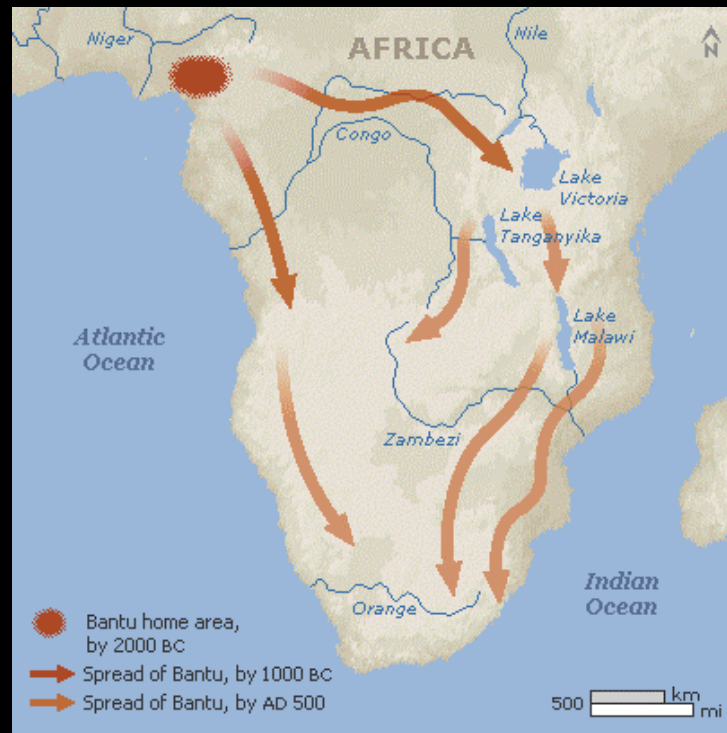


# West Africa: Bantu Migration and the Stainless Society



# Bantu Migration

- Around 1500 BCE farmers of the Niger and Benue River valleys in West Africa began migrating south and east, bringing with them their languages (Bantu family of languages) and their knowledge of agriculture and metallurgy.
- This migration, referred to as the Bantu Migration, continued over the course of the next 2,000 years.

# Bantu Migration


- It is believed that the migration was spurred by climatic changes, which made the area known as the Sahara Desert too dry to live in.
- People moved south out of the Sahara into the Bantu's homeland, which in turn caused them to move to the forest of Central Africa, then eventually beyond the forest to the east and south.

- However, not all the Bantu speakers moved away. Further north in the upper Niger valley can be found the remains of Jenne-Jeno, believed to be the first city in sub-Saharan Africa.



# Jenne-Jeno

- Beginning as a small fishing settlement around 250 BCE and reached urban size in 400 C.E. Archeologists believe that it was a unique form of urbanism comprising a collection of individual communities.

 Not all human societies have followed the same path toward sophistication, and that urbanization that doesn't necessarily mean civilization.

# Kush, Axum, and the Swahili Coast

- The Kush and Axum civilizations developed to the south of Egypt in the upper reaches of the Nile River.
- Kush developed at about the same time as ancient Egypt, and at one point around 750 BCE actually conquered it

# Kush, Axum, and the Swahili Coast

- Less than 100 years later, the Kush retreated southward back to its capital at Meroe, where it became a center for ironworks and trade



# Kush, Axum, and the Swahili Coast

- After the Kush declined around 200 CE another empire Axum rose (modern day Ethiopia)
  - never conquered another civilizations
  - traded w/ them, especially ivory and gold
  - 4th century Axum converted to Christianity
  - 7th century converted to Islam



# Kush, Axum, and the Swahili Coast

- These conversions illustrate that the people of Axum were in constant contact with the empires of the Mediterranean world
  - Ethiopia's large Christian community is direct result Axum conversion

- Incredible wealth generated by this trade resulted in the growth of powerful kingdoms and trading cities along the coast.
- Like wealthy trading cities throughout the world, they became political and cultural centers.
- By the 15th century, what had previously been mud and wooden outposts had become impressive coral and stone mosques, public buildings, and fortified cities with trade goods from all over the world.

- To facilitate political and economic relationships the ruling elite and merchant classes of the eastern African kingdoms converted to Islam, but maintained many of their own cultural traditions. Eventually, Islam spread throughout most of East Africa.

# The Other Side of the Sand: Ghana, Mali, and Songhai



# The Other Side of the Sand: Ghana, Mali, and Songhai

- Kush and Axum were in the eastern Africa, along the Nile River and near the Red Sea. Therefore they had easy access to other cultures.
- The cultures of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai, were in the west Africa, south of the Sahara.



# Ghana, Mali, and Songhai

- When the Muslim Empires spread across North Africa in the 7th and 8th centuries, these African kingdoms began trading with the larger Mediterranean economy.
- Islamic traders penetrated the unforgiving Sahara desert and reached the fertile wealthy interior of Africa, **called sub-Saharan** (beneath the Sahara) while the African traders pushed northward towards Carthage and Tripoli.
- Previously, the desert had acted as one gigantic “don’t –want-to-deal-with-it” barrier, so people typically didn’t.

