**The Kingdom of Mali**

Take another look at the map above showing Africa's kingdoms and empires. Notice the relationship between Ghana and Mali. What do you see? The Kingdom of Mali includes all of Ghana plus a lot more territory! During its time, Mali was the second largest empire in the world only after the Mongolian empire in Asia. The dates that historians have designated for the Kingdom of Mali are from the 13th to 15th centuries CE.

The Kingdom of Mali came to control the gold trade that the Kingdom of Ghana had controlled before it, but it also expanded its trading in many ways. The Kingdom of Mali controlled the salt trade in the north and many caravan trade routes. Additionally, it traded extensively with Egypt and the copper mine areas to the east.

The founder and first ruler of the Kingdom of Mali was Sundiata Keita. We know about him through the writings of a 14th century North African historian named Ibn Khaldun. Sundiata expanded the kingdom to include the Kingdom of Ghana and West African gold fields.

The most celebrated king of Mali was Mansa Musa. He greatly extended Mali's territory and power during his reign. He made a name for himself in distant regions throughout the Muslim world through his pilgrimage to Mecca, which is in present-day Saudi Arabia. Sixty thousand people and eighty camels carrying 300 lbs. of gold each accompanied him to Mecca.

Several great centres of Islamic learning were also established during the Kingdom of Mali. Among them were the legendary Timbuktu, Djenne, and Gao. Scholars came from all over the Muslim world to study at these places, which have a long and rich history of learning in religion, mathematics, music, law, and literature. Although many people in Mali maintained their indigenous religions during this time, Islam was becoming well established throughout the kingdom.