

Later Empires

What You Will Learn...

Main Ideas

1. The empire of Mali reached its height under the ruler Mansa Musa, but the empire fell to invaders in the 1400s.
2. The Songhai built a new Islamic empire in West Africa, conquering many of the lands that were once part of Mali.
3. Great Zimbabwe was a powerful state that developed in southern Africa.

The Big Idea

Between 1000 and 1500, three great kingdoms—Mali, Songhai, and Great Zimbabwe—developed in Africa.

Key People

Sundiata, p. 390

Mansa Musa, p. 391

Sunni Ali, p. 392

Askia the Great, p. 393



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TAKING NOTES

Use the graphic organizer online to take notes about life in the cultures that developed in West Africa—Mali and Songhai—and the one that developed in southern Africa—Great Zimbabwe.

If YOU were there...

You are a servant of the great Mansa Musa, ruler of Mali. You've been chosen as one of the servants who will travel with him on a pilgrimage to Mecca. The king has given you all fine new clothes of silk for the trip. He will carry much gold with him. You've never left your home before. But now you will see the great city of Cairo, Egypt, and many other new places.

How do you feel about going on this journey?

BUILDING BACKGROUND Mansa Musa was one of Africa's greatest rulers, and his empire, Mali, was one of the largest in African history. Rising from the ruins of Ghana, Mali took over the trade routes of West Africa and grew into a powerful state.

Mali

Like Ghana, Mali (MAH-lee) lay along the upper Niger River. This area's fertile soil helped Mali grow. Mali's location on the Niger also allowed its people to control trade on the river. As a result, the empire grew rich and powerful. According to legend, Mali's rise to power began under a ruler named **Sundiata** (soohn-JAHT-ah).

Sundiata Makes Mali an Empire

When Sundiata was a boy, a harsh ruler conquered Mali. But as an adult, Sundiata built up an army and won back his country's independence. He then conquered nearby kingdoms, including Ghana, in the 1230s.

After Sundiata conquered Ghana, he took over the salt and gold trades. He also worked to improve agriculture in Mali. Sundiata had new farmlands cleared for beans, onions, rice, and other crops. Sundiata even introduced a new crop—cotton. From the cotton fibers people made clothing that was comfortable in the warm climate. They also sold cotton to other people.

To keep order in his prosperous kingdom, Sundiata took power away from local leaders. Each of these local leaders had the title *mansa* (MAHN-sah), a title Sundiata now took

Mali and Songhai



ATLANTIC OCEAN

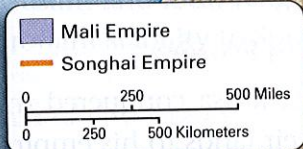


Fez

Mediterranean Sea

Tripoli

SAHARA



Senegal River

Walata

Timbuktu

Gao

Djenné

Niger River

Lake Chad

Volta River

Benin

Gulf of Guinea



Clay sculpture of a horse and rider from Mali

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ANIMATED HISTORY

West African Trading Empires, 800s-1500s

GEOGRAPHY SKILLS

INTERPRETING MAPS

- 1. Location** On what river are Timbuktu and Gao located?
- 2. Place** The Senegal River was located within which empire?

for himself. *Mansas* had both political and religious roles in society. By taking on the religious authority of the *mansas*, Sundiata gained even more power in Mali.

Sundiata died in 1255. Later rulers of Mali took the title of *mansa*. Unlike Sundiata, most of these rulers were Muslims.

Mansa Musa

Mali's most famous ruler was a Muslim named **Mansa Musa** (MAHN-sah moo-SAH). Under his skillful leadership, Mali reached the height of its wealth, power, and fame in the 1300s. Because of Mansa Musa's influence, Islam spread through a large part of West Africa, gaining many new believers.

Mansa Musa ruled Mali for about 25 years, from 1312 to 1337. During that time, Mali added many important trade cities to its empire, including Timbuktu (tim-buhk-TOO).

