

## **The West Africans**



# **As a Young Historian, I will be able to...**

- Describe the development and cultural characteristics of West Africa in the fifteenth century.
- Summarize West African religions, culture, and society.
- Explore the roots of the system of slavery practiced in the Americas.

# Relationship of Geography & Trade

**1500s West Africa was a diverse region of natural resources & trade**

**The Sahara Desert scorches the Northern part**

**A broad grassland, or savanna, lies in the middle**

**The south is home to several waterways like the Niger & Senegal**

**Valuable resources include salt and gold in the region.**

**These resources provided growth of powerful empires revolving around trade**



# **Ghana & Mali Emerges**

**The earliest kingdom in West Africa, rose to prominence around 800 A.D.**

**Supplied much of the gold in the region**

**Ghana falls around 1200 A.D. to Mali**

**Most famous ruler of Mali was King Mansa Musa.**

**He expanded Mali's domain to the Atlantic coast & increased the worship of Islam.**

**His promotion of Islam helped lead to the founding of the university at Timbuktu.**

# **The Rise of **Songhai** & Additional Kingdoms**

**1400s Songhai empire emerges with its capital at Gao**

**Songhai conquers Mali & becomes largest & most powerful kingdom in West Africa**

**Eventually poor leadership leads to the end of the Songhai empire.**

**Smaller kingdoms were in power as well such as...**

**a. Kingdom of Benin-promoted art**

**b. The Hausa people & their 7 cities in present day Nigeria & Niger**



# **Religion in West Africa**

**Islam was brought across the Sahara to people of the savanna**

**Along the coast people held traditional beliefs.**

## **Land Ownership & Society**

**Land did not belong to individuals, it belonged to kinship.**

**Kings could assign territories & replace the officials living there.**

**People in villages often worked the land in common.**

# **The West African Slave Trade**

**Slave trade was important part of West Africa's economy.**

**Slavery was a common fate for those conquered or captured during warfare or criminals.**

**Enslaved people fell into 2 categories, domestic or captive.**

**Domestic slaves could not be bought/sold & carried some rights.**

**Captive slaves were the opposite & were used as currency sometimes.**

**Some enslaved people could rise to high status later in life.**



# **Portuguese Exploration in West Africa**

**The country of Portugal sought to expand trade & influence.**

**Portugal explores coast of West Africa in 1400s.**

**Trade began in natural goods, metals, & African slaves.**

**Portugal signs treaties with African kings, build forts along coast**

**First major European trading fort established in 1482**

**Slaves begin being shipped to sugar plantations & across Atlantic.**