

# Medieval Africa – Section Two: Africa’s Government and Religion

## I. Government and Society

### A. Introduction

1. Royal Meetings Called With Drums
2. Anyone Complaining Could Speak
3. King
  - a. Sat in Royal Courtyard
    - 1) Open Silk Tent
    - 2) Gold Cap
    - 3) Jewel-Covered Robe
    - 4) Surrounded by Officials
    - 5) Gold Collared Guard Dogs
    - 6) Subjects
      - i. Poured Dust Over Their Heads
      - ii. or Fell to the Ground
      - iii. Bowed to State Business
      - iv. Waited on Reply

### 4. Ruler and Subjects

- a. Kings
  - 1) Settled Arguments
  - 2) Managed Trade
  - 3) Protected the Empire
- b. Subjects
  - 1) Complete Obedience

### 5. Central Authority

- a. Power Rested With King or Queen
- b. Merchants Paid Taxes
- c. Local Rulers Had Some Power
  - 1) This Made Them Loyal to the King/Queen
- d. Kingdoms Grew Rich
- e. Extended Control Over Larger Areas
- f. System Kept the Peace

### B. Ghana’s Government

#### 1. Kings

- a. Relied on Council of Ministers
- b. Or Relied on a Group of Close Advisors
- c. Divided into Provinces
  - 1) After a Period of Growth

#### 2. Lesser Kings

- a. Conquered Leaders
- b. Governed These Areas

#### 3. District Chiefs

- a. Oversaw Smaller Districts
  - 1) Included a Chief’s Clan
    - i. Descended From the Same Ancestor

#### 4. Kings Held Tightly to Power

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- a. Local Rulers Sent Sons to Royal Court
- b. Rode Through Countryside
  - 1) Looking for Injustice
  - 2) Looking for Rebellion
- c. Nobody Could Trade Without King’s Permission
- d. Nobody But King Owned Gold Nuggets
  - 1) People Used Gold Dust
  - 2) Kept Gold Valuable
- e. Throne Inherited By Sister’s Son
  - 1) Confusing to Arabs
    - i. Arab States
      - 1) Property Passed to Man’s Son
    - ii. Ghana
      - 1) Property Passes to Nephew

### C. Mali’s Government

#### 1. Larger Scale than Ghana

- a. More Territory
- b. More People
- c. More Trade
- d. Royal Advisors Had More Responsibility
  - 1) One Supervised Fishing on the Niger
  - 2) One Looked Over Empire’s Forest
  - 3) One Oversaw Farming
  - 4) One Managed Money

#### 2. Divided Into Provinces

- a. Sundiata put Generals in Charge
  - 1) Accepted By People
    - i. Protected From Invaders
    - ii. Normally Came from Province Ruled
- b. Mansa Musa
  - 1) Rewarded Citizens
    - i. Gold
    - ii. Land
    - iii. Horses
    - iv. Kept Them Loyal
    - v. “National Honor of the Trousers”
      - 1) Military Heroes
      - 2) Bigger Trousers = Greater Exploits
      - 3) Sewn Clothes Limited to Royal Family
        - a) Most Wore Wrapped Clothing

### D. Songhai’s Government

#### 1. Built on Traditions of Ghana and Mali

- a. Sunni Ali
  - 1) Provinces
  - 2) Empire Never Fully Set Up

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- 3) Continually Moved
          - i. Fighting One Battle After Another
        - 4) 1492 Died Mysteriously
          - i. Possible Causes
            - 1) Drowned Crossing a Stream
            - 2) Killed By Enemies
      - b. Muhammad Ture
        - 1) Songhai General
        - 2) Loyal Muslim
          - i. Effected Government
- II. Traditional African Religion
  - A. European Misconception
    - 1. Believed There Was No Religion In Africa
  - B. Igbo Beliefs
    - 1. Olaudah Equiano
      - a. Member of Igbo Tribe
    - 2. Belief in a Creator
      - a. One Supreme God
      - b. Governs Events
        - 1) Especially Deaths
        - 2) Especially Captivity
  - C. Many Tribes Shared Igbo Belief In One God
    - 1. Understood Christian and Muslim Monotheism
    - 2. Wanted to Continue Own Religious Practices
  - D. Practices Varied
    - 1. Nanti
      - a. East Africa
      - b. Believed People Talk Directly to God
    - 2. Igbo
      - a. Believed People Went Through Lesser Gods and Goddesses
        - 1) These Worked for the Supreme God
  - E. Purposes
    - 1. Provided Rules for Living
    - 2. Remembering History
    - 3. Honored Ancestors
      - a. Could Talk To Supreme God
      - b. Could Help With Problems
- III. Islam in Africa
  - A. Spread from Arabian Peninsula to Africa
    - 1. 600’s A.D.
  - B. Ibn Batta
    - 1. Ibn means “Son of”
    - 2. Young Arab Lawyer
    - 3. Left Morocco
      - a. 1325 A.D.

