

WEEK 2 AND 3

TOPIC: GHANA EMPIRE

EARLY HISTORY OF GHANA EMPIRE

Ghana Empire was one of the earliest known Negro empires recorded by historians; it was first mentioned by an Arab geographer, Al-fazari, in AD773 in his book Al-masudi, where he referred to it as a land of gold.

The original name of the empire was “wagadou” but was later changed to Ghana, meaning “the king” or title of the king.

It was not certain how and when Ghana was founded, but from Arab sources, particularly the Tarikh al Sudan, it appears to have been founded by a Soninke dynasty between AD 300-400.

Ghana Empire also revealed that it was situated on the grasslands north of the rivers Senegal and Niger, its capital Kumbi Saleh is said to have been founded by Kaya Maghan, who is credited to have overthrown the immigrant minority and Negro indigenes in about AD700 and established purely Soninke dynasty.

By AD1000, the Soninke kingdom had extended its territory, in the west to the river Senegal and south to Bamouk town of Audoghost of the Sahara desert, by the middle of the 11th century control over an area covering most of the modern states of Senegal, Mali and Territories of roughly 650,000 square kilometers.

FACTORS FOR THESE RISES OF GHANA EMPIRE

1. Geographical location: Ghana was situated in a place that had fertile land and lots of mineral resources. The fertile land boosted agriculture and mineral resources, especially gold, attracted traders from many places.
2. location around trade route
3. The social life in ancient Ghana: in Ghana, the king was very powerful and dressed elegantly. His palace was wonderfully decorated with paintings and sculptures. He was greatly respected by his people. The ability of the king to effectively organize the political, religious and economic life of his people became a major factor to the rise of the empire.
4. large army
5. good government

SOCIO POLITICAL STRUCTURE OF GHANA EMPIRE

In describing the socio political structure of Ghana Empire, is a description of how it was organized and governed, these involved primarily describing the government at the center, the provinces, the vassal states and the army

1. The king
2. council of chiefs
3. provincial Governors

4. the chief justice who headed the empire judiciary
5. The Army

THE RELIGION OF ANCIENT GHANA

The people of Ghana were originally pagans who worshipped a Supreme Being Through gods and goddesses like other parts of Africa even till today.

By the 11th century the religion of Islam spread to ancient Ghana as a result of its spread to West Africa. Islam spread to West Africa especially Ghana through three means, they include;

1. Through the activities of a desert tribe called the “ Sanhajab”
2. Through trading activities. (they traded with people from north Africa and Sahara Desert)
3. Through the activities of Arab scholars who visited Ghana when the wealth of the booming.

THE ECONOMY OF ANCIENT GHANA

Ghana had a very good commercial relationship with the outside world as a result of the trade between them and North African Berbas known as the Trans-Sahara trade. Ghana empire exported kolanut, honey, gold, gums, and cotton to North Africa and imported salt, copper, cloths , beds, brocades, dried fruits , guns, gun powder etc., which were greatly needed in the empire at that time .

Gold which was the main thing Ghana exported was mined in the wangara state south of the empire and this was the basis of its fame, as it was described as the richest and most powerful empire in the whole of West Africa.

FACTORS THAT LED TO THE FALL OF GHANA EMPIRE

The decline and fall of Ghana Empire were internal and external

1. **The size of the Empire:** the empire became very large because of the many neighboring states that were conquered through military operation. As a result, it was difficult for the central authority to control and show its power over all the empire. As a result of this, some states started breaking into provinces and gradually became independent and formed alliance against central government.
2. **Political instability**
3. **The wealth of the empire:** the wealth of the empire especially in gold exposed the empire to attack from various jealous groups.
4. **Invasion of Kumbi saleh :** the capital of Ghana was captured by Almoravid forces . This led to the disintegration of some provinces in Ghana.

ASSIGNMENT

1. what were the factors responsible for the rise of Ghana empire
2. briefly describe the socio political structure of Ghana empire
3. What role did trade play in rise of Ghana empire