

# African Government and Society

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# Government and Society

- **Main Idea (Objective):**



- The growth of West African Empire led to the growth of centralized governments ruled by kings.



# Government and Society

- **Lecture Focus (Essential Question):**



- What makes a system of government effective? Lets see how the rulers of Ghana, Mali and Songhai governed their empires.



# Government and Society

- **Let me paint you a picture...** you hear loud thumping of the drums that would call the citizens of Ghana to a meeting with the king.



- Anyone with a complaint or issue could speak.

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# Government and Society

- In the royal courtyard, the king sat in an open silk tent.
- He wore a cap of gold and a jewel-covered robe.
  - Royal officials would surround him.
- Guard dogs with gold and silver collars would stand watch.



# Government and Society

- Before talking to the king, subjects poured dust over their heads as they fell to the ground.



- Bowing, these individuals would state their business and patiently waited for the kings reply.



# Ruler and Subject

- This spectacle was how government worked in the West African kingdoms.



- Kings settled arguments, managed trade, protected their lands and expected complete obedience from their subjects in return.



# Ruler and Subject

- With the growth of empires, Africans invented new ways to govern themselves.



- The most successful states, like Ghana, Mali and Songhai formed some type of central authority, with power resting with a king, or in a few cases, a queen.



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# Ruler and Subject

- Both rulers and subjects benefited from this type of government.



- Merchants received favors from the kings and the kings in return received taxes from the merchants.



# Ruler and Subject

- Local rulers kept some power and the kings in turn would receive their complete loyalty.



- This allowed kingdoms to grow wealthy, keep peace and to extend their control over massive areas

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# Ruler and Subject

- **Questions:**
- **1)** Kings in Western Africa were known for performing what day to day duties?
- **2)** What did Kings expect in return for performing these duties?
- **3)** How did Kings and merchants benefit from a mutual relationship?
- **4)** Why were some local rulers allowed to keep some power? Was this a good idea?

# Ruler and Subject

- **Questions:**
- **1) Kings in Western Africa were known for performing what day to day duties?**
  - **Settling arguments, managed trading and protect the realm**
- **2) What did Kings expect in return for performing these duties?**
  - **Complete obedience**
- **3) How did Kings and merchants benefit from a mutual relationship?**
  - **Merchants received favors from kings and kings received taxes from merchants**
- **4) Why were some local rulers allowed to keep some power? Was this a good idea?**
  - **Kings would receive their complete loyalty / what if they did not?!?!?!?**



# Ghana's Government



- The kings of Ghana relied on help from a **Council of Ministers**, which was essentially a group of close advisors that helped to maintain order in the kingdom.



# Ghana's Government

- As the kingdom grew, rulers would divide the lands into **provinces**.



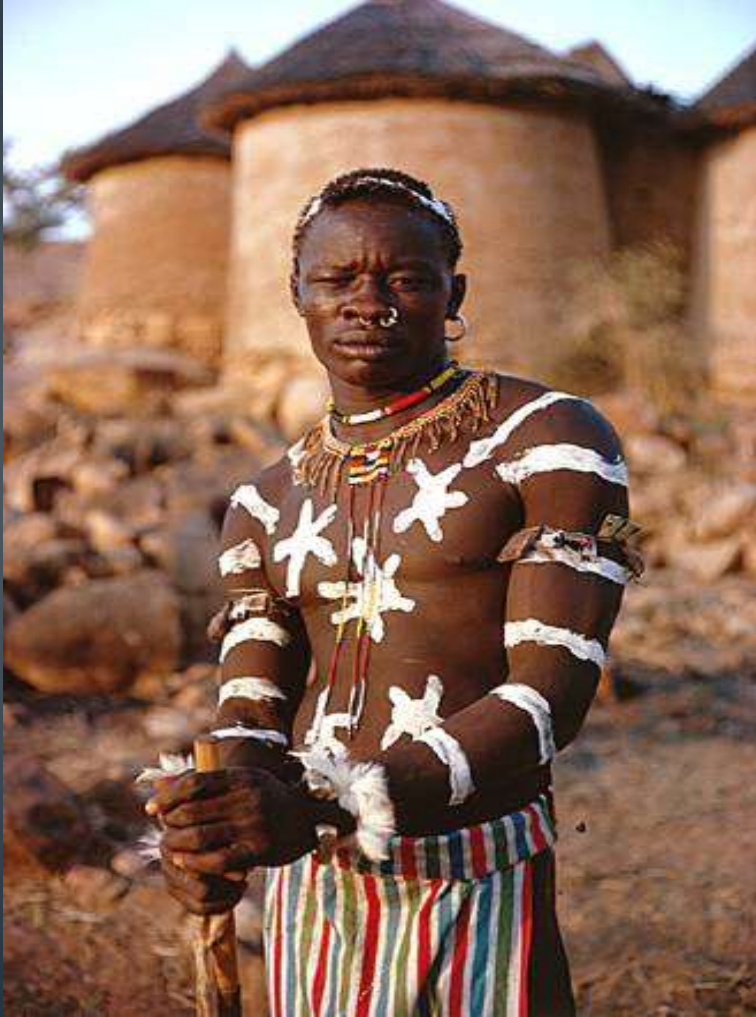
- Often lesser kings, many of which had been conquered by the Ghana military would govern these provinces.



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# Ghana's Government

- Beneath this lesser kings were **District Chiefs**, who oversaw the administration of smaller districts.



- Each district usually included a chief's **clan**, which is basically a group of people descended from the same ancestor.



# Ghana's Government

- Ghana Kings held tightly to their power, in many instances insisting that local leaders send their sons to the royal court as a **ward**.



- **Ward** - a child, who is legally under the protection or care of another person or of a court or government...**but what does this really sound like???**

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# Ghana's Government

- Ghana kings, along with their Council of Ministers rode throughout the kingdom seeking reports of injustice or rebellion.



- The Ghana kings were involved personally in most matters including the most important aspect of their kingdom, their trade network.



# Ghana's Government

- Not a single merchant could trade without the King's permission...In fact nobody could even own gold nuggets except the King.
- **Merchants** and patrons would have to trade in **gold dust**.
- Ghana's gold mines were plentiful and it was thought that if everyone held gold it would become too abundant and lose its value.





# Ghana's Government



- One thing about Ghana's government confused outsiders.
- It was a Ghana custom that the kingdom is inherited only by the son of the king's sister.
- In surrounding kingdoms, especially Arab empires, property passed through a man's sons, not the sons of his sister.
- In Ghana, the Kingdoms throne was passed on to the King's nephew.

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# Ghana's Government

- **Questions:**
- **1)** How did the king's of Ghana divide their kingdom?
- **2)** What was a ward and how was it used by Ghana Kings?
- **3)** How did everyone including merchants pay for goods?
- **4)** What was unique about how power was passed down by Ghana Kings?

# Ghana's Government

- **Questions:**
- **1) How did the king's of Ghana divide their kingdom?**
  - **Into provinces governed by conquered leaders**
- **2) What was a ward and how was it used by Ghana Kings?**
  - **a child, who is legally under the protection or care of another person or of a court or government**
- **3) How did everyone including merchants pay for goods?**
  - **Gold dust, only kings held gold nuggets**
- **4) What was unique about how power was passed down by Ghana Kings?**
  - **The throne went to the kings nephew**



# DBQ Document Based Question: Ghana Profits from Trade

- **Al Barki**, a Muslim Geographer and historian described the way Ghana taxed merchants to increase its own wealth:

*“ The king exacts the right of one **Dinar (Muslim currency)** of gold on each donkey load of salt that enters his country and two Dinars of gold on each load of salt that goes out. A load of copper carries a duty of five **Mitqals (Muslim currency)** and a load of merchandise ten Mitqals. The best gold in the country comes from Ghiaru, a town situated eighteen days’ journey from the capital of Kumbi.”*

- Abdullah al Barki,  
“ Ghana in 1067”

- **Based on the passage which do you think has more worth, a Dinar or a Mitqal? Why?**



