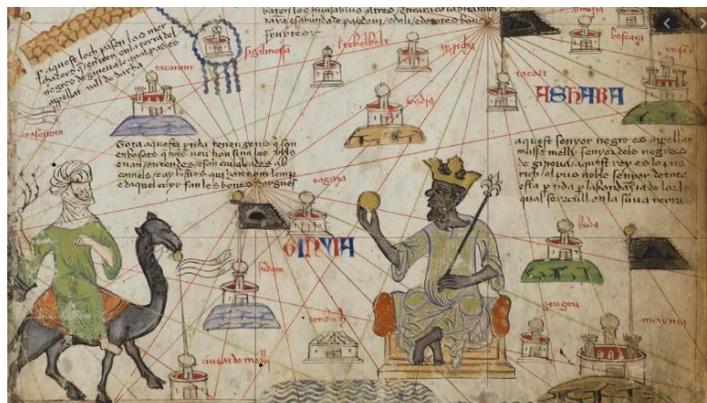


The Great Mali Empire

The Mali Empire flourished from 1200-1500 AD, and succeeded the empire of Ghana. The Mali Empire spread across an estimated 478,819 square miles, including the modern day boundaries of Senegal, southern Mauritania, Mali, northern Burkina Faso, western Niger, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, the Ivory Coast and northern Ghana.

Mali thrived in a dry, savannah grassland climate, south of the Sahara Desert, north of the tropical rain forests. While Mali was geographically isolated from the rest of the world (Photo right), the Malian rulers were renowned for their wealth in gold. Europeans became eager to obtain this gold, after learning about Mali's location through Muslim and Jewish traders. Word of mouth was necessary, as Christian traders at the time, were prohibited from crossing Muslim controlled, North Africa, due to the resentment following the massacres of the Christian Crusades. The Italian map maker, Abraham Cresque was commissioned by Charles V of France, to pin point the location of Mali. The Cresques map included a hand drawn picture of Mansa Kanka Musa (ruler) holding a golden scepter in one hand, and a gold nugget in the other (photo to the right). Mansa Kanka Musa (hereafter referred to as Mansa Musa) was one of the most famous rulers, reigning from 1280-1337 AD, and, is reputed to be the richest man in history. His title meant king of kings. Mansa Musa established the city



The map of Abraham Cresque, included a picture of Mansu Mansa holding a golden scepter and gold nugget.



The Djinguereber Mosque, was buildt in the Western Sudanic style architecture, during the reign of Mansa Musa.

of Timbuktu as the intellectual hub of the world. With an inflation adjustment, his net worth is estimated to have been worth three times Bill Gates fortune.

Mansa Musa was a progressive ruler, and popular among his people. He eradicated the empire's countryside from thieves, which allowed local and international trade to flourish. Gold and salt were the primary sources of trade that brought Mali to prominence. Travelers to Mali included diplomats, merchants and scholars from East Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and parts of Asia. The trading routes and methods of taxation were centuries old, originating from the economy of the predecessor Ghana Empire. Mansa Musa established an effective legal system and a taxation system that enabled traders and the government both to prosper. Mansa Musa is known for establishing the University of Sankore, At it's peak, the Timbuktu population reached 100,000. The Timbuktu University had a population of 25,000. In 1526 AD, the medieval historian Leo Africanus wrote, "...In Timbuktu, there are numerous judges, PhDs and clerics, all receiving good salaries from the king. He pays great respect to men of learning. There is a big demand for books imported from North Africa. More profit is made from the book trade than any other line of business."

Mansa Musa was a devout Muslim. Historians of the day record that Mansa Musa made a historic pilgrimage to Mecca (present day Saudi Arabia). One of the 5 tenets of Islam is for a devout Muslim to pilgrimage to Mecca for the Hajj. This royal caravan bound for Mecca contained 60,000 travelers, with requisite logistical supplies to sustain a journey of this magnitude. The party of pilgrims included guides to navigate the complexity and dangers of the Saharan desert, members of the royal family, governors, soldiers (for protection), and other devout Muslims who also wanted to make the pilgrimage.

