

trans-saharan gold-salt trade

Directions: Read the CHAPTER 11 SECTION 2 SUMMARY in your summary packet **FIRST**, and answer the questions on that reading. **THEN**, examine the documents below and answer the questions that follow.



HISTORY and Economics

SUPPLY AND DEMAND

supply > demand = price falls

demand > supply = price rises

supply = amount available
demand = amount people want or need

Scarcity, Supply, and Demand

Scarcity, the lack of a particular resource, exists because the world's resources are limited. The scarcity of resources affects everyone, but not always in the same way. For example, scarcity benefits those who can supply a desired limited resource, if those who demand the resource can pay the price.

Scarcity, Supply, and Demand in History

Ghana was a kingdom rich in gold—so rich that even the ruler's dogs wore gold-plated collars. This abundance of wealth lured traders from North Africa, where gold was scarce but in high demand. In exchange for the gold, the North Africans offered salt, which the people of West Africa needed in their diets to survive.

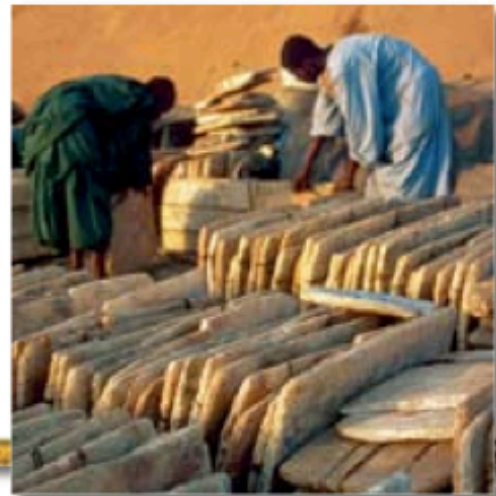
Ghana's kings gained wealth and power from the gold-salt trade. Major trade routes ran through the kingdom of Ghana, which enabled Ghana's kings to control and collect taxes on the trade. In addition, all of Ghana's gold was the kings' property. They kept all gold nuggets for themselves but allowed gold dust to be traded. In this way, the kings controlled the supply of gold and its price.

Scarcity, Supply, and Demand Today

Consider how scarcity affects the world today. What countries benefit from supplying and controlling a limited resource just as Ghana did in the past? The world's oil-rich countries are a good example. These countries have greatly increased their wealth and global influence over the past 100 years by filling the demand for a single valuable resource that cannot be found in other places. As you study world history, look for ways that scarcity of resources affects supply and demand.

