Kingdoms of Africa
Bantu Migrations

- The most prominent event in Sub-Saharan Africa during ancient times were the migrations of the Bantu-speaking peoples and the establishment of agricultural societies in regions where Bantu speakers settled.
- Just as Sudanic agriculture spread to the Nile and provided an economic foundation for the development of many African societies, it also spread to most other regions of Africa south of the Sahara and supported the emergence of distinct tropical agricultural societies.
The Bantu

• Located initially in the lower Niger Valleys, the Bantu began to migrate from West Africa spreading their language, knowledge of iron production, and their experience with settled tropical agriculture.
• Between 500 B.C.E. to 500 C.E., this migration would move Bantu innovations and inherited innovations throughout central Africa and onto to southern Africa.
Geographic Considerations

- North- Mediterranean- access to trade- coastal mountains- land for agriculture
- East- Rift Valley- some mountains- Indian Ocean
- West- grasslands and some rainforest along the Niger river
- Central - equatorial- Congo-only real rainforest
- South- high plateau- temperate climate-savanna
African Kingdoms

800 C.E. - 1600 C.E.
African Kingdoms

- Ghana 750-1076
- Mali 1235-1610
- Songhay 1464-1612
- Great Zimbabwe 11th -15th C.E.
- Swahili coast 12th -15th C.E.

- Many of the dates for these kingdoms are still debated
GHANA
Ghana Empire

- The Ghana Empire or Wagadou Empire (existed c. 750-1076) was located in what is now southeastern Mauritania, Western Mali, and Eastern Senegal.
- It is believed to be the first of many empires that would rise in that part of Africa. It first began in the eighth century, when a dramatic shift in the economy of the Sahel area south of the Sahara allowed more centralized states to form.
- The introduction of the camel, which preceded Arabs and Islam by several centuries, brought about a gradual revolution in trade, and for the first time, the extensive gold, ivory, and salt resources of the region could be sent north and east to population centers in North Africa, the Middle East and Europe in exchange for manufactured goods.
The empire owed much of its prosperity to trans-Saharan trade and a strategic location near the gold and salt mines. Both gold and salt seemed to be the dominant sources of revenue, exchanged for various products such as textiles, ornaments and cloth, among other materials.

Many of the hand-crafted leather goods found in old Morocco also had their origins in the empire. The main centre of trade was Koumbi Saleh.
Ghana’s Economy & Decline

- The taxation system imposed by the king (or 'Ghana') required that both importers and exporters pay a percentage fee, not in currency, but in the product itself. Tax was also extended to the goldmines.
- In addition to the exerted influence of the king onto local regions, tribute was also received from various tributary states and chiefdoms to the empire's peripheral.
- The empire began struggling after reaching its apex in the early 11th century. By 1059, the population density around the empire's leading cities was seriously overtaxing the region.
- The Sahara desert was expanding southward, threatening food supplies. While imported food was sufficient to support the population when income from trade was high, when trade faltered, this system also broke down.
Mali
Mali Empire

- The Mali Empire or Manding Empire or Manden Kurufa was a medieval West African state of the Mandinka from c. 1235 to c. 1610.
- The empire was founded by Sundiata Keita and became renowned for the wealth of its rulers, especially Mansa Musa I.
- The Mali Empire had many profound cultural influences on West Africa allowing the spread of its language, laws and customs along the Niger River.
Mali Empire

- The Mali Empire flourished because of trade above all else. It contained three immense gold mines within its borders unlike the Ghana Empire, which was only a transit point for gold.
- The empire taxed every ounce of gold or salt that entered its borders.
- By the beginning of the 14th century, Mali was the source of almost half the Old World's gold exported from mines in Bambuk, Boure and Galam.
Songhay
The Songhai Empire, also known as the Songhay Empire was a pre-colonial African state centered in eastern Mali. From the early 15th to the late 16th Century, Songhai was one of the largest African empires in history. Its capital was the city of Gao, where a small Songhai state had existed since the 9th Century. Its base of power was on the bend of the Niger River in present-day Niger and Burkina Faso.
Songhai Empire
The Songhai economy was based on a traditional caste system. The clan a person belonged to ultimately decided their occupation. The most common castes were metalworkers, fishermen, and carpenters. Lower caste participants consisted of mostly non-farm working slaves, who at times were provided special privileges and held high positions in society. At the top were nobleman and direct descendants of the original Songhai people, followed by freemen and traders. At the bottom were war captives and slaves obligated to labor, especially in farming. Dogons, Tuareg, and others
Songhay Society

- Upper classes in society converted to Islam while lower classes often continued to follow traditional religions. Sermons emphasized obedience to the king.
- Timbuktu was the educational capital. Sonni Ali established a system of government under the royal court, later to be expanded by Askia Muhammad, which appointed governors and mayors to preside over local tributary states, situated around the Niger valley.
- Local chiefs were still granted authority over their respective domains as long as they did not undermine Songhai policy.
Decline

• Following Dauoud's death, a civil war of succession weakened the Empire, leading Morocco Sultan Ahmad I al-Mansur Saadi to dispatch an invasion force under the eunuch Judar Pasha.
• Judar Pasha was a Spaniard by birth, but had been captured as an infant and educated at the Moroccan court. After a cross-Saharan march, Judar's forces razed the salt mines at Taghaza and moved on Gao; when Askia Ishaq II (r. 1588-1591) met Judar at the 1591 Battle of Tondibi, Songhai forces were routed by a cattle stampede triggered by the Moroccans' gunpowder weapons despite vastly superior numbers.
• Judar proceeded to sack Gao, Timbuktu, and Djenné, destroying the Songhai as a regional power.
• Governing so vast an empire proved too much for the Moroccans, and they soon relinquished control of the region, letting it splinter into dozens of smaller kingdoms.
Great Zimbabwe
Great Zimbabwe
Lost Kingdom

