



civilizations in africa

mai

The second great Sahelian kingdom was that of **Mali**. The **Sahel** is the savannah region south of the Sahara which, after 750 AD, became the center of culturally and politically dynamic cities and kingdoms because of the strategic importance of the Sahel for trade across north Africa.

The first great Sahelian kingdom was **Ghana**, but the Islamic revolution of the Almoravids, a Berber people living north of Ghana, splintered that kingdom. The Almoravids did not succeed in building their own, Islamic kingdom in the region. The Almoravid revolution, however, led to energetic Islamic proselytizing all throughout the Sahel. Many of the ruling families converted to Islam.

One of these ruling families, the Keita, forged the successor to the Ghanaian kingdom, the kingdom of Mali. As with Ghana, Mali was built off of the monopolization of the trade routes from western and southern Africa to eastern and northern Africa. The most lucrative of these monopolies was the gold trade. Mali was located farther south than Ghana; the Malians lived in an agriculturally fertile land. Mali was also located along the upper Niger river, while Ghana had been located to the west. The bulk of the gold trade proceeded up the Niger river, so this gave Mali a firmer grip on this lucrative monopoly. Mali was not a true empire, but rather the center of a sphere of influence. The territory controlled by Mali comprised three distinct regions: the Senegal region with people speaking Niger-Kongo languages, the central Mande states occupied by Soninke and Mandinke, and the region of

Gao occupied by people who spoke Songhay.

The historical founder of Mali was the magician, Sundjata, one of the most legendary figures in African history. Sundjata, who ruled Mali from 1230-1255, began as a royal slave and magician among the Soso who had inherited the Ghanaian empire. According to African oral histories, Sundjata seized the major territories through which gold was traded and so built the foundation off of which Mali would be built. He also introduced into the region the cultivation and weaving of cotton.

The most significant of the Mali kings was Mansa Musa (1312-1337) who expanded Mali influence over the large Niger city-states of Timbuctu, Gao, and Djenné. Mansa Musa was a devout Muslim who built magnificent mosques all throughout the Mali sphere of influence; his gold-laden pilgrimage to Mecca made him an historical figure even in European history writing.

It was under Mansa Musa that Timbuctu became one of the major cultural centers not only of Africa but of the entire world. Under Mansa Musa's patronage, vast libraries were built and *madrasas* (Islamic universities) were endowed; Timbuctu became a meeting-place of the finest poets, scholars, and artists of Africa and the Middle East. Even after the power of Mali declined, Timbuctu remained the major Islamic center of sub-Saharan Africa.

After the death of Mansa Musa, the power of Mali began to decline. Mali had never been an empire proper, and subject states began to break off from the Mali sphere of influence. In 1430, the Tuareg Berbers in the north seized much of Mali's territory, including the city of Timbuctu, and the Mossi kingdom to the south a decade later seized much of Mali's southern territories. Finally, the kingdom of Gao, which had been subjugated to Mali under Mansa Musa, gave rise to a Songhay kingdom that finally eclipsed the magnificent power of Mali.

Name: _____ Period: _____

Kingdom of Mali

Read each paragraph and find the correct answer:

Paragraph # 1 – Why did this area where Mali was located become important after 750 AD?

Paragraph # 2 – What was the major influence for spreading Islam throughout the Sahel?

Paragraph # 3 – Describe how Mali was built, the location and type of land these people inhabited.

Paragraph # 4 - One of the Mali kings introduced weaving and cultivation of cotton. Why would this be important to the Mali people?

Paragraph # 5 – The most significant king was Mansa Musa. What did he accomplish to earn this title?

Paragraph # 6 – Describe the Mali city of Timbuktu.

Paragraph # 7 – What led to the decline of Mali?

Page 193: Mali Kingdom of West Africa

Name: _____ Period: _____

The rise of the kingdom of Mali followed the down fall of the kingdom of Ghana. The kingdom of Mali came to power in the area that had been previously occupied by Ghana. It also spread over a large area to the north and west along the upper Niger River.

Question: Why would it be beneficial for the kingdom of Mali to control the area along the Niger River? 2 points

Outline

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Formal Response:

Mali's power reached its peak under the rule of Mansa Musa. Musa was in power in the early 1300s and was a great supporter of education, arts as well as the construction of public buildings. Under his rule the city of Timbuktu became a major center of learning.

Question: Explain how Mansa Musa's support of education would lead to strengthen the empire. 2 points

Outline

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Formal response:
