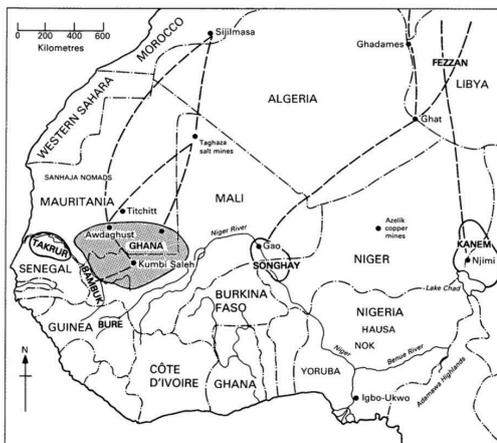


2016-06-27 From the preparatory notes for Class 10 of the introductory course on political economy: ‘The evolution of property and how it rules the world’.

Complete the discussion of Shillington, *History of Africa* (3rd edition, pages 85-95) distributed previously. Slides used to illustrate the discussion on this reading:

Kingdom of Ancient Ghana



Map 6.2 The kingdom of Ancient Ghana in the eleventh century (superimposed on modern boundaries)



Camels transporting salt in the Sahara



Salt in various forms



These three questions were distributed by email prior to the class:

1. What were some of the reasons for the formation of the [ancient] Ghanaian state in the period 800 - 900 CE?
2. Where did the King of the Ghanaian state get his wealth from? How did the king maintain control over the state?
3. Why did the Ghanaian state decline?

Here are some answers to consider:

1. What were some of the reasons for the formation of the [ancient] Ghanaian state in the period 800 - 900 CE?

- ◆ There was pre-existing development of farming, domestication of sorghum and millet as well as development of iron work technology (for farming and weaponry) in West Africa by the Soninke.
- ◆ The Soninke, being on the fringe of the desert had obtained horses from the nomads which gave them a military advantage.
- ◆ Raids by Sanhaja Berber nomads prompted Soninke chiefdoms and farmers to group together for their own defence.
- ◆ The Soninke were ideally placed to exploit growth in the trade in gold from the Sahara – they were located mid-way between the salt reserves (of the desert) and the gold fields of the upper Senegal river. They could act as ‘middle-men’ supplying other groups with their surplus grain or passing on salt to the Bambuk gold producers to their South.