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- b. Wanted to See the Muslim World
- c. Traveled Almost 30 Years
- d. Covered More Than 73,000 Miles
- e. Arrived in West Africa
  - 1) 1352 A.D.
  - 2) Islam Present for Hundreds of Years
    - i. Not Accepted By All
      - 1) Mainly Rulers and Merchants
      - 2) Blamed on Sundiata Keita and Sunni Ali
        - a) Didn’t Do Enough To Convert
        - b) More Concerned With Rebellions
    - ii. Women Didn’t Wear Veils
    - iii. Most Studied the Quran
      - 1) Muslim Holy Book

### C. Mali and Mansa Musa

#### 1. Pleased Ibn Battuta

#### 2. Mansa Musa

- a. Allowed All Religions
- b. Worked to Make Islam Stronger
- c. Built Mosques
- d. Set Up Libraries
  - 1) Timbuktu
  - 2) Collected Books
    - i. From All Over Muslim World

#### 3. 1324 A.D.

- a. Pilgrimage to Mekkah
  - 1) Also Known as Mecca
  - 2) Made Mali Known to Other Parts of the World
  - 3) Use Caravan
    - i. Thousands of People
      - 1) Included Slaves
    - ii. One Hundred Pack Camels
      - 1) Each Carried Gold
  - 4) Convinced Some of Islam’s Finest People to Come to Mali
    - i. Architects
    - ii. Teachers
    - iii. Writers
    - iv. Helped Spread Islam

### D. Songhai and Askia Muhammad

#### 1. Sunni Ali

- a. Followed Traditional Religion
- b. Declared Himself Muslim
  - 1) Kept Support
- c. Son Refused to Follow His Example

#### 2. Muhammad Ture

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- a. Took the Name Askia Muhammad
  - b. Drove out Sunni Askia’s Family
  - c. Built Largest Empire in Medieval West Africa
  - d. Kept Local Courts
    - 1) Had to Honor Muslim Laws
  - e. Made Timbuktu Important Center
    - 1) Cultural
    - 2) Set Up Schools
      - i. Around 150
      - ii. To Teach the Quran
3. Empire Survived Family Disputed
4. Fell to Superior Weapons
- a. Moroccan Invaders
    - 1) Moroccan Guns
  - b. 1591 Shattered the Empire
- E. Islam in East Africa
1. Iba Battuta Visited Mogadish
- a. 1331 A.D.
  - b. Mogadish
    - 1) Trading Port
    - 2) East African Coast
    - 3) Ruled by a Sultan
      - i. Spoke Arabic
      - ii. Spoke Swahili
        - 1) Arabic Word
        - 2) Means "People of the Coast"
        - 3) Meaning Changed
          - a) Unique East African Coastal Culture
          - b) Language Spoken East African Coast
        - 4) Still Exists Today
          - a) Blend of African and Muslim
            - i. African From Interior
            - ii. Muslim From Settlers Arab and Persian
          - b) Portugal Tried to Destroy Swahili
            - i. Swahili Halted Inland Trade
            - ii. Swahili Culture Outlived European Rule
- F. Islam’s Impact on Africa
1. Far Reaching
- a. North and East
2. Converts
- a. Adopted Laws
  - b. Adopted Ideas of Right and Wrong.
    - 1) Some Times Opposed by Traditionalists
3. Advanced Learning
- a. Muslim Schools

## Medieval Africa – Section Two: Africa’s Government and Religion

- 1) Drew Students From All Over Africa
  - 2) Introduced Arabic Language
4. Influenced Art
5. Influenced Buildings
- a. Muslim Architects
    - 1) Built Beautiful Mosques
    - 2) Built Beautiful Palaces