C. Savanna Zone - Grain from the delta area of the Niger River, cattle, donkeys, and cotton. Delta - triangle shaped area of land made from silt deposited by a river.

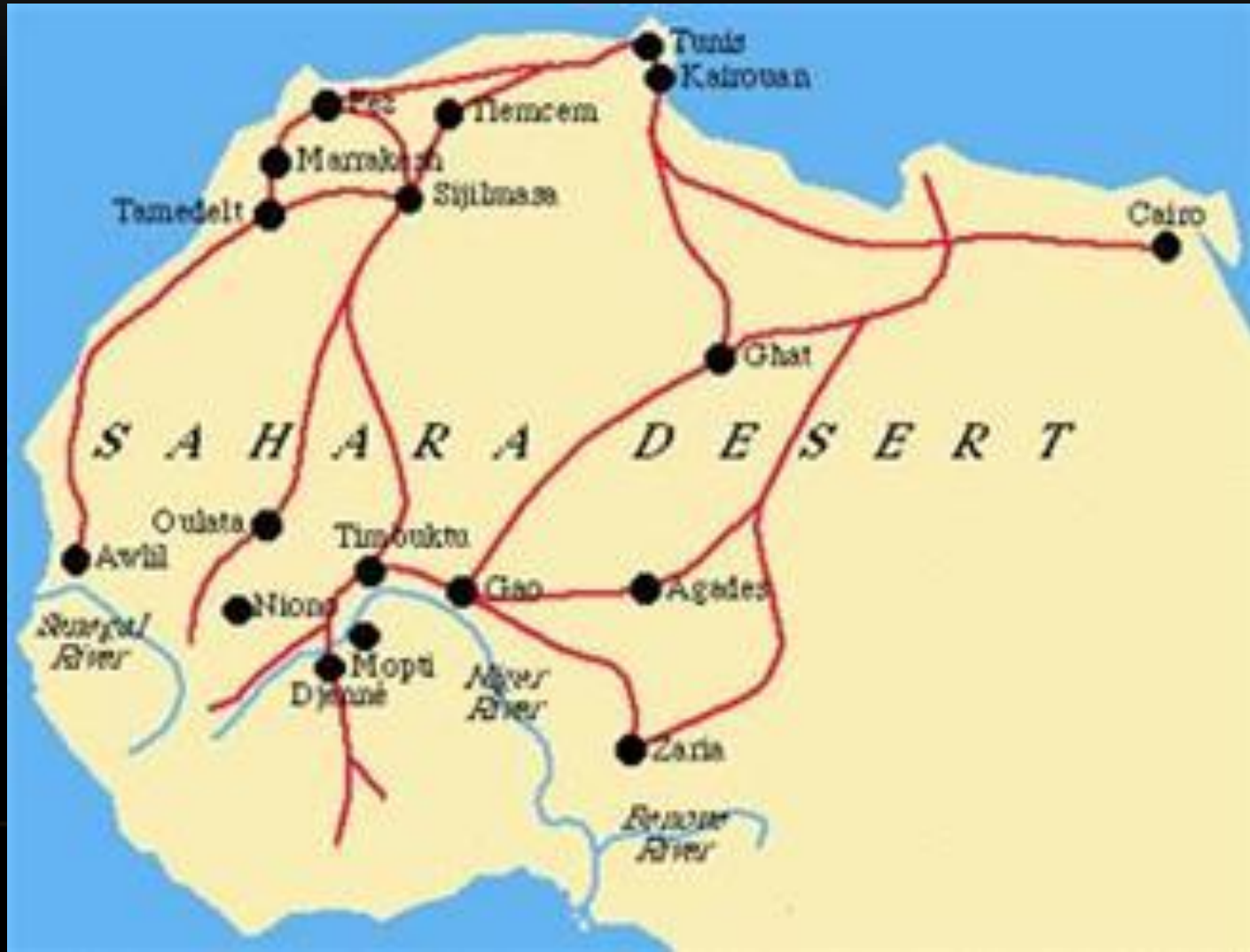
1. Gold was located in the Savanna in the Bambuk-Bure gold fields.

D. Rain forest Zone - Kola nuts, a high in caffeine nut.

1. Gold was also located in the rain forest in the Akan gold fields.



TRANS-SAHARAN TRADE



III. TRANS-SAHARAN TRADE

A. **trans-Saharan Trade** - trade route across the Sahara desert. Major trade route that traded for gold and salt, and spread culture including the religion of Islam.

B. **Gold and Salt** were the two most valuable resources and **commodities**.

1. Since salt is necessary for human health, salt was traded on an equal basis as gold.

2. **commodity** - a raw material or primary agricultural product that can be bought and sold, examples - gold and salt.

C. Trading of goods went across all five zones was long distance and used a variety of methods.

1. Camels were used in the desert zone.

2. Pack animals like donkeys and cattle were used in the wet areas of the Savanna.

3. In the rain forest zone, the **tsetse fly** was deadly for pack animals so goods were carried by boat or human carriers.



