Previewsing Main Ideas

**RELIGIOUS AND ETHICAL SYSTEMS** Beginning about 640, Islam created two North African empires. Merchants and traders spread Islam into both West and East Africa, where it influenced rulers.

**Geography** What empires developed in West Africa during this period?

**INTERACTION WITH ENVIRONMENT** In parts of Africa, hunter-gatherers used up an area’s food supply and then moved on. In some Saharan villages, workers built houses of salt. The location of gold determined trade routes.

**Geography** What factors might have caused three empires to arise in the same area?

**ECONOMICS** Trade networks developed in Africa because different regions had items that other regions wanted. African city-states and empires that were able to control and tax such trade became wealthy and powerful.

**Geography** How were the locations of Timbuktu and Kilwa different and how might that have influenced trade?
How might trade benefit both sides?

You are crossing the Sahara with goods to trade. Your destination is Timbuktu, the great trading center of Africa. There you will meet with other traders, especially those from the gold-mining regions to the south. You hope to make the journey worthwhile by trading salt and manufactured goods for as much gold as possible. The gold traders will want to receive as much of your salt and manufactured goods as they can in exchange. Together you must come to an agreement on what your trade items are worth.

To survive the trip across the Sahara, traders stopped at oases for water. However, it was 500 miles to Timbuktu from the nearest oasis! The journey was very hard.

Workers in the Sahara endured hardship to mine this salt. In a hot climate, salt helps the human body to retain water. Salt was scarce in the gold-mining region.

The camel was the only animal that could go without water long enough to cross the Sahara.

These beautiful cowrie shells came all the way from East Africa. They were used as money.

This cloth was shipped across the Mediterranean Sea to North Africa. Then it began the long journey to Timbuktu.

EXAMINING the ISSUES

• What elements are necessary for a mutually successful trade?
• How do scarcity and abundance affect trade?

As you discuss these questions in class, think about what you have learned about other trading peoples, such as the Phoenicians and the Europeans. As you read about trade in the various regions of Africa, notice what steps rulers took to control trade moving through their territory.