

NEWSFLASH: Heritage Chronicles

NEWSFLASH SHOWCASE PRESENTATION

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GHANA, MALI AND SONGHAI EMPIRES

Today's Africa is accepted by scientists as being the "cradle of the human species"

However it is often forgotten that some of the world's greatest civilisations such as the Ghana, Mali and Songhai empires flourished before the Europeans arrived in Africa.

False and negative views about Africa were developed in Europe to justify the Transatlantic Slave Trade which started with the Portuguese in 1471.

Africa was portrayed as an uncivilised continent where tribal warfare was rife with no trace of leadership or culture BUT as you will read from the following information on "Great African Empires" this is definitely NOT the case. The three Ancient Empires of West Africa were Ghana Mali & Songhai

GHANA EMPIRE

The Ghana Empire (also known as Wagadugu) covered what are now Mauritania, Southeast Mali and Northern Senegal. It was about 500 miles northwest of today's modern Ghana.

The capital of the Ghana Empire was called Ghana which was around AD.300.

Trade was an essential element in the rise and fall of the West African empires. The main imports of the Ghana Empire were cloth, brocades, copper and salt and its main export was its very valuable gold which helped to build its importance in "international trade".

The camel caravan trading and expedition routes linked West African cities with Europe and the Middle East.

The king of Ghana controlled trading through taxing traders and salt being a very important commodity was traded for equal amounts of gold.

The decline of the Ghana Empire came about in the 11th century. The invasion of the Ghana Empire by the Almoravids from the north along with internal

disputes within the empire led to its collapse in the 13th century when it was absorbed into the Mali Empire

MALI EMPIRE

The Almoravid or the Senegalese Empire lasted about one century followed by the Soso or Susa Empire which lasted again for about one century.

After the fall of the Ghana Empire the Mali Empire took over around 1240 AD and grew to be larger than the Ghana Empire. The first capital of the Mali Empire was Djeriba then Niani and then eventually Mali.

Mali was famous for weaving, mining and architecture. By the close of the 14th century the Mali Empire had achieved greater wealth and power than Ghana. Civil war attacks from Songhai and the arrival of the Portuguese in Africa reduced Mali's power.

It's greatest leaders were Sundiata, Sakura, Mansa Musa, Maghan and Sulayman, Maria Jata, Musa

SONGHAI EMPIRE

The third of the great Empires of West Africa was Songhai. By 1500 AD it had become the largest and most powerful state in West Africa. Songhai was famous for its progress in education, a uniform system in weights and measures and the improvement in banking and credit procedures.

The riches of the gold encouraged invasion of Songhai. The Moroccans took control of Timbuktu which was a great centre of learning. Once again this great empire was weakened by internal conflicts and went into decline.

The existence of great Kingdoms and empires has shown that Africans were capable of creating important civilisations long before the Europeans arrived in Africa.

Important rulers of the Songhai Empire were Sonni Ali, Bakari Da'a, Askia the Great, Musa, Askia Ismail, Askia Daud, and Askia Ishak