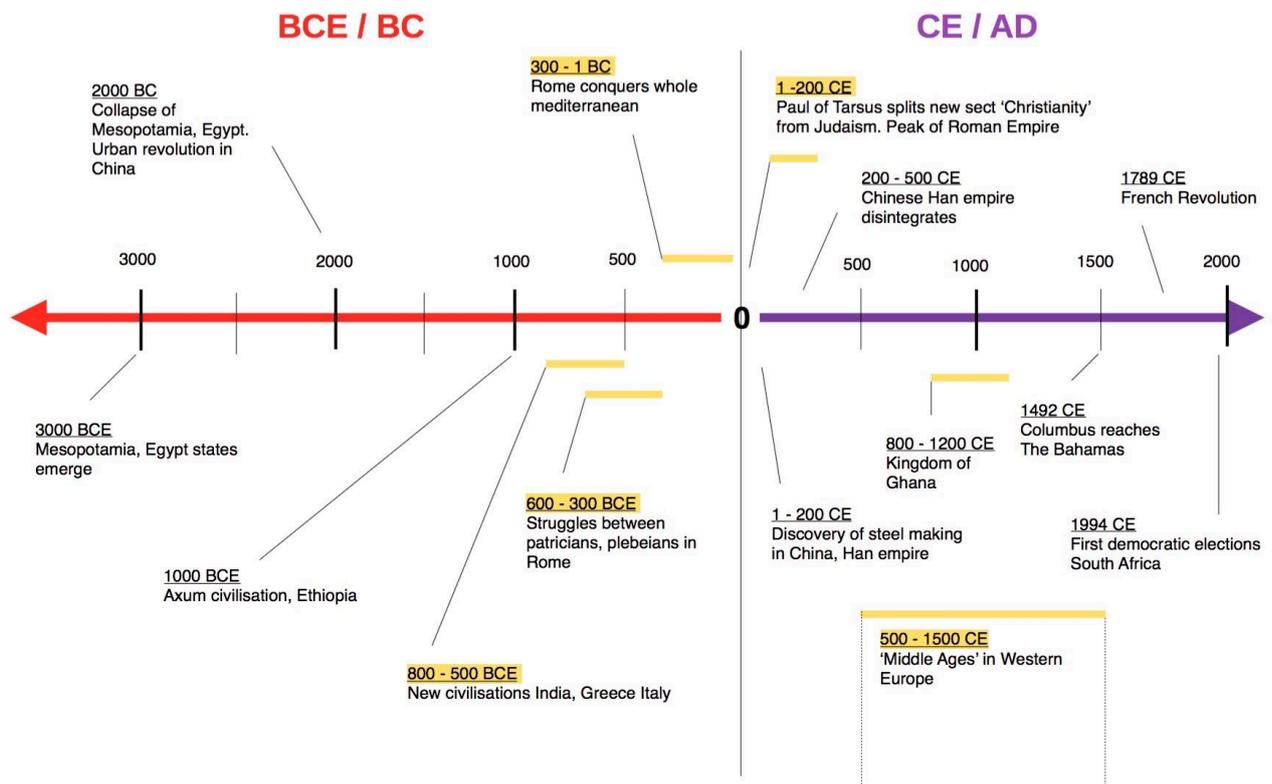
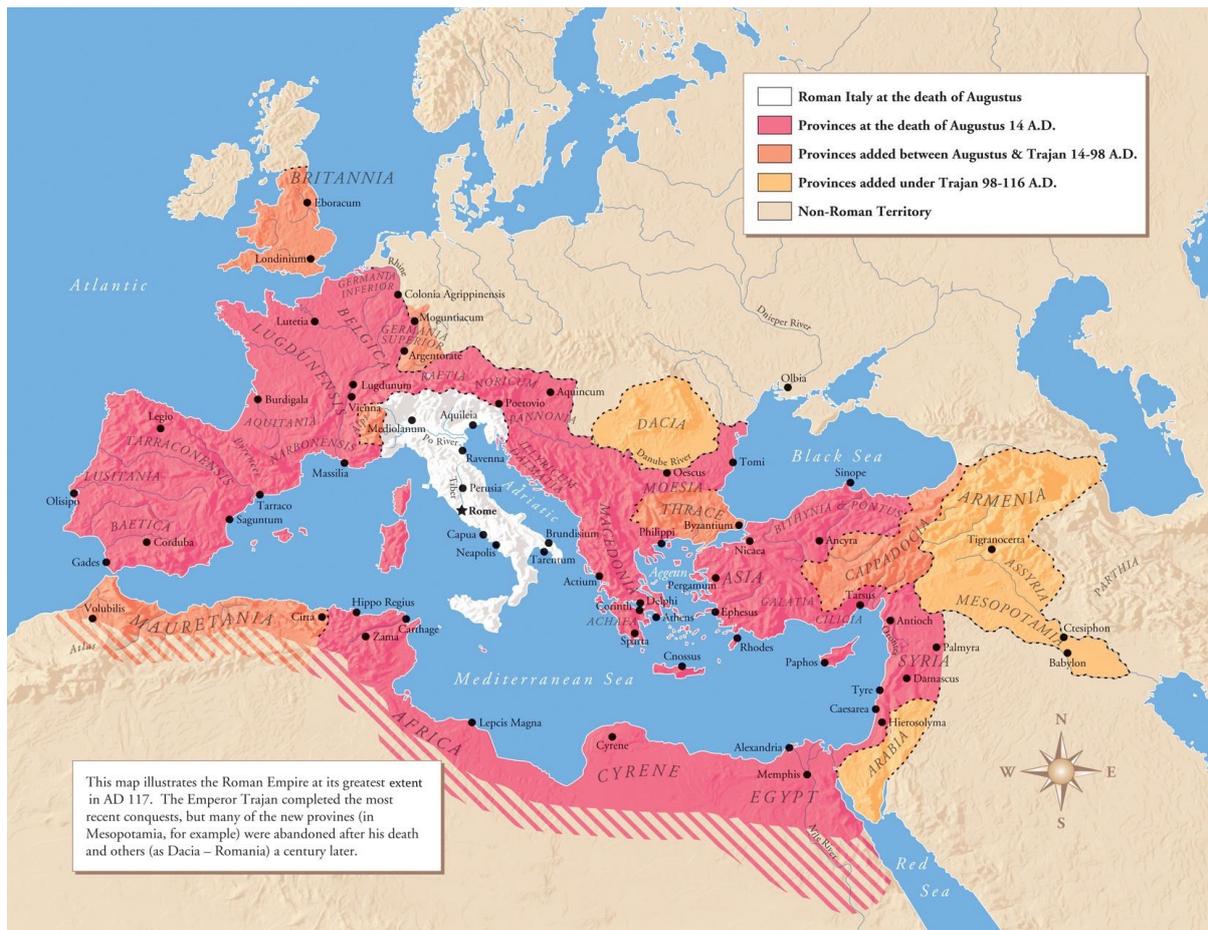
2. Where did the King of the Ghanaian state get his wealth from? How did the king maintain control over the state?