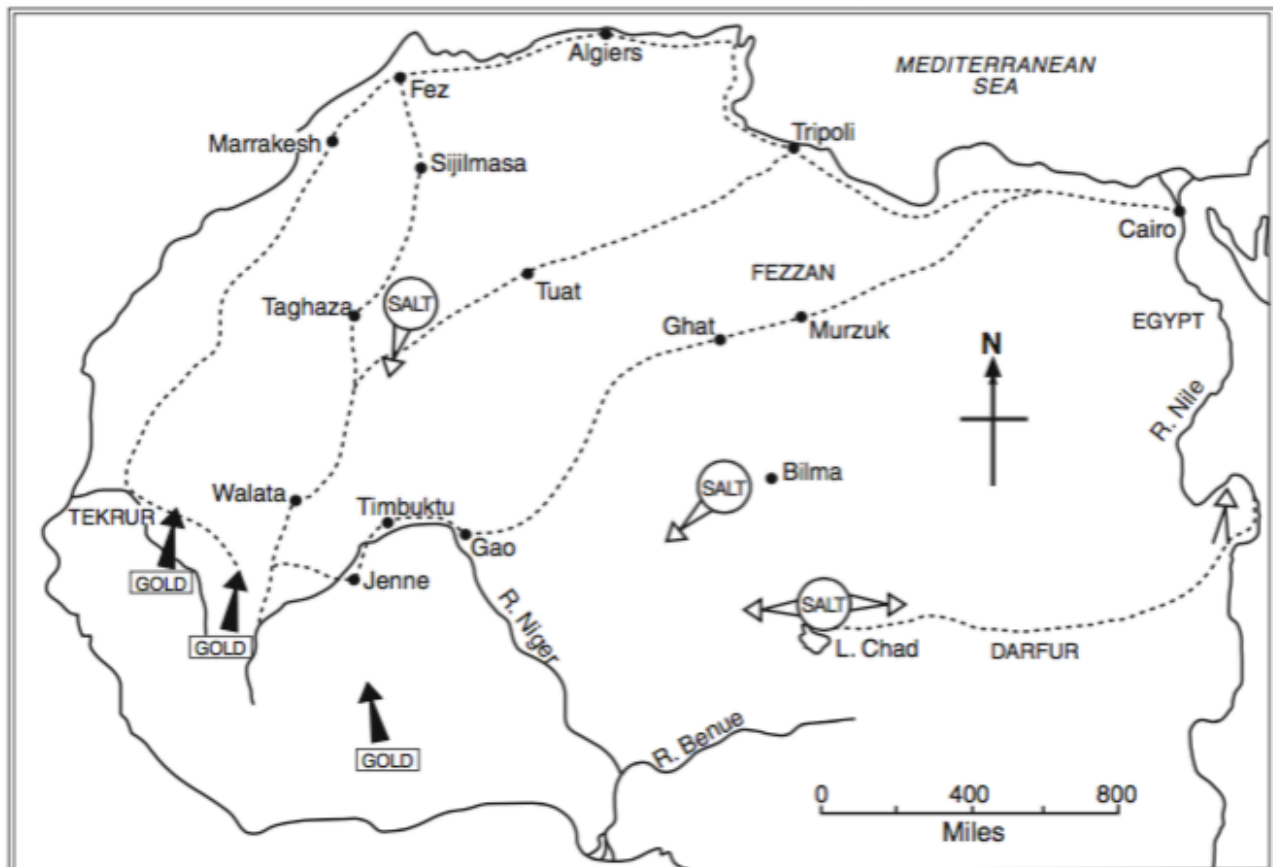
Explain How are some people able to benefit economically from scarcity?

► Raw salt is often formed into slabs for ease of transport. Here, a worker in a market in Mopti, Mali, in West Africa stacks slabs of salt to sell.



1. How was the Empire of Ghana able to **benefit economically** from scarcity?

Trans-Saharan Gold-Salt Trade in Early Times



... All this trade led to the founding of cities. Most of these cities were especially concerned with the trade across the Sahara. They began as small trading settlements, but grew bigger as more traders came and went, and became centres for craftsmen who worked in leather, wood, ivory, and metals. City governments became necessary, as well as men trained to be put in charge of keeping accounts, of maintaining law and order, of ensuring the safety of citizens. Then the rulers of these cities began to extend their power to ever wider regions of neighbouring countryside. Gradually the cities grew into states, and the states into empires....

Source: Basil Davidson, *A History of West Africa to the Nineteenth Century*, Anchor Books (adapted)

2. Based on this document, what were **two results** of the **Trans-Saharan Gold-Salt Trade** in West Africa?

... One of the chief trade centers for salt in the ancient world was the fabled city of Timbuktu. Located on the southern edge of the Sahara Desert, the city thrived on profits from the salt trade.... The salt trade made the city prosperous; in Africa, salt ranked with gold and slaves in value. For merchants to risk camels over hundreds of miles of burning sand, the profits must have been enormous. Nor did the city squander [waste] its wealth. Timbuktu's salt trade supported schools and libraries; merchants lived in fine houses; the king paid handsome salaries to judges, doctors, and clerics—all from profits on the three-hundred-pound salt cargo that each camel carried....

Source: Robert Kraske, *Crystals of Life: The Story of Salt*, Doubleday & Company

3. According to Robert Kraske, what are **two ways** the profits of the salt trade **affected the city of Timbuktu**?