HISTORY

WEEK ONE

The **Songhai Empire** was one of the greatest empires in West African history. It rose to power after the decline of the Mali Empire and became a major center of trade, learning, and Islamic culture in the region.

**Origin of the Songhai Empire**

1. **Geographical Location:**
   * The Songhai Empire was located in **West Africa**, mainly along the **Niger River**, which provided water, transportation, and fertile land.
   * Its capital city was **Gao**, a city that became a powerful trading center.
2. **Ethnic Group:**
   * The empire was named after the **Songhai people**, a group that originally settled near the Niger River in present-day **Mali and Niger**.
   * The Songhai people were primarily **fishermen, farmers, and traders**.
3. **Early Settlements:**
   * The Songhai people had settled in **Gao** by the **9th century A.D.**
   * By the **11th century**, Gao had become an important trading town, visited by North African merchants.

**Early History of the Songhai Empire**

1. **Independence from Mali:**
   * In the **13th century**, Gao and the Songhai people came under the control of the **Mali Empire**.
   * By the **15th century**, during the decline of the Mali Empire, the Songhai people regained their independence.
2. **Rise to Power:**
   * The real rise of the Songhai Empire began under **King Sunni Ali** (also known as **Sunni Ali Ber**) in **1464 A.D.**
   * Sunni Ali was a strong military leader who expanded the empire by conquering neighboring territories, including **Timbuktu** and **Djenne**.
   * He built a powerful army of cavalry and navy using war canoes on the Niger River.
3. **Expansion and Organization:**
   * After Sunni Ali’s death in 1492, his successor, **Askia Mohammed (Askia the Great)**, took over.
   * Askia Mohammed was a devout Muslim who strengthened the empire by:
     + **Promoting Islam** and Islamic education.
     + **Building mosques and Islamic schools**.
     + Encouraging trade and maintaining peace and order.
4. **Golden Age:**
   * Under Askia Mohammed, the Songhai Empire reached its **golden age**, becoming the largest and most powerful empire in West Africa.
   * The empire became famous for:
     + Its **well-organized administration**.
     + **Trade in gold, salt, kola nuts, and slaves**.
     + Centers of learning like **Timbuktu**, which had libraries and Islamic universities.

**WEEK TWO** The **Songhai Empire** was one of the greatest empires in West African history. It existed many years ago and became powerful after the fall of the Mali Empire.

**Geographical Location**

* The Songhai Empire was located in **West Africa**.
* It covered parts of the **present-day countries** of:
  + **Mali**
  + **Niger**
  + **Nigeria**
* Its **capital city** was **Gao**, which was situated along the **River Niger**.
* Other important cities in the empire were **Timbuktu** and **Djenne**.

**Boundaries of the Empire**

* **North**: The Sahara Desert
* **South**: Forest regions of West Africa
* **East**: Present-day Niger and parts of Nigeria
* **West**: Near the Mali Empire and Senegal area

**Importance of the River Niger**

* The **River Niger** played a major role in the empire’s development.
* It was used for:
  + **Transportation**
  + **Trade**
  + **Fishing**
  + **Irrigation for farming**

**WEEK THREE**

The **Songhai Empire** had a well-organized system of government and society. This helped the empire grow strong and last for many years.

### ****1. Political Structure (Government)****

The Songhai Empire had a centralized system of government. a) **The Emperor (Askia)**

* The head of the empire was called the **Emperor** or **Askia**.
* He had **absolute power** and made final decisions on important matters.
* Famous emperors included **Sunni Ali** and **Askia Muhammad**.

#### b) **Ministers and Advisors**

* The emperor was assisted by **ministers** who helped him govern.
* Each minister had a specific duty, such as:
  + **Finance**
  + **Army**
  + **Justice**
  + **Trade**

#### c) **Provinces and Governors**

* The empire was divided into **provinces**.
* Each province was ruled by a **governor** (called Fari), who reported directly to the emperor.
* Governors collected taxes and maintained law and order.

#### d) **Local Chiefs**

* **Local chiefs** ruled smaller towns and villages under the control of the governors.
* They settled minor disputes and followed the emperor's laws.