- ◆ The Soninke kept the source of the gold a secret in their dealings with Muslim traders.
- ◆ Local hereditary chiefs held power in outlying districts on behalf of the king. They had to recognise the king’s power by sending him food and produce from hunting. The king held the sons and heir of these chiefs hostage in his royal court to ensure cooperation.
- ◆ In return the King provided protection to the people of his kingdom from raids by desert nomads. At this time, the king could summon an army of 200,000 men (drawn from local districts). Vassal = a holder of land given power on condition of allegiance.
- ◆ This army could be used to raid less powerful groups (to the south) and sell those captured as slaves to traders (with was a minor element).
- ◆ Trade in Gold itself was not taxed, but the king kept all nuggets of gold, leaving just the dust for the trade. Salt and other traded products were taxed.

3. Why did the Ghanaian State decline?

- ◆ Around 1050 CE, the kingdom had expanded to take over the Islamic Berber town of Awudaghust after which, many people and rulers within the kingdom became Muslims. This was for various reasons relating to wars but likely happened peacefully due to discontent among subjects and adoption of Islam brought literacy...
- ◆ Conflicts between Soninke and Saharan Berber berbers weakened trade links thus revenues for the king. Increasing tribal competition was also taking place for the gold fields as these began to open up.
- ◆ There was a deterioration in the environment due to the inability of the land of the Sahel to produce crops to support large settled population (in around 1300 CE) as well as pressure from overgrazing of the Berber nomadic groups. These changes resulted in the dispersal of the Soninke farmers further into the Savannah to the South and West.

Centuries earlier: the extent of the Roman Empire in 117CE:



Discussion of land and slave ownership in ancient Rome and **the Roman Empire**, drawing together the material on ancient slavery, and the difference between this and feudal serfdom.

A member of the class takes us through the following chart (now slightly revised) to recap:

The schema sketched by Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology* (1845)

FORMS OF PROPERTY	TYPE OF SOCIETY / KEY FEATURES	SOCIAL STRUCTURE
TRIBAL PROPERTY	FAMILIES, TRIBES PRE-AGRICULTURAL → AGRICULTURAL SLAVERY IS LATENT IN THE FAMILY	NATURAL DIVISION OF LABOUR (Slaves could be captured in war)
ANCIENT COMMUNAL PROPERTY STATE PRIVATE & COMMUNAL MOVABLE & IMMOVABLE PROPERTY (Ancient communal property declines as immovable private property increases)	CITY = ASSOCIATION OF TRIBES DEVELOPMENT OF SLAVERY	FIRST DIVISION INTO CLASSES CITIZENS and SLAVES DIVISION BETWEEN TOWN & COUNTRY = URBAN/RURAL TENSION and SEPARATION OF INTERESTS E.g. in ROME EMERGENCE OF PROLETARIAT CLASS (WORKING BUT NOT OWNING LAND OR OTHER MEANS OF PRODUCTION) SLAVERY MEANT THAT THE FREE PROLETARIAT NEVER FULLY DEVELOPED
FEUDAL / ESTATE PROPERTY	HIERACHAL STRUCTURE OF LAND OWNERSHIP NOBILITY ARMED RETAINERS SERFS LATER IN THE TOWNS: GUILDS OF MASTER CRAFTSMEN JOURNEYMAN & APPRENTICES GUILDS OF MERCHANTS	EMERGENCE OF ENSERFED SMALL PEASANTRY AS MAIN PRODUCERS, TIED TO THE LAND URBAN 'RABBLE' IN TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT, NEVER DEVELOPS AS A SETTLED PROLETARIAT

33-minute video lecture by professor of historical theology, Dr Ryan Reeves: **Medieval Society (Ryan Reeves).mp4**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yh_CZSLMxGo

Class to read paras 29-42 of the extracts from *The German Ideology*.

Rubin on merchant capitalism.pdf distributed (to be used as essential reading in future classes).