# Ghana, Mali, and Songhai

- Increasingly caravans of traders were willing to do what they had to do to get the riches on the other side of the sand. At first, the west Africans were in search of **salt**, which they had little but existed in the Sahara. When they encountered the Islamic traders along the salt road, they started to trade more than salt. The consequence was an explosion of trade.



# Ghana, Mali, and Songhai

- Why were the Islamic traders so interested in trading with the west African kingdoms?



Because in Ghana and Mali there was TONS of gold.



# Ghana, Mali, and Songhai

- The trade brought more than just Islamic goods, it brought Islam. For Ghana the result was devastating. The empire was subjected to a Holy War led by Islamic group intent on converting (or else killing) them.
- While Ghana was able to defeat the Islamic forces, their empire fell into decline.

# Ghana, Mali, and Songhai

- By the time Mali came to power, the region had converted to Islam anyway, this time in a more peaceful transition.

# Ghana, Mali, and Songhai

- One of the greatest Mali rulers, Mansa Musa, built a capital at Timbuktu and expanded the kingdom well beyond the bounds of Ghana. In 1307, Musa made a pilgrimage to Mecca, complete w/ an entourage of hundreds of gold-carrying servants and camels. The journey was so extravagant and so long and so impressive to everyone who saw it, that Musa became an overnight international sensation.

# Ghana, Mali, and Songhai

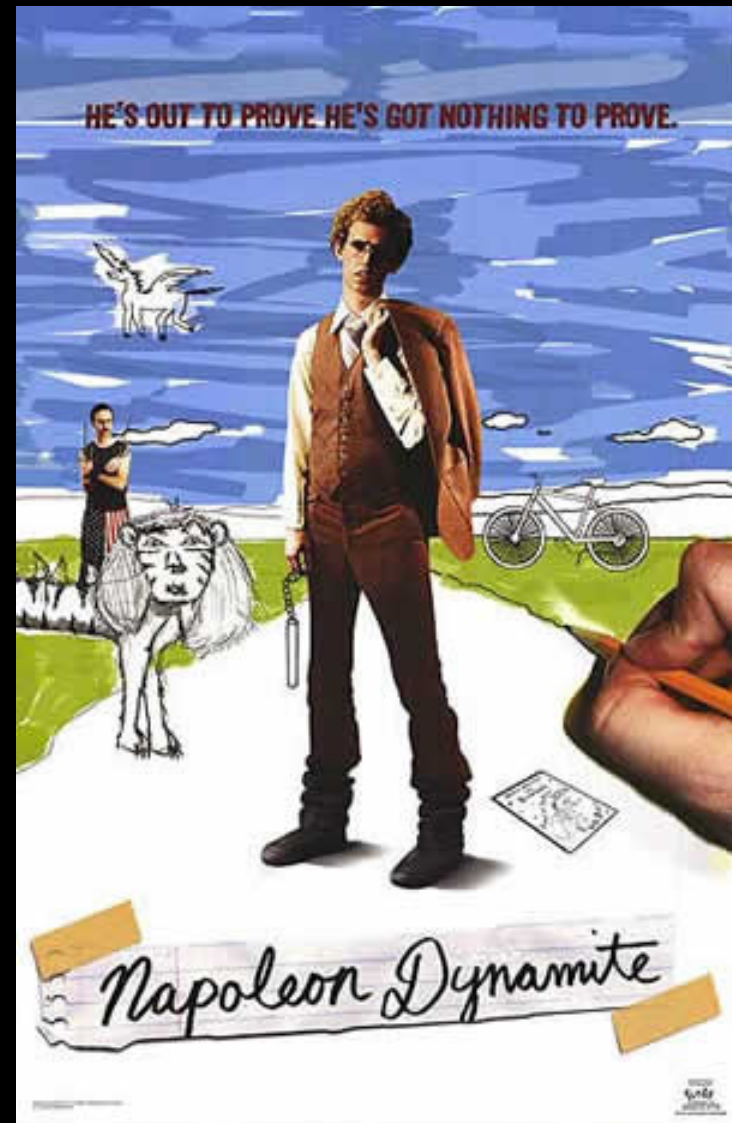
- The largest empire in west Africa was formed in the mid-fifteenth century, when Songhai ruler Sonni Ali conquered the entire region and established the Songhai Empire. The Songhai Empire lasted until around 1600 CE and during its reign, Timbuktu became a major cultural center, complete w/ a university that drew scholars from the Islamic world.

# The Arts in Africa

- Oral literature was an important part of life in most African communities. History and stories were passed from one generation to the next, not through written text, but through storytelling. It was a production akin to dramatic performance. The stories were told the same way for so many generations that people knew the lines. Everyone was able to participate in the story telling by reciting at appropriate times.

Sweet!

- Think about what it is like to see Napoleon Dynamite w/ a room full of people who've already seen the movie.



**Deb:** What are you drawing?

**Napoleon Dynamite:** A liger.

**Deb:** What's a liger?

**Napoleon Dynamite:** It's pretty much my favorite animal. It's like a lion and a tiger mixed... bred for its skills in magic.

# Benin Culture

- The Benin culture (present day Nigeria) mastered a bronze sculpting technique. They made clay molds around wax carving, melted the wax, filled the mold with melted bronze, and after breaking the clay mold, revealed some of the most beautiful early bronze work created by any civilization.