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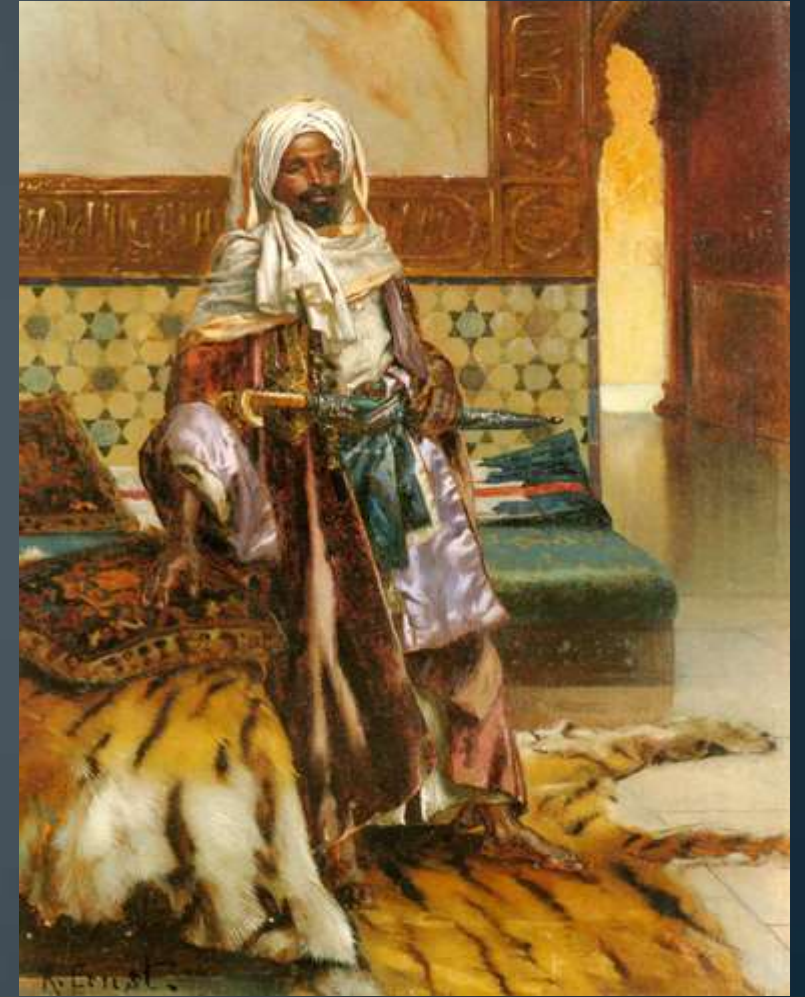
- **Based on the passage which do you think has more worth, a Dinar or a Mitqal? Why?**
- Remember that in Western Africa Salt was worth its weight in gold, making the Dinar more valuable.





# Mali's Government

- Mali followed the example of Ghana, but on a larger scale.



- Mali's Kingdom had more territory, more people and more trading networks, so royal officials had more responsibilities.



# Mali's Government

- The Mali government split up responsibilities between regions.
