

Name _____ Section _____ Date _____

LT: I can make inferences about how the abundance of an element affects a civilization.

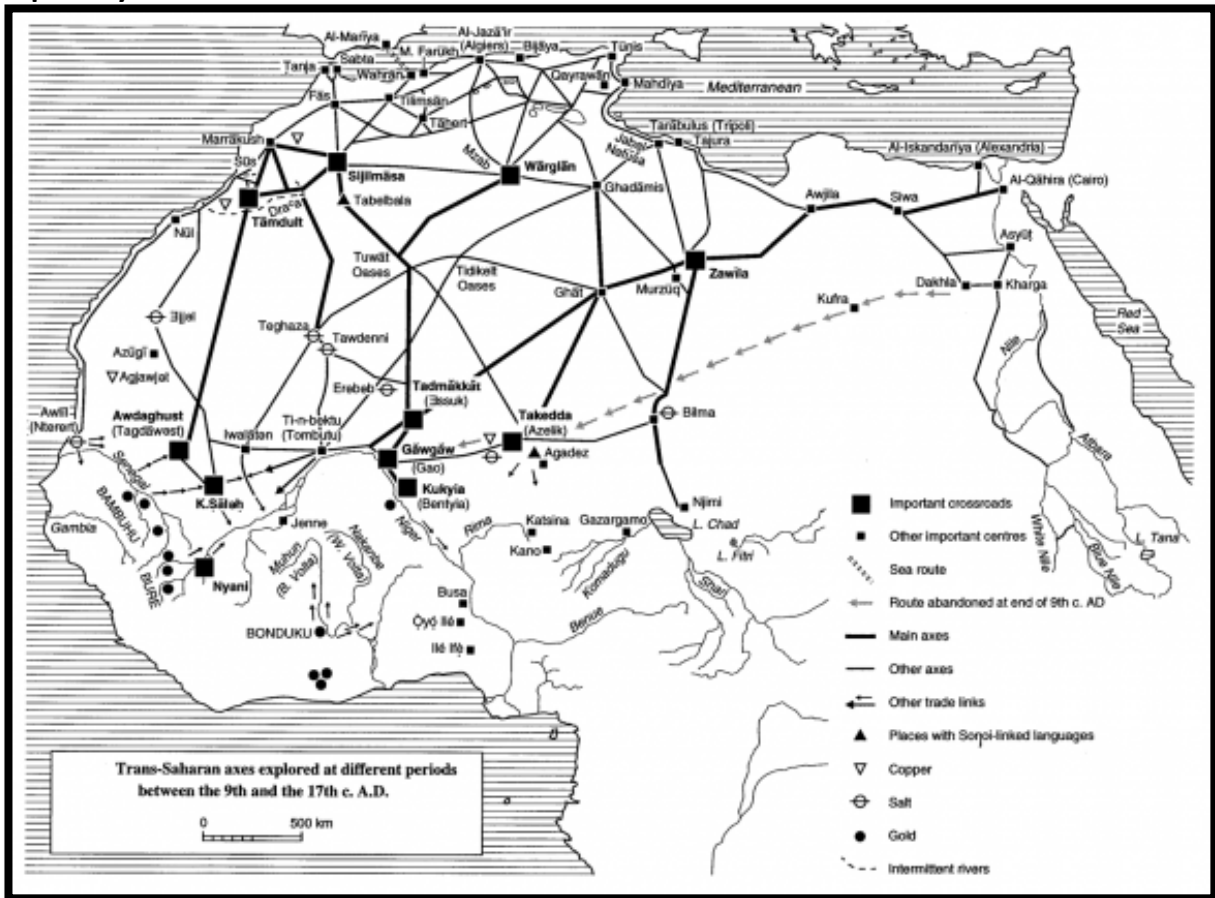
Do Now: What are some valuable elements? What makes an element valuable? (there are multiple right answers to this) _____

How does the presence of elements affect civilizations?

Case Study: West African Kingdoms

The creation of elements fits into Big History as the third threshold, but today, lets “zoom in” and look at how the presence of certain elements can affect a civilization. We could have picked almost any place in the world, but let’s choose the West African kingdoms of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai.

Part 1: Map Analysis



1. According to this map, which 3 elements are present in W. Africa? (1 is a compound of 2 elements)
2. On the map, shade the area where you predict the African kingdoms were. Why did you shade the area you did?
3. How does the presence of elements affect civilization, according to your answers to 1 & 2?

Part 2: Video Clips

1. Why was salt so valuable? (Bullet points okay)

2. Why was gold so valuable? (Bullet points okay)

Part 3: Excerpts

This description of the king's court in ancient Ghana was written by the Arab scholar, Al-Bakri.

The court of appeal is held in a domed pavilion around which stand ten horses with gold embroidered trappings. Behind the king stand ten pages holding shields and swords decorated with gold, and on his right are the sons of the subordinate kings of his country, all wearing splendid garments and with their hair mixed with gold. The governor of the city sits on the ground before the king, and around him are ministers seated likewise. At the door of the pavilion are dogs...[wearing] collars of gold and silver, studded with a number of balls of the same metals.

1. List some examples of wealth from the passage.

2. What is the evidence of an advanced political structure observed by Al-Bakri?

3. Why do you think an abundance of valuable elements allows a civilization to develop a more sophisticated political structure?

The flow of sub-Saharan gold to the northeast probably occurred in a steady but small stream. Mansa Musa's arrival in Cairo carrying a ton of the metal (1324–25) caused the market in gold to crash, suggesting that the average supply was not as great. Undoubtedly, some of this African gold was also used in Western gold coins. African gold was indeed so famous worldwide that a Spanish map of 1375 represents the king of Mali holding a gold nugget. When Mossi raids destroyed the Mali empire, the rising Songhai empire relied on the same resources. Gold remained the principal product in the trans-Saharan trade, followed by kola nuts and slaves. The Moroccan scholar Leo Africanus, who visited Songhai in 1510 and 1513, observed that the governor of Timbuktu owned many articles of gold, and that the coin of Timbuktu was made of gold without any stamp or superscription.

1. How did the Spanish view the kingdom of Mali?

2. How could the presence of valuable elements like gold and salt have contributed to the fall of the Mali Empire?

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How does the presence of elements affect civilizations?
Exit Slip

How does the presence of elements affect civilizations both positively and negatively? (at least 4 sentences and should include one quote from the excerpts)

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