

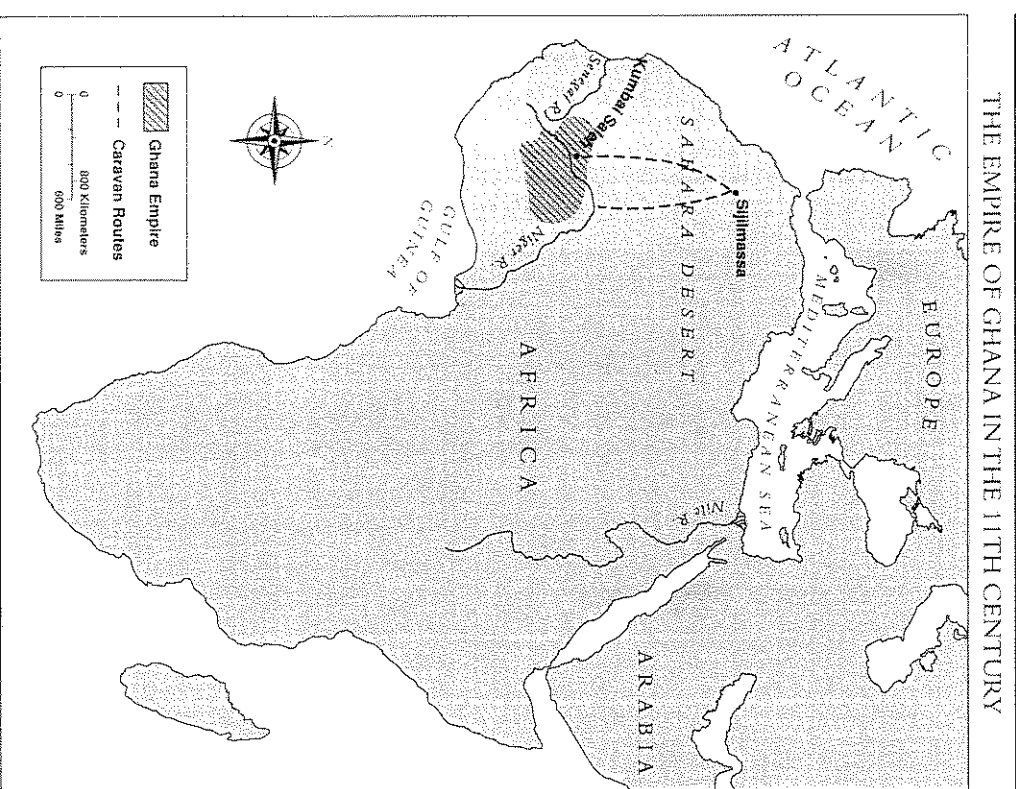
- a. In traveling from Mecca to Medina, you would be going (1) north (2) south (3) west.
  - b. The distance from Mecca to Medina is about (1) 200 kilometers (2) 400 kilometers (3) 800 kilometers.
  - c. The Byzantine Empire was (1) on the Atlantic Ocean (2) on the Red Sea (3) between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean.
  - d. In traveling from Damascus to Baghdad, you would be going (1) west (2) north (3) east.
  - e. The distance from Cordoba to Tours is about (1) 400 kilometers (2) 800 kilometers (3) 1,200 kilometers.
2. Outline the similarities and differences among Islam, Judaism, and Christianity.
  3. Using the map on page 126, and other sources, prepare a report on the extent of Islam's expansion from the years 634 to 750.
  4. Muhammad assumed that the Jews and Christians would accept his teachings. Why did he believe this? Why do you think they rejected Islam?
  5. Imagine that you are preparing to write a book about the life of Muhammad. Prepare the table of contents. Which part of his life interests you most? Why?