  - One official would supervise the fishing market along the Niger River.
- There was officials dedicated to Mali's forest regions.
- The farming industry and money managing also had their own supervisors.



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# Mali's Government

- Mali Kings divided the empire into provinces, like Ghana.



- However, **Sundiata**, the founder of Mali, put his generals in charge of these provinces.



# Mali's Government

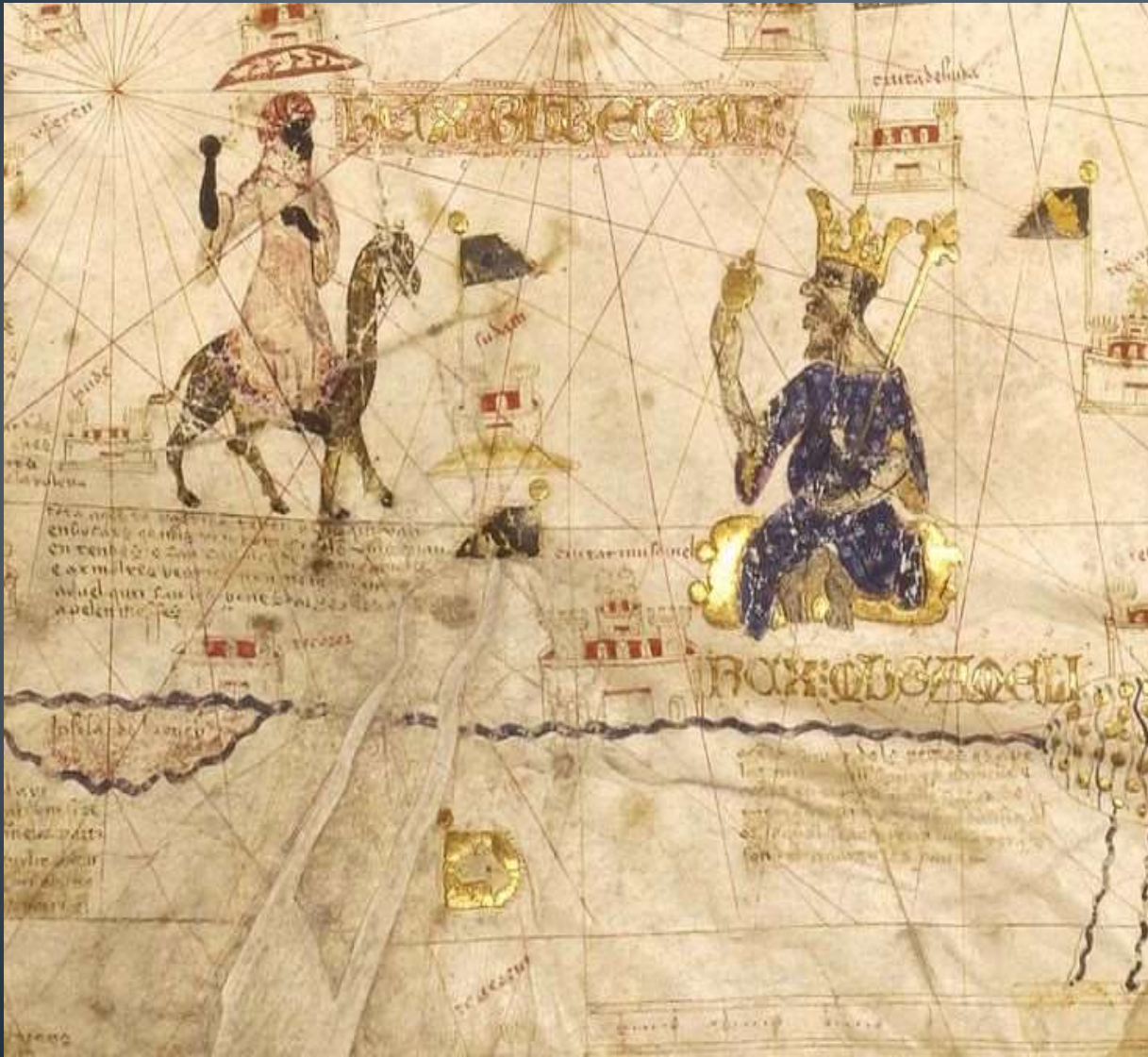
- Mali's people accepted Sundiata's generals because they protected them from invaders.