- Great Zimbabwe, or "house of stone", is the name given to hundreds of great stone ruins spread out over a 500 km² (200 sq mile) area within the modern day country of Zimbabwe, which itself is named after the ruins.
- The exact origin of the word Zimbabwe is not known.
Great Zimbabwe

- Built consistently throughout the period from the 11th century to the 15th century, the ruins at Great Zimbabwe are some of the oldest and largest structures located in Southern Africa.
- At its peak, estimates are that the ruins of Great Zimbabwe had as many as 18,000 inhabitants. The ruins that survive are built entirely of stone.
- The ruins span 1,800 acres (7 km²) and cover a radius of 100 to 200 miles (160 to 320 km).
Great Zimbabwe

- It is believed Great Zimbabwe located south of the Zambezi River was where much of Africa’s gold was mined.
- At its peak in about 1400, the city which occupied 193 acres may have had 18,000 inhabitants.
- Between 1250 and 1450, local African craftsmen built stone structures for Great Zimbabwe’s rulers, priests, and wealthy citizens.
Great Zimbabwe

- The largest structure served as a king’s court.
- Mixed farming and cattle-herding was Great Zimbabwe’s economic base.
- Long distance trade mostly in gold
- Ecological crisis caused from overgrazing and the destruction of forests may have led to their decline.
Great Zimbabwe

- While there is little known about Great Zimbabwe, its size and influence on the region is just recently being rediscovered.
- European disbelief in a Bantu-speaking empire is still under debate in some academic circles.
- The European belief that Africans were not capable of such an advanced kingdom fueled the speculation of the kingdom as a lost kingdom of some White nation perhaps the Queen of Sheba.
Swahili Coast
Swahili coast

- 1800 miles long
- Diffusion from Indian, Arab, Chinese, and others
- Islam perhaps most enduring
Swahili Coast

- While the Swahili Coast had kingdoms, it was not controlled by just one kingdom.
- The region was a center hub of trade and commerce in east Africa.
- The introduction of various traditions such as Islam helped to shape the character of the Swahili Coast.
Swahili Coast

- While trans-Saharan caravan traffic linked west Africa to the larger trading world, merchant mariners sailing in the sea lanes of the Indian Ocean formed a similar service for coastal east Africa or the Swahili Coast.
- Swahili is an Arabic term meaning “coasters.”
- The Swahili dominated the east African coast from Mogadishu in the north to Kilwa, the Comoro Islands, and Sofala in the south.
Swahili Coast

- By the tenth century, Swahili society attracted increasing attention from Islamic merchants.
- From the interior regions of east Africa, the Swahili obtained gold, slaves, ivory, and exotic local products.
- In exchange, the Swahili city-states received pottery, glass, and textiles that the Muslim merchants brought from Persia, India, and China.
Swahili City-States

- By the 11th and 12th Century, trade had brought tremendous wealth to coastal east Africa.
- Mogadishu, Lamu, Malindi, Mombasa, Zanzibar, Kilwa, Mozambique, and Sofala were some of the trade centers that eventually developed into powerful city-states governed by a king who supervised trade and organized public life in the region.
- Wood structures to Coral and stone based structures
East African Kingdoms

- Recent archaeological discoveries are reshaping our picture of east African society.
- Racism and ethnic identification has helped to shape these previous conceptions of the Bantu-speaking peoples of this region.
- Like elsewhere, Islam laid a cultural foundation in East Africa but this cultural foundation was atop previous indigenous cultures.
African Society

- Africa is a land of tremendous diversity.
- The continent supported a wide array of societies and economies: mobile bands of hunting and gathering peoples, fishing peoples, nomadic herders, subsistence farmers, to city-based societies that drew their livelihoods from mining, manufacturing, and trade.
- In kingdoms, empires, and city-states, African peoples developed complex societies with clearly defined classes: ruling elites, military nobles, administrative officials, religious authorities, wealthy merchants, artisans, business entrepreneurs, common people, peasants, and slaves.
African Society

- These societies resembled those found in other settled, agricultural lands of Eurasia organized by powerful states.
- In the small states and kin-based societies of sub-Saharan Africa, social structures were different.
- Kinship, sex and gender expectations, and age groupings were the principal considerations that determined social position.
Kinship Groups

- Extended families and clans served as the main foundation of social and economic organization in small-scale agricultural societies.
- Private owned property did not exist; common lands
- Gender roles and expectations were different than in other lands
- Creator god and lesser gods and spirits to the arrival of Christianity and Islam
Conclusions

- States and societies of sub-Saharan Africa differed considerably from those in other parts of the eastern hemisphere.
- Agricultural based kin groups rather than state structures
- Interaction with other groups forged large city-states and imperial empires
- Gold, salt, ivory, and slaves from Africa became mainstays in other regions
- By 1500 C.E. African traditions and Islamic influences had combined to fashion a series of powerful, productive, and distinctive societies in sub-Saharan Africa.
African Kingdoms

- Ghana 750-1076
- Mali 1235-1610
- Songhay 1464-1612
- Great Zimbabwe 11th -15th C.E.
- Swahili coast 12th -15th C.E.

Many of the dates for these kingdoms are still debated
Kingdoms of Africa