Many trade routes crossed the savanna through the region farmed by the **Soninke** people.

The Soninke called their leader **Ghana**, or war chief.

By the 700s, Ghana was a kingdom, and its rulers were growing rich by taxing the goods that traders carried through their territory.

The two most important trade items were **gold** and **salt**.
- Gold came from a forest region between the Niger and Senegal Rivers.
- Salt came from the Sahara Desert.

By 800, Ghana had become an empire.

The king of Ghana:
- Controlled trade by storing large amounts of gold and salt that only he had the power over.
- Commanded a large army
- Demanded taxes and gifts from chiefs of surrounding lands, and would allow them to live in peace if payments were made,
- And acted as a religious leader and the chief judge
Ghana developed in West Africa between the Niger and the Gambia Rivers. It was an important kingdom there from about AD 300 to about 1100. The rivers helped Ghana to grow rich because they were used to transport goods and develop trade. Ghana also collected taxes from traders who passed through the kingdom. The people called their nation Wagadu; we know it as Ghana --that was the word for war chief.

• The kingdom of Ghana probably began when several clans of the Soninke people of west Africa came together under the leadership of a great king named Dinga Cisse.

• Ghana had few natural resources except salt and gold.
• They were also very good at making things from iron.
  • Ghanaian warriors used iron tipped spears to subdue their neighbors, who fought with weapons made of stone, bone, and wood.

http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/center/mm/eng/mm_rs_01.htm
"The King . . .(wears). . . necklaces round his neck and bracelets on his forearms and he puts on a high cap decorated with gold and wrapped in a turban of fine cotton. He (meets people) in a domed pavilion around which stand ten horses covered with gold-embroidered materials...and on his right, are the sons of the (lesser) kings of his country, wearing splendid garments and their hair plaited with gold.

At the door of the pavilion are dogs of excellent pedigree. Round their necks they wear collars of gold and silver, studded with a number of balls of the same metals."

This is a primary source that describes the court of one king of Ghana.

10th century geographer Al-Bakri, quoted in Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West African History.
Ghana became a rich and powerful nation, especially when the camel began to be used as a source of transport.

Ghana relied on trade and their trade was made faster and better with the use of the camel.
After 700 AD, the religion of Islam began to spread over northern Africa.

Followers of this religion are called Muslims. Muslim warriors came into Ghana and fought with the non-Islamic people there.

Local warriors then decided to break away from the power of Ghana and form their own local kingdoms.

This ended many of the trade networks and eventually weakened the civilization of Ancient Ghana.
Mali

http://www.btsadventures.com/img/mosque.jpg
• By 1235 the kingdom of **Mali** had emerged.
• Its founders were **Mande-speaking people**, who lived south of Ghana.
• Mali’s wealth was also built on **gold**.
A powerful king named Sundiata ruled Mali from around 1230-1255 AD. He became known as a mansa, or emperor.

He led the people in conquering and expanding his kingdom to be as great as Ghana had been.

Mali had 7 rulers in the 50 years between Sundiata and Mansa Musa.

Perhaps the greatest king of Mali was Mansa Musa (1312-1337). He developed the gold and salt trade of Mali and his kingdom became very powerful and rich.

Mansu Musa: Lord of the Negroes of Guinea. (Photo courtesy of History of Africa)
• Mansa Musa was a Muslim; he built many beautiful mosques, or Islamic temples in western Africa as well as attending public prayers, and supporting holy men.
• In 1324 Mansa Musa made a **hajj**, or pilgrimage (a journey to a holy place) to Mecca, which is a holy city in Arabia.

• He traveled with 60,000 servants and followers and 80 camels carrying more than 4,000 pounds of gold to be distributed among the poor. Of the 12,000 servants 500 carried a staff of pure gold. This showed his power and wealth to the other people he visited.

• After returning he ordered mosques to be built in the major cities of **Timbuktu** and **Gao**.

http://bseleck.bei.t-online.de/timbuktu/img_tim/mansamusag.gif
• When Mansa Musa died there were no kings as powerful as he was to follow.
• The great kingdom of Mali weakened.
• Eventually a group of people known as Berbers came into the area and other people came up from the south to claim territory that was once part of the kingdom.
• Although Mali fell, another advanced African kingdom took its place, the kingdom of Songhai.

The Berbers still live in North Africa. This picture, taken in 1893, shows a Berber group.

http://www.uchicago.edu/docs/mp-site/plainscape/graphics/berbers.jpg
Songhai

http://www.exzooberance.com
• As Mali declined in the 1400s, people under its control began to break away.
• Among these were the **Songhai** people to the east.
• They built up an army, extended their territory to the Niger River, and gained control of important trade routes.
• The Songhai had two very important leaders, **Sunni Ali** and **Askia Muhammad**.
The picture above is one artist’s idea of what the great Songhai leader, Sunni Ali might have looked like.

• **Sunni Ali** saw that the kingdom of Mali was weakening and he led his soldiers to conquer the area. He began the kingdom of Songhai. He also set up a complex government to rule all the lands he had conquered.

http://www.abcorpaffairs.com/gallery/
• Sunni Ali died in 1492.
• His son took over the rule of Songhai but he did not accept Islam as a religion.
• One of Sunni Ali's generals, named Askia Muhammad, overthrew the new king and made himself king of Songhai.
• He was a follower of Islam and continued with Islam as the religion of his kingdom.

This is a photo of a mosque, or place of worship for Muslims, in western Africa. Many mosques were built of local materials.

http://www.thewoz.ca/ghana/_larabanga1.jpg
• Songhai remained a rich and strong kingdom under Askia Muhammad’s rule.
• It had a complex government centered in the city of Gao, and great centers of learning.
• In the late 1500s, Morocco invaded Songhai to take its rich trade routes.
• Moroccans had a new weapon, the gun, and the army of Songhai did not. This led to the fall of Songhai.