### **2. Social Structure (Society)**

The society of Songhai was organized into different social classes.

#### a) **Royal Family and Nobles**

* These were the **highest class** in society.
* They held top positions in government and army.

#### b) **Traders and Scholars**

* Traders were important because they brought wealth through **trans-Saharan trade**.
* Scholars helped promote **Islamic education** and culture, especially in cities like **Timbuktu**.

#### c) **Farmers and Fishermen**

* Most people were **farmers and fishermen**.
* They produced food and supported the empire’s economy.

#### d) **Slaves**

* Slaves were at the **bottom of society**.
* They worked on farms or served in the homes of the rich.

**WEEK FOUR**

### ****The Military Might and Power of the Songhai Empire****

The **Songhai Empire** was one of the most powerful empires in West Africa between the **15th and 16th centuries**. It grew into a great empire mainly because of its strong **military force**. The leaders of Songhai built a well-organized army that helped them conquer many lands and defend their empire from enemies.

### ****1. Strong Army Organization****

The Songhai Empire had a **professional army**. This means the soldiers were trained full-time and paid for their services. The army was divided into different groups:

* **Infantry** (foot soldiers)
* **Cavalry** (soldiers on horses)
* **Navy** (soldiers who fought on rivers)

Each group had a specific duty, and they worked together during battles.

### ****2. Use of Horses and Camels****

The Songhai army used **horses** in battle, which gave them speed and strength. The cavalry (horse riders) could move quickly across the desert and savannah. In desert areas, they used **camels** to carry supplies and travel long distances.

### ****3. Control of Rivers and Waterways****

The Songhai Empire controlled the **Niger River**, which was very important for trade and movement. They had a **river navy** that helped them defend their territory and control river transport. This gave them an advantage in wars and in controlling trade routes.

### ****4. Powerful Weapons****

The Songhai army used strong and effective weapons like:

* **Spears**
* **Swords**
* **Bows and arrows**
* **Shields**

Later, under some rulers, they also began to use **firearms** (guns) after getting them from North Africa through trade.

### ****5. Great Military Leaders****

The success of the Songhai army was due to the leadership of great emperors like:

* **Sunni Ali (ruled 1464–1492)**: He was a bold and powerful warrior-king. He expanded the empire through constant military campaigns.
* **Askia Muhammad (ruled 1493–1528)**: He improved the army’s organization, trained soldiers better, and introduced Islamic military ideas from the north.

These leaders made sure that the army remained strong and well-disciplined.

#### **Key Features of Songhai's Military Might:**

* **Well-trained Army**: Songhai had a standing army, which means soldiers were trained full-time to fight and protect the empire.
* **Divided into Units**:
  + **Infantry** (foot soldiers)
  + **Cavalry** (horse riders)
  + **Navy** (river soldiers)
* **Use of Horses and Camels**: Horses helped in fast attacks, and camels were used in desert areas for carrying goods and weapons.
* **Weapons**: The army used spears, swords, arrows, shields, and later, some firearms (guns).
* **Niger River Control**: The Songhai navy used boats to control the Niger River and protect water trade routes.

**WEEK FIVE**

## **Socio-Political Structure of the Songhai Empire**

The **Songhai Empire** was one of the greatest and largest empires in West Africa during the 15th and 16th centuries. It reached its peak under rulers like **Sunni Ali** and **Askia Muhammad**. The empire had a well-organized socio-political system that helped it to grow strong and powerful.

### **1. **Political Structure****

The Songhai Empire had a **centralized system of government**. This means that the power to rule was mainly in the hands of one person – the **emperor**.

#### a. **The Emperor (Askia)**

* The emperor was the **supreme ruler** and head of the empire.
* He controlled the **military**, appointed government officials, and made important decisions.
* A famous emperor was **Askia Muhammad**, who reorganized the government and promoted Islamic laws and education.

#### b. **Provincial Governors**

* The empire was divided into **provinces or regions**.
* Each province was ruled by a **governor (called a “Fari”)** appointed by the emperor.
* Governors ensured peace, collected taxes, and reported to the emperor.