Religion was very important to Mansa Musa. In 1324 he left Mali on a pilgrimage to Mecca. Through his journey, Mansa Musa introduced his empire to the Islamic world. He spread Mali's fame far and wide.

Mansa Musa also supported education. He sent many scholars to study in Morocco.

THE IMPACT TODAY

Some of the mosques built by Mansa Musa can still be seen in West Africa today.

These scholars later set up schools in Mali. Mansa Musa stressed the importance of learning to read the Arabic language so that Muslims in his empire could read the Qur'an. To spread Islam in West Africa, Mansa Musa hired Muslim architects to build mosques throughout his empire.

The Fall of Mali

When Mansa Musa died, his son Maghan (MAH-gan) took the throne. Maghan was a weak ruler. When raiders from the southeast poured into Mali, he couldn't stop them. The raiders set fire to Timbuktu's great schools and mosques. Mali never fully recovered from this terrible blow. The empire continued to weaken and decline.

In 1431 the Tuareg (TWAH-reg), nomads from the Sahara, seized Timbuktu. The people living at the edges of Mali's empire broke away. By 1500 nearly all of the lands the empire had once ruled were lost. Only a small area of Mali remained.

READING CHECK Sequencing What steps did Sundiata take to turn Mali into an empire?

Songhai

Even as the Empire of Mali was reaching its height, a rival power was growing in the area. That rival was the Songhai (SAHNG-hy) kingdom. From their capital at Gao, the Songhai participated in the same trade that had made Ghana and Mali so rich.

