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The Mali Empire

12th – 14th Centuries

**A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for a Master's
Degree in Literature and Civilization**

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Dedication

- I dedicate this humble work:
- To my parents,
- To my sisters and brothers,
- To all my Teachers, And to all my relatives, friends, and colleagues.

Acknowledgements

I have first to thank Allah, the Almighty Who provided with the power to conduct this work. I would like also to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Tahar Abbou, for his help, patience, guidance, pieces of advice, and encouragement during the progress of this research paper, and for providing me with valuable documents.

I am indebted to my parents for their care and help. I would also like to thank my teachers for enlightening and guiding me along the years I have spent at Adrar University.

At last, I would like to thank my friends and colleagues.

Abstract

Following the decline of the Empire of Ghana around the 11th Century by the invasion of the Almoravids. Small ethnic kingdoms emerged with the same ambition to build an empire among them the Kingdom of Sosso, and the Kingdom of Mande, who were all contenders to take back the territories of Ghana. West Africa has known three empires including Ghana, Mali, and the Songhoy. The Mali Empire was one of the greatest mediaeval empires in West Africa. It emerged from a small ethnic kingdom which gathered the Mande people in the early 13th century. This Kingdom was ruled by Sundiata's father (Maghan Kon Fata the Mande King) who chose Kangaba as the capital of his newly established kingdom, but after the arrival of Sundiata Keita to the throne in 1235, a lot would change in the Mande Kingdom. Sundiata's reign permitted the empire to expand and gain a vast territory that extended from the Atlantic Coast south of the Senegal River to Gao in the east of the Middle Niger bend. Unlike the Ghana Empire, Mali Empire witnessed a bright era in the 14th century because it became a wide trading and scholarship centre in West Africa, especially after Mansa Musa's pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324, which allowed the empire to be known among the Muslim Empires. He came back with scholars and architects to build mosques and universities to spread the knowledge of Islam across his kingdom and West Africa. This research work examines two significant eras of Mali history, that is to say, the eras of Sundiata (1235-1255) and Mansa Musa's reign (1312-1337), with a special focus on their achievements and influence on the Malian society.

Key words: Mali Empire, Islam, Mande, Ethnicities, Sundiata Keita, Mansa Musa, Trade Centres, Scholars, Pilgrimage.

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General Introduction

In the Medieval era, West Africa witnessed the rise of three great empires that played a major role in the changes that took place in the African society. West Africans were the first to know permanent settlements (Urbanism and Cities), and they also experienced life within organized societies that respected orders and law, such as the Ghana, the Mali Empire, and later, the Songhai. The Mali Empire was the largest of the three medieval West African kingdoms that ascended to power on the basis of gold and salt trade between the Niger River valley and North Africa. Originally, a small city-state on the upper Niger River, Mali emerged as the prevailing power in West Africa following the disintegration of the Empire of Ghana. King Sundiata Keita triumphed over a rival kingdom in approximately 1230. Under Sundiata's autocratic rule, the Mandinka cities of Gao, Timbuktu, and Djenne thrived as Mali's three major trading centres along the Niger River and the empire's economic base expanded to include extended and sustainable agriculture around the Inland Niger Delta.

The Mali Empire was an Islamic empire, therefore, most of the kings went on pilgrimage to Mecca in organized caravans bearing of the risk of a couple of months. Islam welcomed and applied by the Mansa in all walks of life, especially during the reign of Mansa Musa, who ruled from 1312 to 1337 and elevated Mali to world prominence. Returning from his hajj to Mecca in 1324, Mansa Musa transformed the commercial centres of Timbuktu, Djenne, and Gao into cities of scholarship, learning, and architectural renown. At its height, Timbuktu housed three universities, 180 Qur'anic schools, and was known throughout the Islamic world as an educated metropolis. The exchange of culture was just as important as that of commercial goods. The introduction and acceptance of the Islamic religion changed the educational standards as well as the laws of Mali. In Islam it is very important to study the Qur'an; therefore, it was important for the people of Mali to be literate. The amount of

Islamic influence was so strong that many of the law and punishments were changed to follow the Islamic teachings. However, this transfer had a great impact on the Malian society as a whole, and on individuals in particular because of the exposure to the different branches of Islamic (Qur'anic) sciences and culture, and also due to the contact with Arab merchants and scholars.

