

WEST AFRICAN KINGDOMS

OVERVIEW

THE EMPIRE OF GHANA: 300 AD – 1200 AD



The Empire of Ghana which is also known as the Empire of Wagadou came to prominence after being established in 300 AD by the Mande people of western Africa. The Empire of Ghana covered a much larger region than modern-day Ghana, the total region encapsulated modern-day Mali, southern Mauritania, and the area between the Niger and Senegal Rivers. The Empire of Ghana began the development of iron resources and produced weapons such as spears and had an army of over 200,000 soldiers. In addition to weaponry, the iron working was used to develop farming tools and grow their agricultural industry. By 770 AD the kings of the Empire of Ghana had full control over the trade routes to the Sahara. Anyone who wanted to trade with the Africans in the Sahara had to do so via The Empire of Ghana. The capital of the Empire of Ghana called Koumbi Saleh was originally two cities which grew to very large populations and eventually combined to one city with two sections. One side of the city was named El Ghaba which was the location of the royal palace and the wealthy members of the empire whose homes were constructed from stone. The other side of the city was the trading center and mostly populated by the muslim africans.

THE EMPIRE OF MALI: 1235 AD – 1600 AD



The Empire of Mali grew out of the Kingdom of Kangaba which had been established in around 750 AD. After the fall of the Empire of Ghana, the Empire of Mali rose to power and eventually became one of the wealthiest empires in human history. The capital of the empire of Mali was the city of Niani located in the west of the kingdom. One of the early kings of pre-imperial Mali was King Barmandana who came to power in 1050 AD. King Barmandana converted to Islam and made a pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca in Arabia and introduced the religion to the empire. A class of officials to govern specific industries within the empire were established and these were made up of Malians from important families, they were known as noblemen. The empire was divided geographically into different provinces and the Mansa (king) delegated power to governors who oversaw each province. The courts of the empire were divided into Islamic courts and also non-Islamic courts for the inhabitants of the empire. The tenth king of Mali was King Mansa Musa and he came to power in 1312 AD, he is recorded as the wealthiest king in world history. Mansa Musa was an extremely devout Muslim and embarked on a large program of construction within the empire building universities and mosques in the Malian cities of Gao and Timbuktu.

THE HAUSA KINGDOMS: 700 AD – 1804 AD



The Hausa Kingdoms were a grouping of West African states that were located between Lake Chad to the west and the Niger River to the east. The African ethnic group which populated these kingdoms and the area in general from around 700 AD are known as the Hausa people with one of the oldest kingdoms being Daura which is located in modern-day northern Nigeria. The Hausa Kingdoms included Kano, Katsina, Zazzau, Gobir, Rano, Daura and Biram and were founded in 1000 AD. The kingdoms are also known as 'Hausa Bakwai' which means 'Seven True Hausa States'. Each Hausa state also governed and managed the surrounding smaller walled villages which numbered over 170 in total. The Hausa Kingdoms established various guilds for the production of iron products, weapons and pottery. Agriculture remained a key business and wealth generator for the kingdoms. Fields were categorized into three types, namely the individual field called 'gayauna', the family field called 'gandum gide' and the kings field named 'gandum sarkin'.