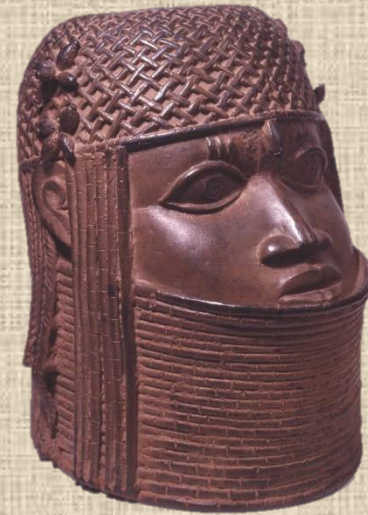


West and Central Africa: Origins of the Atlantic Slave Trade



SOCIETY

Empires, Kingdoms, and Ministates

The Sudanic civilization began in the eastern part of West Africa around 9000 B.C. They domesticated cattle and cultivated crops. They also had a monotheistic religion and lived in states under divine kings and princes.

The Three Great Empires:

- ❖ Ghana Empire: 800 A.D.
 - ❖ Had Camels
 - ❖ Used in Trade Routes
- ❖ Mali Empire: 1200 A.D.
- ❖ Songhai Empire: 1400 A.D.

Each of the three empires were, much like the Incan and Aztec civilizations, were composed of smaller kingdoms and controlled trade through their military strength.

Gold was a valuable and abundant item in this area and made up 50-66% of gold in circulation across the globe.

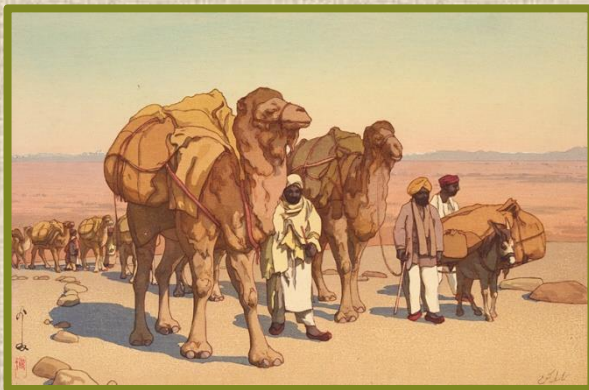
To the south, many tiny kingdoms cultivated yams and depended on coastal resources for survival.

Trans-Saharan and Coastal Trade

The power of the empires was based on a monopoly over the trans-Saharan trade.

Goods Traded:

- ❖ Gold
- ❖ Copper
- ❖ Salt
- ❖ Slaves



Smaller states usually did not have access to the same routes, and eventually the Europeans opened up another option along the coast. Areas became known for their merchandise, such as the:

- ❖ Grain Coast
- ❖ Ivory Coast
- ❖ Gold Coast
- ❖ Slave Coast

European traders negotiated contracts on local terms.

The Spirit World

West Africans located to the south of the Sahara heard about Islam through trade with the Arabs. While some took up the monotheism of Islam, many remained dedicated to multiple gods and spirits.

Secret societies brought people together and celebrated male virility and female fertility. Large homes and families were very important.

African communities also had wise men and women who could manipulate forces as they saw fit. It was thought that kings could also communicate with spirits.