This dissertation is divided into two chapters. The first chapter deals with the location, origins, political authority, and social organization of the Mali Empire, that is to say, it will examine the era of Sundiata Keita (1235-1255AD). Moreover, it will examine the royal system and the components of Mali Society. The second chapter tackles another significant era in the history of the Mali Empire which is the era of Mansa Musa. This chapter will provide detailed information about Mansa Musa, including his Reign and pilgrimage, in addition to the economic and intellectual organization of the empire. Finally, light is shed on the cultural legacy of Mansa Musa. In order to illustrate what had been introduced, the dissertation will answer the following questions:

- How could Sundiata overcome the issue of ethnic diversity in the Mali Empire?
- What was the achievement made by Sundiata?
- What was the impact of Mansa Musa's pilgrimage on West Africa and the World?
- To what extent did Mansa Musa contribute to the spread of Islam in West Africa?

In order to answer the questions raised in this research work, we will examine two interesting eras of the history of Mali Empire with more emphasis on the impact of major events on Mali Empire: the factors of power and weakness in Mali Empire. We will also examine how the king managed these factors in establishing a well-known empire that gathered different ethnic groups.

This research uses both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include Arabic documents which were written by Arab historians and scholars about the Mali Empire; however, the information about this research was also collected from different other secondary sources, which included materials written by African scholars themselves, such as textbooks, articles, and journals. Both descriptive and analytical methods are used in this research work.

The purpose of this study is to shed light on the Mali Empire (12th and 14th Centuries) as one of the greatest medieval empires that emerged in West Africa as the first sample of a civilized community that has shown tolerance and forgiveness between its different components and has learned acceptance, difference and respect for the law, customs and mores. The study also aims to show the role played by the various kings of Mali, notably Sundiata and Mansa Musa, in building a great society which has been an example for all of Africa, if not for the world.

Chapter One:
Foundation of the Mali Empire
(12th-13th Centuries)

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- **Introduction**

The fall of one empire usually gives rise to another, and the first West African empire was called the Empire of Ghana (AD 300-1100). Its decline saw the emergence of a new small kingdom that took over its territories. Based on small ethnic states, each ethnic group created its own kingdom. These small kingdoms were all brought together under the authority of one man, known as Sundiata (also spelled Sundjata), who organized the Malinké¹ resistance against the Susu Kingdom². Many historians believe that Sundiata founded Mali when he defeated Sumanguru Kanté in 1235 at the Battle of Kirina, known as his first battle with the Unified Kingdoms.

The empire emerged in its capital, Niani, also known as the birthplace of the king. The reign of Sundiata allowed the empire to expand and acquire a vast territory that stretched from the Atlantic coast south of the Senegal River to Goa, east of the middle bend of the Niger (see Map 1, p. 52)

The Mali Empire brought together different ethnic groups who did not share the same religions, beliefs, and traditions. This diversity was a very important factor which also facilitated the unity of the Mali Empire. Sundiata Keita is perceived as the founder of the empire, so the chapter focuses on him, including his governmental system, the constitution, the society, and the cultural heritage that he left during and after his reign.

¹ Malinké, Mandingo, Mandinka, Maninka, are a people of West Africa present mainly in Guinea, Mali, Senegal, Gambia and Ivory Coast. The Malinke were the dominant ethnic group in the Mali Empire. The founder of the Mali Empire, Sundiata Keita, was a Malinké.

