TRANS-SAHARAN TRADE
SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA
The Sand Roads

- Trans-Saharan trade route
- Linked North Africa and the Mediterranean world with West Africa
Trans-Saharan Trade

- Like the Silk and Sea Roads, this trade begins as a result of environmental variation.
- What does each region have to offer?
  - North African coastal areas = cloth, glassware, weapons, books
  - Sahara region = copper and salt
  - Savanna grasslands = grain crops
  - Sub-Saharan forests = tree crops like yam and kola nuts
Trans-Saharan Trade

- Made possible by the CAMEL!
- 1st traders = camel-owning people from desert oases
- Major traders became = North African Muslim Arabs
- What did they come to West Africa and sub-Saharan Africa for?
  - GOLD!, ivory, kola nuts, slaves
  - Gave in return: SALT!, horses, cloth, weapons, tools
Caravans

- As many as 5,000 camels
- Hundreds of people
- Travelling at night
- Length of journey = about 70 days
- 15-20 miles walked per day
Sahel - Southern border of Sahara

- Berbers formed the kingdom of Ghana in 5th c.
- Located in the middle of the salt and gold trade routes.
Construction of Empires

- New wealth and resources from trans-Saharan trade allowed some regions to construct large empires or city-states.
- Between 500 and 1600 CE
- Major empires = Mali, Ghana, and Songhai
West African Empires

- All monarchies
- Drew upon wealth of trans-Saharan trade
- Relied on slaves
  - Females used as domestic servants and sex slaves
  - Males used as state officials, craftsmen, miners, agricultural laborers
Sub-Saharan Africa  p. 233 map

- Wide variety of environments:
  - Steppe – grass & shrub covered plains that is treeless and too arid for agriculture
    - Sahel region
  - Savanna – Tropical or subtropical grassland, mostly treeless with occasional clumps of trees
  - Tropical rain forest – High precipitation forest zones
  - Many popular cultures or “small traditions”
    - Local customs & beliefs not a large region
Bantu

- Niger-Congo group of 300 languages
- Fishing, canoes, nets
- Permanent villages
- Made pottery & cloth
- Spread iron smelting
- Would establish an economic basis for new societies