

African kingdoms



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What is it in today's society that debates influence on the " Old World"? Well in today's society, there are large debates to modern civilization and causing influences such as trade, religion, music, dance, that helped develop the " Old World". The " Old World" was the concept of three continents, Africa, Asia and Europe, which goes back to classical antiquity. Classical antiquity is a broader term to determine a long period of historical culture along the Mediterranean Sea, distinguishing interlocking of ancient Greece and Rome.

To narrow an even more in depth influence a better comparison would be dating all the way back to ancient West African Kingdoms such as Songhai and Mali. In the " Old World", trade played a large part in keeping the economy growing, developing and booming. In ancient West African Kingdoms Songhai and Mali, they portrayed a perfect example by trading salt, animal hides and of course gold. The Songhai was one of the biggest Islamic empires in history. It's base power was the bend of the Niger River. Economic trade existed throughout the empire due to the standing army in the provinces.

Songhai trade had a bigger influence on the " Old World", because of their ability to conquer and establish strong trading grounds which demonstrated a valuable ethic. Tax was imposed onto peripheral chiefdoms and provinces to ensure the dominance of Songhai, and in return these provinces were given almost complete autonomy. Songhai rulers got involved in the affairs of neighboring states when a situation became a large risk. Usually it was considered an isolated incident. Each town was represented by government officials, holding positions and responsibilities similar to today's central bureaucrats.

In the “ Old World” a lot of these traits were used to establish a strong hold to a surviving empire. “ There are two main sources of information about Sonni Ali. One is in the Islamic chronicles of the period, the other is through Songhai oral tradition. ” These sources reflect two different interpretations of Sonni Ali's role in the development of the Songhai Empire. Sonni Ali went to school and studied the traditional African arts of the region and was well versed in the forms and techniques of warfare when he came to power in 1464 in the small kingdom of Songhai, which was centered around its capital city of Gao on the Niger River.

As the 15th consecutive ruler of the Sonni dynasty, he began his reign which had begun in 1335. One of Ali's ancestors, Sonni Sulaiman Mar, is said to have wrested Songhai away from the Mali Empire towards the end of the 14th century. The “ Old World” brought ruling techniques into existence through the studies of how strong the Songhai Empire held their ground. Songhai's architecture is very islamic and african. They used alot of Islamic designs and one of the most famous buildings that have the best Muslim designs is the Friday Mosque.

The mosque had flat roofed walls supported by plaster-like buttresses topped with finials. The huge towers reflected of Islamic designs and the two horns sticking out of the towers was a local feature for the Songhai empire's buildings. The “ Old World” had many architecture designs that were flat topped built and in today you can see in their buildings that not much has changed. A building that was built during the Songhai Empire stands still and through the “ Old World”. This building is known as the Tomb of Askia.

Of the three empires from ancient West Africa I believe the Songhai had the most influence on the " Old World". Through time they used their strongest trade point in their capitol Gao, where the bend in the Niger River was. This was a visual example on how trade can be taken serious and considered more of a business matter through unique travel. They used agriculture to display the qualities of their trade and economy. They would have their empire divided into the qualifications of their ethics and use them to work. They displayed the unity and discipline that an empire needed.

From the different ranks reaching all the way to the army who were the main grounds of the trade in different provinces or in other words considered the back bone. Not only in the " Old World" are these ethics seen but also in today's situations. For example we as an America army, have troops in a trading ground in the middle east. We are able to trade because that is our standing ground. The Songhai Empire was known to overcome most obstacle that were found difficult for other West African Kingdoms and that is why in the " Old World" they based a lot of their knowledge on how to become a better empire as individual continents.