WEST AFRICAN NATIONS - GHANA

A. Began in the 1340's CE till 1500's CE

B. Kumbi-Saleh was Ghana's capital and was an important city along the trans-Saharan Trade.

C. Salt was an important trading commodity.

D. Trade was very important to it being a powerful empire. Ghana taxed the trading of goods to make money.

E. Became wealthy of the trans-Saharan trade of gold and salt.

1. trans-Saharan Trade - trade route across the Sahara desert. Major trade route that traded for gold and salt, and spread culture including the religion of Islam.

2. salt - a mineral necessary for human health.

3. For over 500 years, West Africa supplied most of the world's gold.

F. Ghana was defeated by Muslim traders and became an Islamic empire.



WEST AFRICAN NATIONS - MALI



A. Began in the 1200's CE

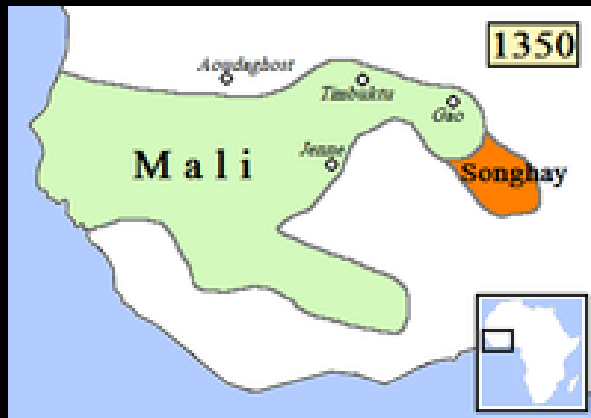
B. **Mansa Musa** - Muslim leader of Mali. Made a Hajj to Mecca and supported education in Mali.

C. Trade of **gold** and **salt** was very important to it being a powerful empire.

D. Was an Islamic empire.

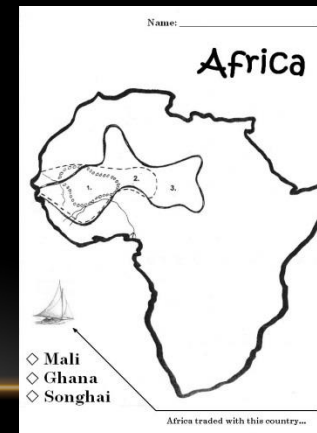
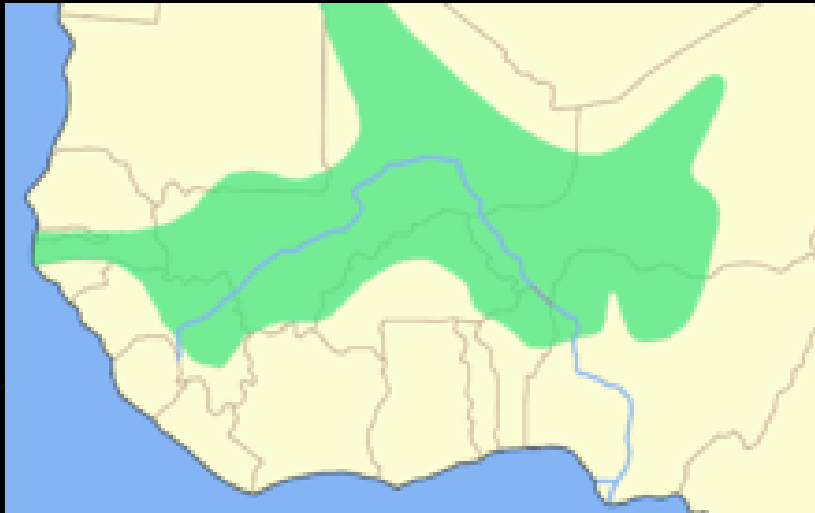
E. **Timbuktu** became an important trading center for trans-Saharan Trade and a leading center of Islamic education.

1. The religion of Islam influenced a lot of the culture including government, education, and architecture.



WEST AFRICAN EMPIRES - SONGHAI

- A. By the 1500's was the most powerful empire.
- B. Gao was the capital and important in trade and was an important city along the trans-Saharan Trade.
- C. Trade of gold and salt was very important to it being a powerful empire.
- D. Was an Islamic empire.
- E. The nation of Morocco eventually conquered Songhai using more advance weapons including cannons and guns.



IV. IMPACT OF ISLAM ON THESE EMPIRES

- A. Islam influenced government, education, architecture, of these three empires.
- B. Mansa Musa and other Islamic leaders spread Islam thorough trade.
- C. Towns along the trade routes is where merchants of different cultures traded ideas, religions, and goods.
- D. Muslim traders called berbers spread Islam north and south along the trade routes.



V. DECLINE OF THE TRANS-SAHARAN TRADE.

A. Once these three empires declined so did the gold and salt trade.

B. The Atlantic Slave trade eventually took over.