#### c. **Officials and Ministers**

* There were several ministers who assisted in managing the empire, such as:
  + Minister of Finance
  + Minister of Justice
  + Minister of the Army
  + Minister of Foreign Affairs
* These ministers helped the emperor run the empire effectively.

#### d. **Judicial System**

* The empire had a strong **Islamic court system**.
* Judges, known as **Qadis**, used **Sharia (Islamic law)** to settle disputes, especially in towns and cities.

### **2. **Social Structure****

The people of the Songhai Empire were divided into **social classes**, which affected their roles and privileges in society.

#### a. **The Royal Family and Nobles**

* This was the **highest class**.
* Included the emperor, his family, and other important leaders.
* They lived in luxury and held political power.

#### b. **Scholars and Islamic Clerics**

* These were respected people who studied and taught the **Qur'an** and Islamic knowledge.
* They worked as **judges, teachers, and advisors** to the emperor.
* The city of **Timbuktu** was famous for learning and had many schools and libraries.

#### c. **Traders and Artisans**

* Traders played a big role in the economy of the empire.
* They traded goods like gold, salt, cloth, and kola nuts.
* Artisans made useful items like tools, clothes, and jewelry.

#### d. **Farmers and Fishermen**

* These were the **majority of the population**.
* They grew crops like millet, sorghum, and rice.
* Fishermen caught fish from the Niger River to feed the people.

#### e. **Slaves**

* Slaves were at the **bottom of the social structure**.
* They worked on farms, in homes, or as servants.
* Some were war captives, while others were born into slavery.

**WEEK SIX**

## **Achievements and Expansion of Askia Muhammad (1439–1528)**

Askia Muhammad (also known as **Askia the Great**) was one of the greatest rulers of the **Songhai Empire**. He ruled from **1493 to 1528** and helped to expand and improve the empire. His reign brought many important changes.

### ****Expansion of the Empire****

Askia Muhammad was a brave and wise military leader. He used a strong army to **expand the size of the empire**.

1. **Conquered New Territories**
2. **Controlled Trade Routes**

### ****Major Achievements of Askia Muhammad****

1. **Organized Government**
   * Askia created a **central government** with **ministers** to handle different parts of the empire, like the army, treasury, justice, and foreign affairs.
   * He appointed **governors** to rule the provinces and report to him.
2. **Promoted Islam**
   * He was a devout Muslim and made **Islam the official religion** of the empire.
   * He encouraged people to **learn the Qur’an**, built **mosques**, and supported **Islamic scholars**.
   * He made a famous **pilgrimage to Mecca** in 1497, which showed the world the greatness of Songhai.
3. **Improved Education**
   * Askia built many **schools** and supported **learning centers**, especially in **Timbuktu**.
   * He invited scholars from other parts of the Muslim world to teach in Songhai.
4. **Established Justice System**
   * He introduced **Islamic laws (Sharia)** and appointed **judges (Qadis)** to settle disputes fairly.
   * This helped to maintain **peace and order** in the empire.
5. **Encouraged Trade and Agriculture**
   * He made **trading safer** by protecting merchants and roads.
   * He improved **farming** by building **irrigation systems** and supporting farmers.
6. **Built a Strong Army**
   * Askia created a **well-trained army** with soldiers, cavalry (horsemen), and weapons.
   * This helped him **protect the empire and expand its borders**.

**WEEK SEVEN**

## **Factors That Led to the Rise of the Songhai Empire**

The **Songhai Empire** rose to power in **West Africa** after the decline of the Mali Empire. Several **important factors** helped the Songhai Empire to grow and become powerful.

### 1. ****Favorable Location****

* The Songhai Empire was located around the **Niger River**.
* The river provided **water for farming, fishing**, and easy **transportation**.
* It also helped in the growth of **trade** with other regions.

### 2. ****Control of Trade Routes****

* Songhai controlled major **trans-Saharan trade routes**.
* They traded in **gold, salt, slaves, and kola nuts**.
* This made the empire **rich and powerful**.