The 5 Pillars of Islam
(Submission to Allah)

لا إله إلا الله محمدٌ رسول الله
La ilaha illa-llaah Muhammadur-Rasoolullah

“There is no true God but Allah (الله) Subhanahu wa ta’ala (High and Exalted is He) and Mohammad Salal-ayhu alayhi wasalam (Peace be upon him), is His last Messenger”.

Salaat (Prayer)

Perform the 5 mandatory prayers a day (Al-Fajr, Dhuhur, Asr, Mughrib & Isha). Allah does not need one's prayer because He is free of all needs. Prayer is for our immeasurable benefit, and the blessings are beyond all imagination.

Zakaat (Purification)

Obligatory giving to the poor. A very important pillar of Islam, it draws Allah's blessings and strengthens the relationship between the rich and the poor.

Sawm (Fasting)

Fast in the month of Ramadhan. Fasting is abstaining from eating, drinking, intimate male / female contact and smoking from sunrise till sunset in this Holy Month.

Hajj (Pilgrimage)

One should perform this once in your lifetime. Muslims from all over the globe assemble in Mecca before the Ka'bah in response to the call of Allah (S.W.T.).



The journey from Mali to Mecca was 9,000 miles. The mode of transportation was by combination of camel, horseback and others walked on foot. Historians record that Cairo, Egypt was the first major stop, on the route to Mecca. Once the Caravan arrived in Egypt, they were greeted by the Egyptian Sultan, Al-Nasir Muhammad, of the Mamluk Sultantate. The caravan rested for several months from the arduous journey, and then continued to Mecca. Mansa Musa's camels were laden with gold. While in Cairo, Mansa Musa and his party gave away this gold as gifts, distributed alms to the poor, and shopped in the market place. The influx of the Mali gold caused the price of gold to drop so dramatically, that it took 12 years for the market to recover. It was in Cairo that Mansa Musa met Abu Ishaq as-Sahili, known in the writings as "the Moor." The Moor was a poet and architect, and was commissioned by Mansa Musa to build several Mosques, using the Western Sudan architecture.

After Mansa Musa's death, the Mali Empire began to decline from a combination of civil wars, competing trade routes, and attacks from the nomadic Tuareg people of the southern Sahara and the Mossi people, who controlled lands south of the Niger River. Eventually, the Songhai Empire rose to prominence, and engulfed the Mali Empire. The Mali Empire clung to the western corner of its once vast territories, until the Moroccans arrived in the 17th century AD, armed with guns provided by Europeans,

Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406 AD) was an Arab historian that chronicled the empires of the Western Sudan (West Africa), using information from written records, interviews, and oral tradition. Today, the "Epic of Old Mali" is recanted by the "Dyeli", who serve as singers and poets. Historically, the Dyeli served the emperors and would recant history, serve as court master of ceremonies, and were trained in constitutional procedures, and to settle disputes.

Today, Malian families and have preserved these old books as private family heirlooms. The following cities report the following number of manuscripts: 1) 3,550 in the cities of Chinguetti and Ouadane, 6,000 in Walata, and 700,000 in Timbuktu. The Ahmed Baba Center's library contains at least 50,000 manuscripts. In 2008, 300 manuscripts were digitized and made available online by the New York Times, and



documented by the article, Project Digitizes Works from the Golden Age of Timbuktu." It is estimated that one quarter of these books are about, history, law, ethics, biographies, mathematics, astronomy, astrology, medicine and geography. In 1988, the United Nations

Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, a specialized agency of the United Nations based in Paris, France, declared Timbuktu a World Heritage site. In 2012, in Timbuktu was added to the UNESCO List of World Heritage in Danger, when 14 of the 16 mosques were destroyed by armed conflict in the region.

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