

Empires of Medieval West Africa

OLLI 30219 - The Great West African Kingdoms

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Africa (1)

- *Second largest continent in the world but its history is unknown by many.*

- It's believed that Africa is the continent where the human race began...
- ...and yet little is known about its history outside North Africa, Sudan and Ethiopia prior to the 2nd millennium AD (~year 1001),
- Nowadays Africa is usually linked to political instability, wars, hunger, diseases, poverty and underdevelopment but very few know that **prior to colonization, many African economies were advancing in every area.**

Africa (2)

- *Second largest continent in the world but its history is unknown by many.*

- The 7th-9th centuries would be a time contributing significant changes to the history of sub-Saharan Africa,
- West Africa had developed extensive international trading systems during the eras of the large and powerful empires such as :
 - Ghana (modern Mali and Mauritania NOT related to modern Ghana),
 - Mali (modern Mali, Guinea, Senegal),
 - Shonghay (modern Mali and Niger).

Historical resources

- *Many of the events and dates from this time are approximate.*

- **Written language not developed before 900 CE** to record historical events,
- **Sources** are mostly based on:
 - Excavation of ancient cemeteries, buried ruins by archaeologists,
 - Writings (in Arabic) of geographers living in North Africa/Spain about sub Saharan kingdoms from the 9th century,
 - Interpretation by scholars of oral traditions (word of mouth through generations).

Three Great Medieval States

-They dominated West African history for approx. 900 years.

	Ghana	Mali	Shonghay
Origin	Mauritania	Ancient Ghana and Sosso kingdoms	-
Year at peak size	~ early 11th century	~14th century	~16th century
Reason for end	Conquest	Civil War	Conquest
Capital	Kumbi Saleh	Niani	Gao
Founder	Soninke	Sundiata Keita	-
Dynasty	Cissé	Keita	-
Government	Authoritarian	Authoritarian	Authoritarian

References

- Empires of Medieval West Africa *by David Conrad*