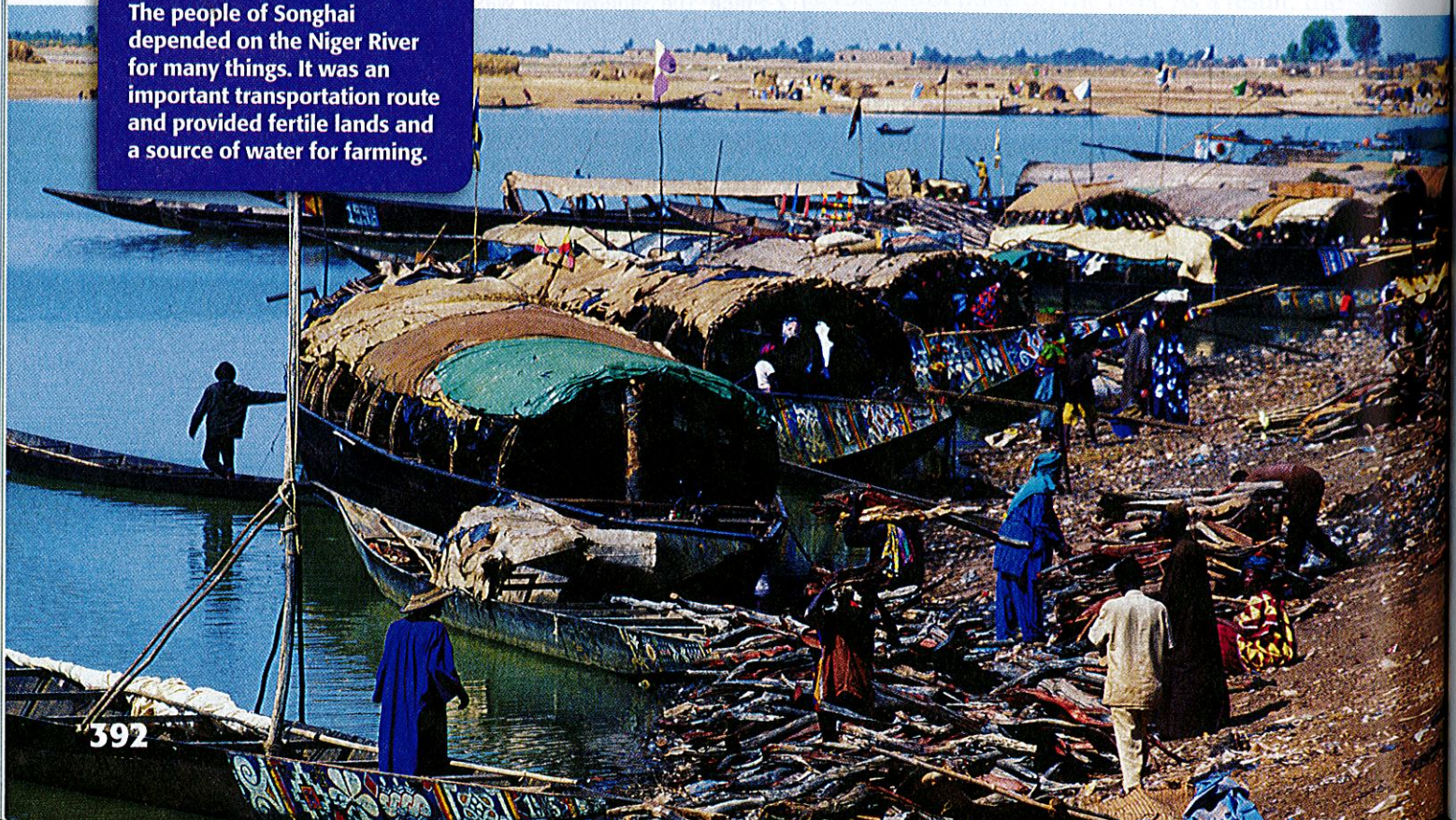
The Building of an Empire

In the 1300s Mansa Musa conquered the Songhai, adding their lands to his empire. But as the Mali Empire weakened in the 1400s, the people of Songhai rebelled and regained their freedom.

The Songhai leaders were Muslims. So too were many of the North African Berbers who traded in West Africa. Because of this shared religion, the Berbers were willing to trade with the Songhai, who grew richer.

As the Songhai gained in wealth, they expanded their territory and built an empire. Songhai's expansion was led by **Sunni Ali** (SOOH-nee ah-LEE), who became ruler of the Songhai in 1464. Before he took over, the Songhai state had been disorganized and

The people of Songhai depended on the Niger River for many things. It was an important transportation route and provided fertile lands and a source of water for farming.



poorly run. As ruler, Sunni Ali worked to unify, strengthen, and enlarge his empire. Much of the land that he added to Songhai had been part of Mali.

As king, Sunni Ali encouraged everyone in his empire to work together. To build religious harmony, he participated in both Muslim and local religions. As a result, he brought stability to Songhai.

Askia the Great

Sunni Ali died in 1492. He was followed as king by his son Sunni Baru, who was not a Muslim. The Songhai people feared that if Sunni Baru didn't support Islam, they would lose their trade with Muslim lands. They rebelled against the king.

The leader of that rebellion was a general named Muhammad Ture (MOO-HAH-muhd too-RAY). After overthrowing Sunni Baru, Muhammad Ture chose the title *askia*, a title of high military rank. Eventually, he became known as **Askia the Great**.

Askia supported education and learning. Under his rule, Timbuktu flourished, drawing thousands to its universities, schools, libraries, and mosques. The city was especially known for the University of Sankore (san-KOH-rah). People arrived there from North Africa and other places to study math, science, medicine, grammar, and law. Djenné was another city that became a center of learning.

Most of Songhai's traders were Muslim, and as they gained influence in the empire so did Islam. Askia, himself a devout Muslim, encouraged the growth of Islamic influence. He made many laws similar to those in other Muslim nations.

To help maintain order, Askia set up five provinces within Songhai. He removed local leaders and appointed new governors who were loyal to him. Askia also created a professional army and specialized departments to oversee specific tasks.

BIOGRAPHY

Askia the Great

c. 1443–1538

Askia the Great became the ruler of Songhai when he was nearly 50 years old. He ruled Songhai for about 35 years. During his reign the cities of Songhai gained power over the countryside.

When he was in his 80s, Askia went blind. His son Musa forced him to leave the throne. Askia was sent to live on an island. He lived there for nine years until another of his sons brought him back to the capital, where he died. His tomb is still one of the most honored places in all of West Africa.

