

LESSON 2

500

1000

1500

about 700
Kingdom
of Ghana
thrives

1324
Mansa Musa,
King of Mali,
goes to Mecca

Early 1500s
Kingdom of
Songhai reaches
its peak



Africa's Trading Empires

PREVIEW

Focus on the Main Idea
Beginning more than one thousand years ago, rich trading kingdoms developed in West Africa.

PLACES

Sahara
Ghana
Timbuktu
Mali
Mecca
Songhai

PEOPLE

Mansa Musa

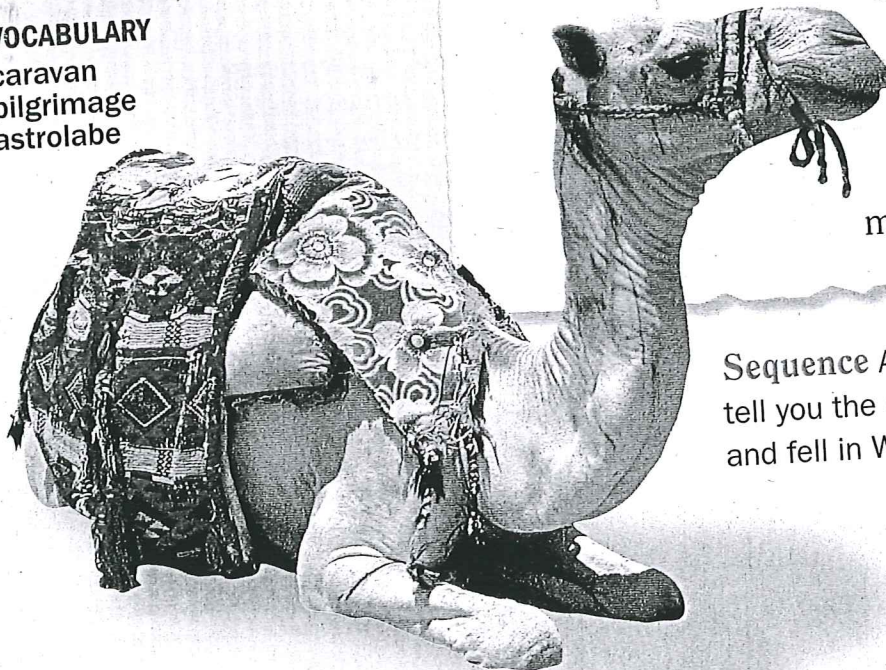
VOCABULARY

caravan
pilgrimage
astrolabe

You Are There

For three long months, you have been on your way. For three long months, you have been sitting on a camel, swaying back and forth. Often it is a struggle just to stay on the camel's back. He's a mean-tempered beast, likely to bite and spit.

You are traveling across the huge Sahara. It is hot during the day and cold at night. The Sahara is like a great sea of sand. But instead of waves, you cross endlessly shifting sand dunes. No wonder they call the camel "the ship of the desert." It is the only kind of transportation that can carry you across the endless miles of sand.



Sequence As you read, look for clues that tell you the sequence of kingdoms that rose and fell in West Africa.

Ghana, Kingdom of Gold

You have just read the story of a caravan crossing Africa's huge Sahara desert. A caravan is a group of traders traveling together. For centuries, caravans on camelback traveled the Sahara, bringing goods to and from West Africa. This region became home to several powerful trading kingdoms.


The earliest kingdom, which was named Ghana (GAH nah), thrived around 700. Visitors called Ghana a "land of gold." Ghana received this name because its land was rich in the precious mineral. But Ghana lacked an important resource—salt.

Trading routes developed, bringing salt into Ghana in exchange for its plentiful gold. Arab traders from North Africa brought salt from the Sahara to cities on the southern edge of the desert, like Timbuktu. Trace the routes of

these traders on the map. In Timbuktu, Arab traders bargained to get the best price for their salt in gold. Just as China's silk had become worth its weight in gold, so too did salt.

