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 though 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.

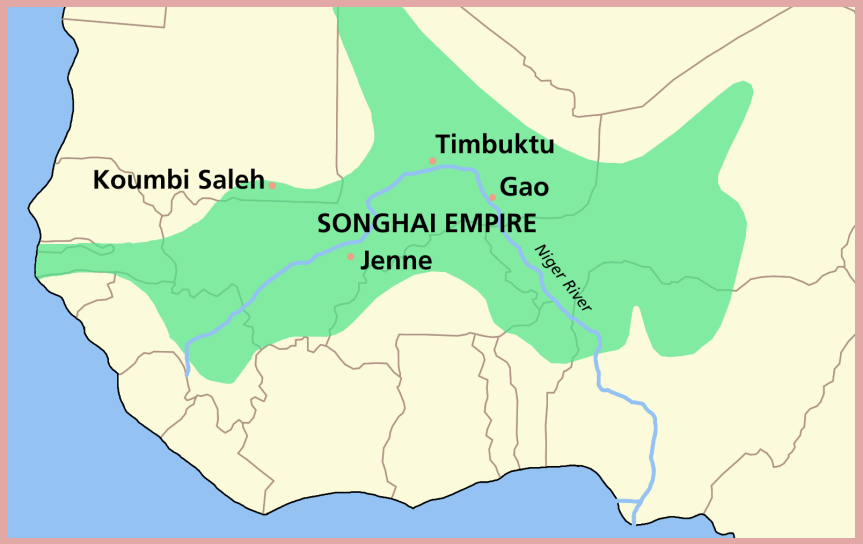
Decline of Mali

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 solders** 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.

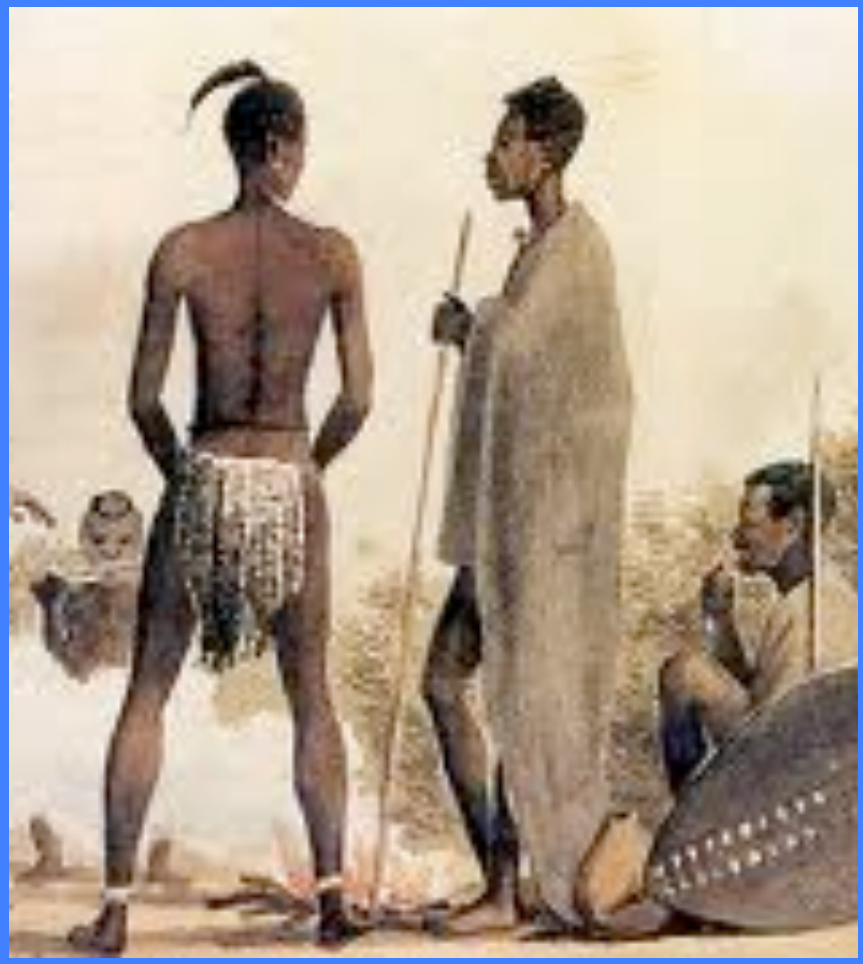
Wealth in East Africa

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 let 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**.

African Kingdoms

Origination & Location	Wealth	Leadership	Decline
Ghana			
Mali			

Origination & Location	Wealth	Leadership	Decline
Songhai			
Eastern Africa			
Central & South Africa			

Comparison Questions

1. Which of the kingdoms are most alike? What makes them similar?

2. Which of the kingdoms are most different? Why are they different?

3. What commonalities are found in all of the African kingdoms reviewed?

4. How are they each similar in
    1. Origination?
    2. Wealth?
    3. Leadership?

Comparison Questions

1. Which kingdom is the easiest to understand? Why do you think this is so?

2. Which kingdom's the most difficult to understand? Why?

3. How did the kingdoms internal problems impact their declines?

4. How did security play a role in each kingdom?

5. How do the kingdom’s practices help people live better lives?

6. Are these kingdoms important in world history? Why or why not?