Drawing Inferences Why do you think Askia the Great's tomb is still considered an honored place?



Songhai Falls to Morocco

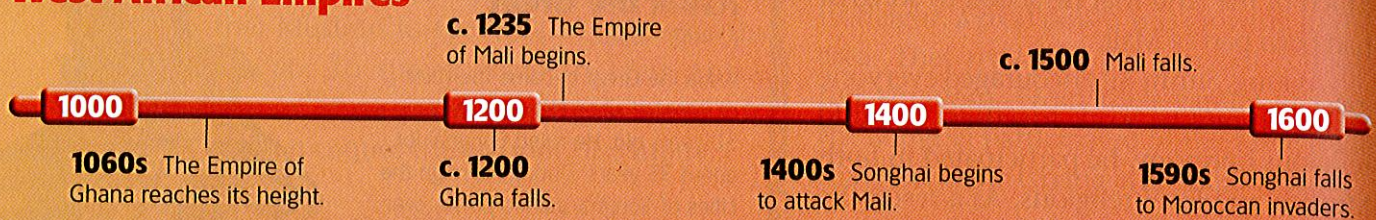
A northern rival of Songhai, Morocco, wanted to gain control of Songhai's salt mines. So the Moroccan army set out for the heart of Songhai in 1591. Moroccan soldiers carried advanced weapons, including the terrible arquebus (AHR-kwih-buhs). The arquebus was an early form of a gun.

The swords, spears, and bows used by Songhai's warriors were no match for the Moroccans' guns and cannons. The invaders destroyed Timbuktu and Gao.

Changes in trade patterns completed Songhai's fall. Overland trade declined as port cities on the Atlantic coast became more important. Africans south of Songhai and European merchants both preferred trading at Atlantic ports to dealing with Muslim traders. Slowly, the period of great West African empires came to an end.

READING CHECK **Evaluating** What do you think was Askia's greatest accomplishment?

West African Empires

ANALYSIS
SKILL

READING TIME LINES

About how many years after the fall of Ghana did Mali fall?

Great Zimbabwe

Strong kingdoms also arose in other parts of Africa. Great Zimbabwe, for example, was a powerful kingdom in southern Africa. Great Zimbabwe was founded in the late 1000s as a small trading and herding center. Gold mining increased in the area in the 1100s. Farming expanded and the kingdom's population grew. In time, Great Zimbabwe became the center of a large trading network.

THE IMPACT
TODAY

The stone fortress remains a major cultural monument in the modern nation of Zimbabwe.

Trade made Great Zimbabwe's rulers wealthy and powerful. They built a huge stone-walled fortress to protect their capital. In the 1400s the gold trade declined.

Deprived of its main source of wealth, Great Zimbabwe weakened. By 1500 it was no longer a political and trading center.

READING CHECK

Comparing How was Great Zimbabwe similar to the empires of West Africa?

SUMMARY AND PREVIEW

Sundiata and Mansa Musa helped Mali become a large empire famous for its wealth and centers of learning. Songhai similarly thrived under leaders such as Askia the Great. In the next section, you will read more about the major West African cultures.

Section 3 Assessment


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ONLINE QUIZ

Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and People

- a. Identify** Who was **Sundiata**?

b. Explain What major river was important to the people of Mali? Why?

c. Elaborate What effects did the rule of **Mansa Musa** have on Mali and West Africa?
- a. Identify** Who led the expansion of Songhai in the 1400s?

b. Explain How did **Askia the Great's** support of education affect Timbuktu?
- a. Recall** What made Great Zimbabwe's rulers wealthy and powerful?

b. Analyze What led to the decline of Great Zimbabwe?

Critical Thinking

- Finding Main Ideas** Use your notes to help you list three major accomplishments of Sundiata and Askia.

Sundiata Askia

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FOCUS ON WRITING

- Comparing and Contrasting** Review this section and your notes on African cultures. Consider how your character's life may have been shaped by the culture in which he or she lived. What were the differences between the cultures? How were they the same? How did specific leaders affect the development of the lands they ruled?