## 9. A Land of Gold

Ghana, the earliest of the great West African trading empires, controlled large areas around the Senegal and Niger rivers. From the eighth to the eleventh centuries, Ghana's location, at the southwestern end of the caravan routes that crossed the Sahara Desert, helped make its merchants and kings very rich. The Ghanaians exchanged gold, ivory, and slaves for Saharan salt, Arabian horses, Egyptian cloth, and North African and European swords.

Salt was actually worth its weight in gold because it was not found in central Africa. Salt was needed to preserve food. Salt merchants traveled across the desert for many months until they reached Ghana. There, they traded the salt for gold.

At its height, Ghana controlled most of the sources of African gold, and its king was believed to be the richest person in the world. This was



understandable, since the king levied (collected) a tax on all the gold shipped out of the country. In addition, he kept *all* the gold nuggets for himself. Only the gold dust was traded.

### Kumbai Saleh 1020

King Kanissa'ai sat on the gold balcony of his pavilion (a large, tentlike building). Around the pavilion stood the king's guard of mounted horsemen. The men wore golden armor, and the horses had gold-embroidered trimmings. Strangers

behind the king were ten pages (young people) carrying shields and gold-covered swords. Many Ghanaians had assembled to listen to the king and partake of the ample meal he had provided. It was evening. A huge fire had been built for light and warmth.

"Your Highness," whispered the prime minister, "you have many decisions to make today."

"Today is no different from any other day," said the king.

"What is the most important decision I have to make today?"

"The treasurer will explain."

The royal treasurer bowed and spoke to the king. "Your Majesty, your storehouse is completely full of gold nuggets. And more are arriving every day. We have no more space to store them. What shall we do?"

The king shook his head and replied, "Treasurer, how many times have I told you to plan ahead? Build another storehouse and dig a deep vault underneath. Place the gold in the vault and guard it well. In the meantime, give one small nugget to each poor person in this audience."

"Yes, your Majesty," said the treasurer. "I will have a new storehouse built immediately."

"Fine. Prime Minister, I am ready for the next problem," said the king.

"There are several merchants here from the distant desert town of Sijilmassa," said the minister. "They are eager to speak with you."

"Gentlemen, welcome to my capital of Kumbai Saleh. How can I help you?"

A spokesperson for the group stepped forward. "Thank you, Your Highness. We have traded our salt for your gold for many years. Never have we bargained or quarreled with your traders. We have accepted whatever gold they offered. But now, we have a small request." The man hesitated.

The king gave him permission to go on.

The man seemed uncomfortable. Finally, he said, "Your Highness, not everyone in the north is happy with the gold dust your traders exchange for our salt. My people have asked

"Absolutely not!" replied the king angrily. "Our agreement is to exchange gold for salt. There is no mention of the shape or weight. You will accept the gold dust or nothing!"

The man was about to say something, but the look on the king's face warned him to remain silent. Kanissai was a great and powerful king who allowed no one to challenge his authority.

The king announced, "This discussion is closed."

The salt merchants meekly withdrew from the king's presence, bowing as they left.

## Postscript

At its height, Ghana included large parts of modern-day Mali, Mauritania, and Senegal. But in 1076, Muslim people from North Africa invaded Ghana and overpowered Kumbai Saleh, and the political decline of Ghana began. The economy of Ghana was damaged by the shifting of the Saharan trade routes to the east, and agriculture suffered as water supplies failed.

In the thirteenth century, the empire of Mali emerged as Ghana's successor. We shall learn more about Mali in the following unit.

## QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. How did Ghana's location help make its merchants rich?
2. How did King Kanissai of Ghana become very rich?
3. What did the king order when he was told the treasurer's problem?
4. Why were the salt merchants from Sijilmassa unhappy?
5. How do you explain the decline of Ghana?

## UNDERSTANDING THE STORY

- A. Write T for each statement that is true, F for each statement that is false, and O for each statement that is an opinion.

1. Ghana's location made trade unprofitable.
2. Salt was worth its weight in gold.
3. The king of Ghana was believed to be the richest person in the