



Interregional Trade A thriving trade making use of numerous inland waterways linked African ethnic groups to one another in regional networks even before the trans-Saharan trade arose, and certainly before Europeans came into commercial contact with Africans. Archaeological and ecological evidence from Kintampo, in modern-day Ghana, reveals food production in the late Stone Age period from 1450 to 1300 B.C.E. The terracotta utensils, polished stone axes, and pottery excavated at the site suggest early trade relations among the peoples of the upper woodland areas of the Volta basin and on the Accra plains. Archaeological findings also point to the role of first-millennium-C.E. regional trade along the Senegal and Niger rivers in the later rise of the Soninke empire of Ghana and in the growth of such cities as Jenne, which eventually became a famous intellectual center under the Mali and Sonhay empires. Archaeological evidence, too, suggests that African rice was cultivated by a wetland method at least 3,500 years ago in the flood plains of the upper Niger between Segu and Timbuktu in Mali and that this form of cultivation spread down the Gambia River to the Senegambia coast.