### 3. ****Strong and Brave Leaders****

* Leaders like **Sunni Ali** and **Askia Muhammad** were wise and strong rulers.
* They used powerful armies to protect the empire and conquer new lands.

### 4. ****Military Strength****

* Songhai had a **strong and well-organized army**.
* The army helped to defeat enemies and keep peace in the empire.
* It also helped them expand into other territories.

### 5. ****Fall of the Mali Empire****

* The **Mali Empire**, which was powerful before Songhai, became weak.
* This gave Songhai the chance to **take over important cities like Timbuktu and Gao**.

### 6. ****Promotion of Islam and Education****

* Songhai rulers encouraged **Islamic religion and learning**.
* Cities like **Timbuktu** became famous centers for **Islamic education**.
* This attracted scholar and made the empire more respected.

### 7. ****Good System of Government****

* The rulers of Songhai set up a **central government** with governors and ministers.
* This helped to maintain **order and proper administration** across the empire.

**WEEK EIGHT**

## **Factors That Led to the Fall of the Songhai Empire**

The **Songhai Empire** was once a great and powerful empire in West Africa. But like many empires, it later became weak and **collapsed**. Many **factors (reasons)** caused the fall of the Songhai Empire.

### 1. ****Weak Rulers after Askia Muhammad****

* After the death of **Askia Muhammad**, weak and selfish rulers took over.
* These rulers could not control the large empire.
* There were **many fights** over who should be king.

### 2. ****Civil Wars and Internal Conflicts****

* People in different parts of the empire started **fighting each other**.
* There was **no peace**, and the empire became **divided**.
* These fights weakened the empire from inside.

### 3. ****Poor Leadership and Corruption****

* Some leaders were **corrupt** and only cared about themselves.
* They did not rule well or protect the people.
* This made people lose **trust** in the government.

### 4. ****Invasion by Morocco****

* In **1591**, soldiers from **Morocco** attacked Songhai.
* They had **guns and cannons**, while Songhai’s army used swords and spears.
* The Moroccan army **defeated Songhai** at the **Battle of Tondibi**.

### 5. ****Collapse of Trade****

* The wars and attacks made it **unsafe** to trade.
* Songhai lost control of **important trade routes**.
* This led to **less money** and resources for the empire.

### 6. ****Large Size of the Empire****

* The empire had grown **too big** to manage properly.
* It was hard for the rulers to **control all the provinces**.
* This caused **disorder** and made the empire weak.

**WEEK NINE AND TEN**

**Some other internal factors that led to the fall of Songhai empire includes:**

### 1. Weak Leadership

* After the death of strong rulers like **Askia Muhammad**, the emperors that followed were **not strong or wise**.
* They were **selfish**, fought among themselves, and could not rule well.
* This made the empire **disorganized and divided**.

**2. Civil Wars and Power Struggles**

* There were many **fights over the throne** (who should be the next emperor).
* Different princes and leaders were **fighting for power**.
* These fights caused confusion and **destroyed unity** in the empire.

**3. Rebellion of Provinces**

* Some parts of the empire **broke away** and became independent.
* For example:
  + The **Kingdom of Kebbi**, which was once under Songhai, **gained independence** and started **attacking Songhai**.
  + Some **Hausa States** also **refused to obey Songhai's rule** and acted on their own.
* These actions **weakened the empire** from within.

**4. Corruption and Bad Governance**

* Many leaders and officials were **corrupt**.
* They **misused money**, collected **too many taxes**, and did not care about the people.
* This caused **anger and unhappiness** among the citizens.

**5. Size of the Empire**

* The Songhai Empire had become **too large**.
* It was **difficult to manage and control** all the provinces and people.
* Many areas became **neglected**, and the central government became weak.

**In Summary**

The internal factors that led to the fall of Songhai include:

1. Weak and selfish rulers
2. Civil wars and power struggles
3. Rebellion of provinces like **Kebbi** and **Hausa States**
4. Corruption and bad leadership
5. The large size of the empire

These problems made the empire **easy to attack and defeat** later by the Moroccans.

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