

African Kingdoms and Empires

The **Kingdom of Ghana** is generally given the dates 800 to 1200 CE by historians.

Some have called the Kingdom of Ghana the "land of gold," an excellent description since it was abounding in gold. The gold trade was largely responsible for the development of Ghana into a powerful, centralized kingdom. The peoples of West Africa had independently developed their own gold mining techniques and began trading with people of other regions of Africa and later Europe as well. At the time of the Kingdom of Ghana, gold was traded for salt that came down from the Sahara desert.

The dates that historians have designated for the **Kingdom of Mali** are from the 1200 and 1400 CE.

The Kingdom of Mali came to control the gold trade that the Kingdom of Ghana had controlled before it, but it also expanded its trading in many ways. The Kingdom of Mali controlled the salt trade in the north and many caravan trade routes. Additionally, it traded extensively with Egypt and the copper mine areas to the east.

The dates for the **Kingdom of Songhay** are between 1350 and 1600 CE.

The Songhay was one of the largest African kingdoms in history. The first emperor of the Songhay was Sonni Ali, who was a Muslim. He was an effective military leader and conquered great amounts of territory. As he effectively controlled the trade networks of Northern Africa, Sonni Ali brought great wealth to the Songhay Empire, which at its height would surpass the wealth of Mali. The Songhay traded gold, but also developed many skilled metalworkers, farmers, and craftsmen to create goods and religious artifacts to be sold in other lands.

1. Quickly mark down the Kingdoms of Ghana, Mali, and Songhay on your map.
2. Outline the African Trade routes.
3. Provide a one sentence summary of each kingdom on your worksheet.
4. Based on the reading, summarize the most important factor to the growth of these African Kingdoms. What would you expect to be the reasons that these kingdoms would have been conquered by outside forces?