² The Susu Kingdom was founded by the uncompromising animist Diarisso Soninké. The Susu kingdom had its hour of fame under the reign of Sumanguru Kanté

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1. Historical Background

Considered as the greatest empire West Africa had ever known, the roots of this empire's origin took shape just after the decline of the Empire of Ghana (4th -10th Centuries), which was the first West African empire. However, its fall caused the emergence of small states around the region. Among which there were several kingdoms with the will to develop, such as the kingdom of Mande, but the most promising of them was the kingdom of Sosso, who was led by a powerful line of blacksmiths with the Kante family. Sumanguru (1180-1230) was the best known of their kings. Who was just as ambitious as the other kings, and really saw a potential to be able to create his empire by conquering the kingdoms and having control of the natural resources, including that of the Mandingo, which had been for him the most difficult.

1.1 Origin of the Mali Empire

Located in the West African savannah, the inhabitants of Mande were surrounded by mineral resources including gold and salt. The 32 main clans of Mande were all divided and therefore under the authority of the Soninké king Sumanguru Kanté. After the brief hegemony of Susu Kanté (1180-1230) with Sunjata, Mande imposed himself on all the countries of the West African Savannah.

1.2 The Battle of Kirina (1235)

Tired of Sumanguru's harsh treatment and endless wars, the Mande clans called their prince Malinké (Sundiata), who had been in exile with his parents since he was a child. After

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being known as a respected and strong warrior, he formed a powerful alliance with other disillusioned leaders, who defeated the Sosso in a decisive battle at Kirina³ in 1235 CE.

Sundiata was appointed leader of the alliance to lead the army, he gathered forces from the north and south of Mande, and then sailed with his army along the Niger River. On the other hand, Sumaguru was leading his army. Sumaguru's army had organized a festival in advance to celebrate the victory even before the war began.

The reputation of the Sosso army was already known to all, around Mande, supposed not to be strong enough to resist, the army of Sundiata was animated by the desire to take revenge on the army of Sumaguru and to take back what had already been taken. Despite the victory of Sundiata's army over Sosso, as Youssouf Tata Cissé writes in his book *Soundjata la Gloire du Mali* "Accompanied by a handful of men from his family, Sumaguru managed to flee to the north-west before taking refuge with the Soninké of Guidimmé" (21). Kirina's victory was a major achievement for Sundiata in proving that he could lead the Keita and the other clans under a unified kingdom.

1.2.1 Sundiata Keita “Mande Mansa” (1210-1255)

Mansa Mari Djata⁴, later named Sundiata Keita, a Malinké prince, whose name means “lion prince”, was born in 1210 and belongs to the Keita clan of the Malinké people of the famous Kangaba near the present-day border between Mali and Guinea.

Sundiata was the son of Naré Maghann Konaté "or" Maghan Konfara, and Sogolon Kolonkan "or" Sogolon Kédjou", crippled from his childhood Sundiata and his mother was the object of mockery among his co-wives Sassouma Bereté and the villagers. After the

³ Kirina is a village of griots, located between present-day Mali and Guinea, and it was in Kirina that the famous battle between King Sosso, Sumanguru Kanté and Sundiata Keita took place in 1235.

⁴ Mari-Djata means Lion King.

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king's death, Sogolon took his children, Sundjata and his sisters, to a neighboring kingdom called Mema, to avoid ill-treatment and danger to the lives of his son and sisters, as Conrad said: "The co-wives were jealous of the soothsayer's prediction and did everything to prevent Sogolon from giving birth to the hero. The child was born crippled. He was called the Jara of Sogolon, (Jara means "lion"), who was abbreviated to Sunjata. It took Sunjata years to learn to walk, so he was always in danger as a child. The co-wives, in particular Sassuma Bereté, who attempted to have Sunjata assassinated, and Sogolon then took him with her other children in exile. Stopping at various chiefdoms along the way, they traveled northeast to the lands beyond Timbuktu and settled in the ancient Soninke Kingdom of Mema" (34-35).

