

CHAPTER 25-AFRICA AND THE ATLANTIC WORLD

In West Africa in the middle 1400s, the empire of Songhay, under the leadership of Sonni Ali, expanded and replaced the kingdom of Mali. The Muslim emperors of Songhay ruled over a wealthy empire with an elaborate administration, a powerful army, and, unusual for an African state, an imperial navy. In the late 1500s, after a series of revolts by their subject peoples, Songhay fell to the Moroccans and number of small regional kingdoms and city-states emerged.

In east Africa, Vasco da Gamma forced the city-state of Kilwa into a tribute relationship with Portugal and eventually the Portuguese navy would subdue all of the Swahili states. With the trade disrupted, the Swahili states declined.

In central and south Africa, other powerful kingdoms fell to the Europeans. In 1482 Kongo entered into commercial and diplomatic relations with the Portuguese, and the kings of Kongo converted to Christianity in the 1500s. The two kingdoms of Kongo and Portugal exchanged a number of different trade goods including slaves. The slave trade undermined the kingdom of Kongo and in 1665 the Kongo and Portugal went to war. This war ended with the execution of the king of the Kongo. The kingdom of Ndongo (modern Angola) also became a Portuguese colony, based on slave trade, despite the resistance by its queen, Nzinga.

In the south, there were a number of regional kingdoms, the best example being the kingdom of Great Zimbabwe, significant in part because of the gold that was traded to the Swahili coast. Farther south, the Portuguese and then the Dutch arrived at the Cape of Good Hope. The Dutch set up a trading post in Cape Town in 1652. The growing Dutch population drove out the native population and South Africa remained a prosperous Dutch colony for a number of years.

Both Islam and Christianity had an impact on Africa. Islam was dominant in West Africa and along the Swahili coast, brought with it education in the form of schools as well a university. Christianity came to Sub-Saharan Africa via the Portuguese and, as with Islam, in some cases blended with the native religions.

No discussion of Africa would be complete without addressing the slave trade. Slavery was common in traditional Africa as in many other places. Slaves were war captives or criminals who were employed in agriculture and sometimes other positions. Between the eighth and the eighteenth centuries, the Muslims had a well-established slave trade in Africa with as many as 10 million slaves taken during that period. The Europeans both used and expanded those trade networks. Starting in the mid-1400s, the Portuguese shipped slaves to Portugal and Spain and then to plantations in the Atlantic islands and Brazil. The Spanish brought slaves to the Caribbean and the English brought slaves to North America. This commerce was known as the "triangular trade" with goods from Europe traded for slaves, slaves traded for sugar in the Caribbean and American goods sent to Europe. The entire voyage, from capture to arrival, was brutal and in some cases resulted in a loss of 50 percent of the people transported. The majority of slaves were brought to the colonies to work on plantations growing cash crops such as sugar, tobacco, and cotton. The plantation experience resulted in high death rates, especially in the Caribbean, which meant continued slave importation. While the slaves offered some resistance, revolts were rare and brutally suppressed. In Africa, the loss of as many

as 12 million people from the population led to distortion of sex ratios (more men taken as slaves than women) and political turmoil.

The slave trade in the Atlantic came to an end in part because of the ideas of freedom drawn from the American and French Revolutions, the increasing cost of slavery, and the decline in the prices of the products the slaves helped produce. The increase in manufacturing and the increasing importance of Africa as a market for goods also helped bring the trade to an end. By 1833, the British ended their involvement in the slave trade and used their fleet to suppress trade by other nations. By 1888, the Atlantic slave trade was over.

Key Concept 4.1. Globalizing Networks of Communication and Exchange

- IV. The new global circulation of goods was facilitated by royal chartered European monopoly companies that took silver from Spanish colonies in the Americas to purchase Asian goods for the Atlantic markets, but regional markets continued to flourish in Afro-Eurasia by using established commercial practices and new transoceanic shipping services developed by European merchants.

Key Concept 4.2. New Forms of Social Organization and Modes of Production

- I. Traditional peasant agriculture increased and changed, plantations expanded, and demand for labor increased. These changes both fed and responded to growing global demand for raw materials and finished products.
- II. As new social and political elites changed, they also restructured new ethnic, racial and gender hierarchies.

Key Concept 4.3. State Consolidation and Imperial Expansion

- I. Rulers used a variety of methods to legitimize and consolidate their power.