- Also, the generals often came from the provinces that they oversaw.



# Mali's Government



- Mali's other great King, **Mansa Musa**, rewarded citizens with gold, land and various animals in order to keep them loyal.
- He granted military heroes the “**National Honor of the Trousers**”.

# Mali's Government

- Al Dukhari, an Arab Historian stated in the book *Topics in West African History*, “*Whenever a hero adds to the lists of his exploits, the king gives him a pair of wide trousers...the greater the number of the knight's exploits, the bigger the size of the trousers*”.
- Because only the king and royal family could wear sewn cloths, this was a big honor indeed.
- Most people wore only wrapped clothing.





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# Mali's Government

- **Questions:**
- **1)** How did Mali follow in Ghana's footsteps in terms of dividing their empire?
- **2)** Who did Sundiata put in charge of his lands?
- **3)** How did Mansa Musa reward loyal citizens?
- **4)** How awesome was the "National honor of Trousers"?

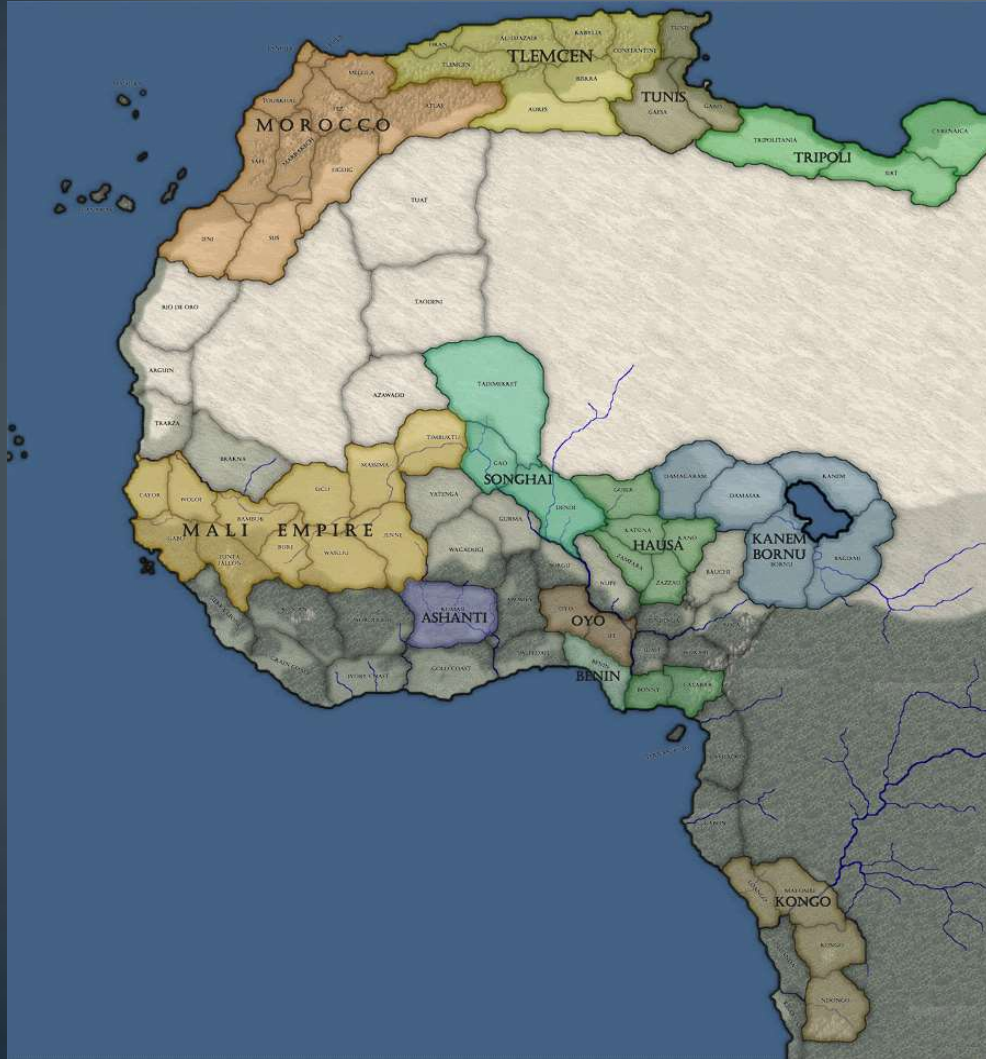


# Mali's Government

- **Questions:**
- **1)** How did Mali follow in Ghana's footsteps in terms of dividing their empire?
  - **They divided their empire into provinces**
- **2)** Who did Sundiata put in charge of his lands?
  - **Military generals**
- **3)** How did Mansa Musa reward loyal citizens?
  - **Rewarded them with gold, land and different animals**
- **4)** How awesome was the "National honor of Trousers"?
  - **My head almost exploded from awesomeness!**

# Songhai's Government

- Songhai's government was built on the traditions established by the Ghana and Mali Kingdoms.



- Songhai's founder, Sunni Ali, divided his kingdom into provinces to make administration easier.



# Songhai's Government

- The problem was that Sunni Ali never quite finished establishing his government.



- Sunni, rather focused on growing his kingdom through massive military campaigns.

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# Songhai's Government

- In 1492 C.E., Sunni Ali died mysteriously on his way home following a military operation.



- Some say he drowned while crossing a stream, however it is more likely that he was assassinated by rival enemies.



# Songhai's Government



- The following year, a Songhai general named **Muhammad Ture** seized control of the government and established his own administration.



# Songhai's Government

- Unlike Sunni Ali, Muhammad Ture was a devote Muslim.



- His religious ideas affected Songhai's government and moved the empire towards a more religious based style of rule.

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# Songhai's Government

- **Questions:**
- **1) Why did Sunni Ali never quite finish establishing his government?**
  - **He was constantly fighting war campaigns and then was mysteriously killed**
- **2) Who was the general that seized control of the Songhai Government?**
  - **Muhammad Ture**
- **3) What new ideas began to affect the Songhai Government?**
  - **Islamic religious ideas**

# Songhai's Government

- **Questions:**
- **1)** Why did Sunni Ali never quite finish establishing his government?
- **2)** Who was the general that seized control of the Songhai Government?
- **3)** What new ideas began to affect the Songhai Government?



# Time Travel Time: **Kingly Processions**



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# Time Travel Time: **Kingly Processions**

- A **Procession** is an organized body of people walking in a formal or ceremonial manner.



- Processions have been used throughout history to usher in new rulers from kings to presidents, even religious leaders...basically any new leaders coming into office.



# Time Travel Time: **Kingly Processions**

- Mali Kingly Processions were filled with pomp and circumstance.



- According to Ibn Battuta, a world explorer during the 1300's, the Mali processions were extremely extravagant and rich.



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# Time Travel Time: **Kingly Processions**



- According to Battua, musicians with gold and silver stringed interments preceded the king's entry into the royal court and some 300 armed enslaved guards would follow him as a sign of strength.



# Time Travel Time: **Kingly Processions**



- President Obama's Procession to the White House for the first time.