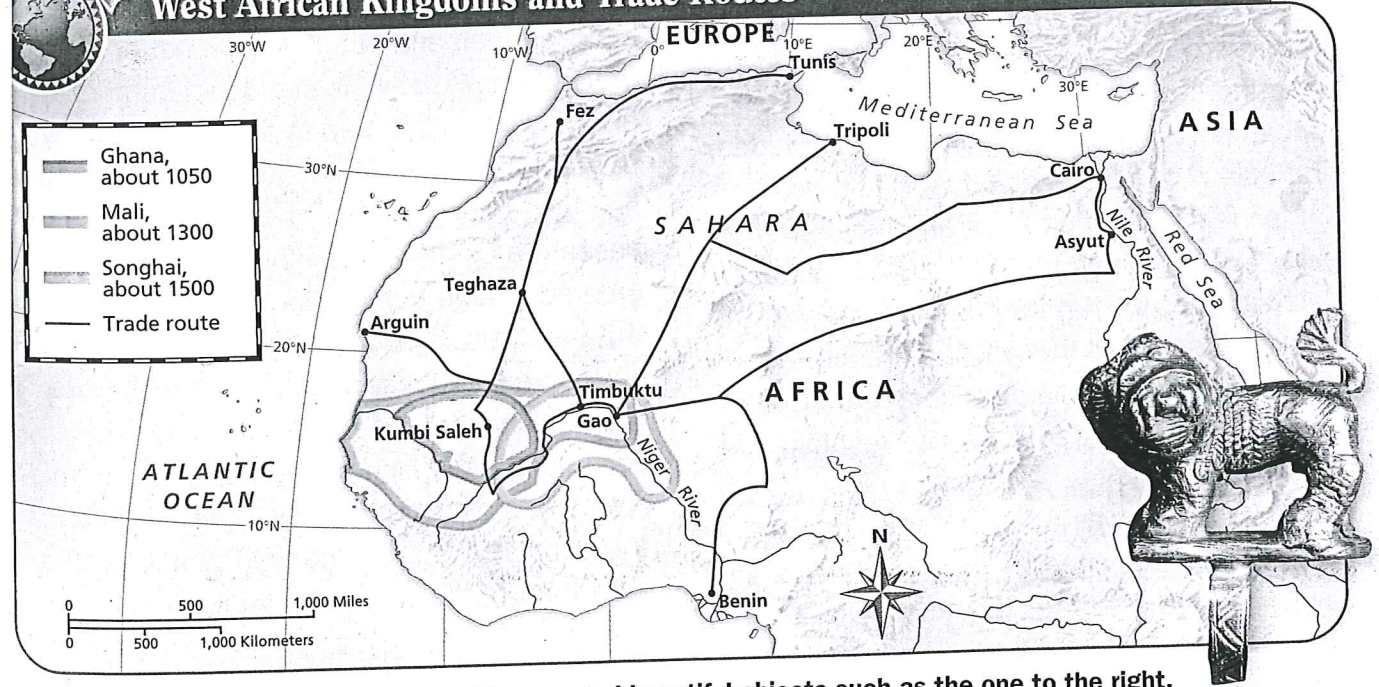
The Arab traders also brought their religion, Islam, with them to West Africa. The followers of Islam are known as Muslims. Islam began to spread throughout the region. The kings of Ghana hired Muslims as officials, to help them rule.

Ghana's rulers grew rich from trade. Its kings charged taxes on all imports and exports. The kingdom of Ghana weakened in the 1100s. But a new empire was emerging in the same area. It would become even larger and richer than Ghana.

