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| |  | | --- | | **Background** The African Trading Kingdoms consist of three main cultures, **Ghana**, **Mali**, and **Songhai**, all located in West Africa. All three kingdoms maintained **vast trading networks** across the Sahara desert and into the Middle East and North Africa. The main export was **gold**, which made each kingdom wealthy and strong, and provided them with the conditions necessary for cultural and intellectual achievement.  **Islamic Influences** Ghana, Mali, and Songhai were all influenced by [**Islam**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=islam','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');) to different degrees. The kings of Ghana often had **Islamic advisors**, while Mali and Songhai established **Islamic Empires** after converting. In Mali, the [**emperor**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=emperor','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');) [**Mansa Musa**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=mansa%20musa','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');) was famous for his [**pilgrimage**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=pilgrimage','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');) **to Mecca**, one of the [**Five Pillars of Islam**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=five%20pillars%20of%20islam','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');). This pilgrimage gained Mali closer ties with the Islamic world, and increased [**trade**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=trade','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');) between Mali and the Muslim Empire.  **Arts & Literature** African art is often [**religious**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=religion','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');) in nature. Religious **statues and masks** were carved from **ivory**, **wood**, and **bronze**. Some art was decorative, usually identifying royalty or membership in a particular clan.  Africans used both **oral** and **written** literary [**traditions**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=tradition','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');). Most written material is in Arabic due to the influence of Islam. These writings contain information on [**government**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=government','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');) and **law**. **Histories** and **folktales** were usually passed from generation to generation orally. These stories often contained moral lessons and were used as a teaching device.  **Education** During the 1400s, **Timbuktu** became a center of learning under the leadership of Mali emperor, **Mansa Musa**. Again, this is the influence of **Islam**, with Islamic [**scholars**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=scholar','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');) traveling from around the Muslim world to study and teach and the **University of Timbuktu**.  **Commerce** Ghana, Mali, and Songhai established trade routes that were in use for centuries. Besides gold, these kingdoms transported a number of **agricultural products** to the Mediterranean and then on to Europe. A negative effect of this interaction was the start of the [**slave trade**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=slave%20trade','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');). | |