REVIEW Explain why Ghana was known as a "land of gold."  Summarize

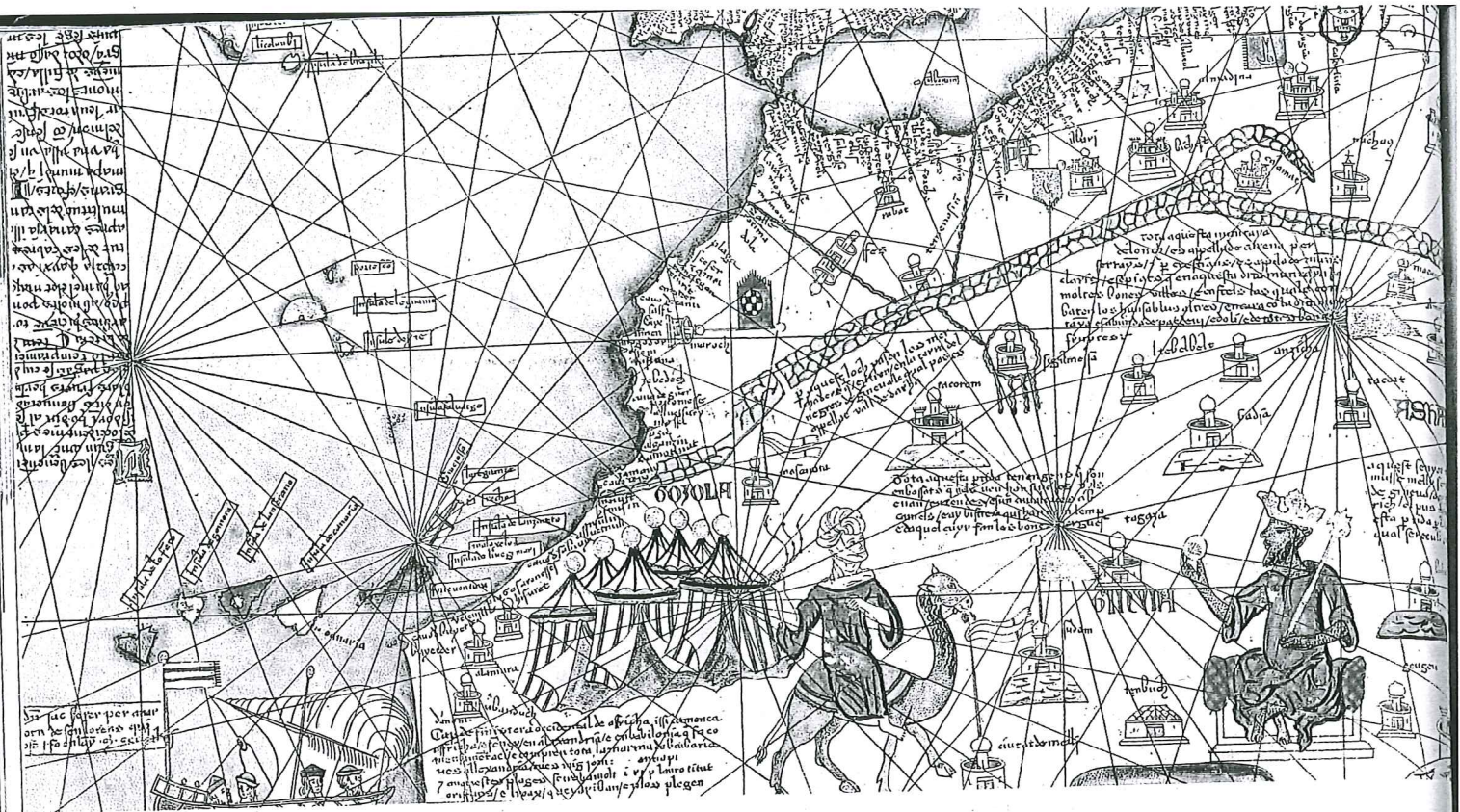


West African Kingdoms and Trade Routes



► The gold-rich cultures of West Africa created beautiful objects such as the one to the right.

MAP SKILL Region What desert did the trade routes cross to reach the cities of West Africa?



► The Catalan Atlas, created in the 1300s by Abraham Cresques of Spain, shows Mansa Musa wearing a crown.

Mali and Songhai

The kingdom of Mali controlled more land than Ghana. Like Ghana, Mali owed its wealth to trade. Caravans continued their trade of gold and salt. In addition, European ships from Spain, Portugal, and Italy brought cloth, horses, and other goods to North African ports. Mali traded gold, animal hides, and kola nuts for such goods.

Mali reached its peak as an empire in the early 1300s, during the rule of **Mansa Musa**. This king was known for his immense wealth. A visitor described the king's entrance. He was carried under a large umbrella that was "made of silk, (topped) by a bird fashioned in gold about the size of a falcon."

Mansa Musa was a Muslim who in 1324 went on a pilgrimage (PIL gruh mij). A **pilgrimage** is a journey taken for religious reasons. Mansa Musa's pilgrimage took him to **Mecca**, a city in the Arabian peninsula that is holy to Muslims. With him came

thousands of people. Among them were about 500 slaves, each carrying a bar of gold weighing four pounds. The gold was used along the way to pay for traveling expenses.

The king's journey strengthened trade ties between Mali and other Muslim nations. He brought back many Muslim scholars and artists who contributed to life in Mali. Many of them settled in Timbuktu. This city, which had long been a center of trade, now also became a center of learning. Mansa Musa ordered a large building for study and worship, the Great Mosque, to be built in Timbuktu.

Soon after Mansa Musa's rule, another trading kingdom rose in West Africa. This was **Songhai**, which flourished from the middle 1300s through the 1500s. At its peak in the early 1500s, Songhai controlled more land than both Ghana and Mali.

REVIEW Name three powerful trading kingdoms of West Africa and the sequence in which they ruled. Sequence

Connecting Different Parts of the World

In this chapter you have been reading how people in different parts of the world reached out to one another. Zheng He's journeys showed that the Chinese were learning routes to India and Africa. Mansa Musa's pilgrimage showed how people from West Africa and the Arabian peninsula traveled between their two regions. The map on the previous page, created by a European in the 1300s, shows that the people of Europe were learning about the people and geography of Africa and Asia.

European map makers built on the knowledge of many travelers and geographers around the world. One tool in particular that helped them was developed by Arabs. It was the **astrolabe** (AS troh lab), an instrument that helped sailors use the sun and stars to find their location in latitude—their distance

from the equator. With the astrolabe and other new tools and ideas, different parts of the world were becoming more closely connected.



► Astrolabe

REVIEW Give details that show how connections between different parts of the world were expanding.

Main Idea and Details

Summarize the Lesson

About 700 The kingdom of Ghana thrived in West Africa.

1324 Mansa Musa, king of Mali, brought thousands of people on a pilgrimage to Mecca.

Early 1500s The kingdom of Songhai reached its peak.

LESSON 2 REVIEW

Check Facts and Main Ideas

1. **Sequence** On a separate sheet of paper, fill in the missing events in this sequence chart showing the three major kingdoms of West Africa.

The kingdom of Ghana developed in West Africa



2. Why did caravans cross the Sahara desert?
3. Why did Timbuktu develop into a center of Muslim learning?
4. What major resource did West African kingdoms control? Which important resource did they lack?
5. **Critical Thinking: Evaluate** Why did Mansa Musa travel with so many people and so much gold?

Link to



Geography

Make an Illustrated Map Look at the map on page 108 showing Mansa Musa of Mali. Create your own illustrated map on a subject you have read about in this chapter. Include symbols and a key.