Admired for his Leadership, he unified the Mande and formed a strong army to defeat Sumaguru Kanté at the battle of Kirina in 1235, which is considered as the date of the establishment of the Mali Empire, then became the first King of the Mande, only son of his mother, he died in 1255 (See Figure 1, p. 51).

1.2.2 The Evolution of the Mali Empire

The leadership of Sundiata was already appreciated by the Mandingo people, but it was glorified when he defeated Sumanguru at the Battle of Kirina in 1235. Jeriba (a village in Mande) was the first settlement of Sundiata after the Battle of Kirina. Niani, also known as the king's birthplace, became therefore the capital of his newly established empire, then he quickly took over the former capital of Sudan (Empire of Ghana) Kumbi Saleh in 1240.

Later on, called by the Gbara or the Grand Assembly (composed of 32 members, from different clans and a few influential Arab merchants), which declared Sundiata the supreme monarch and bestowed upon him the honorary title of Mari Djata or Mansa (Lord Lion or King), his attention quickly turned to business internal, such as the imposition of law and

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order in its newly established empire, and leaving to its generals the care of acquiring more territory and influence.

Sundiata could also rely on his generals, they were well known generals and achieved the conquest, of the Southern Sahara Desert including Walata, very important trading centre during the Ghana Empire. The Generals extended the empire to the east to the Niger River, and the Mali Empire stretched to the goldfield of Wangara and west to the Senegal River, and it counted about 50 million of inhabitants (Levtzion 53).

1.2.2.1 The Death of Sundiata Keita

Sundiata Keita died in 1255 of an uncertain cause, although some believe he was accidentally killed. As the founder of the Empire of Mali, there is a great contradiction around his death, between the tradition of oral storytellers (Griots) and - the earliest sources in the history of the Empire of Mali, which said that Sundiata had been assassinated by an arrow during a ceremony in 1255, whereas the guardians of the oral tradition "griot" also believed that he died from an unclear cause, kept informed by their ancestors griots, who did not either mention the place where he was buried, because it is forbidden to open the tomb of a king in the oral tradition and the Mandingo religion. Therefore, the cemetery or the exact place where Sundiata's body was buried remained unknown to them, all these mysteries about Sundiata's death have described him as a legendary figure.

Besides, the Sankarani river has become a sacred place for the Mandingo and the Keita, to offer sacrifices to the soul of Sundiata, by observing these rituals of the Mandingos in the river, historians have deduced that the Sankarani river was the place where his body was thrown into the water.

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However, the empire he established has grown into one of the richest in the world, comprising one of the richest people of all time. Mansa Musa, also known as one of the most important kings of the Mali Empire. Sundiata's organization and military work allowed his empire to survive until the 16th century. Sundiata was a great king for the Mandingo people, who saw in him a man who deserved respect and obedience and that his soul should be sacred. For the Keita, Sundiata was a symbol of courage and power.

2. Political Organisation

Sundiata Keita was not only a great warrior, but also a seasoned politician, who quickly understood that his new empire needed a new political and even social bases. With the new charter unveiled after his enthronement, the Kurukan Fuga charter was therefore in the image of the king himself, a charter in which the emphasis was placed on unity, solidarity, and in particular on peace between different clan that made up the Mande.

2.1 The Mansa (King)

The Mali Empire had always been strong because of its solid organization and authority. Immediately after the establishment of the empire, Sundiata ruled the empire as a federation, with each tribe having a principal representative at court and a large assembly, to keep an eye on the power of the king. The king was also the supreme source of justice, as Youssouf Tata Cissé wrote in his book *La Grande Geste du Mali*: "Once a year, all the representatives of the King of Manden, wherever they are, met. around their leader. Everything that had to be said or abolished in the country was the subject of debates at the end of which the Mansa indicated the way forward and decreed the laws to be put in place, but also called on advisers" (299).

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The leaders or chiefs of tribes were very important in this system, their role was to establish law and order in their provinces. Usually, chosen from among families of great fame or power, the tribal chiefs were chosen proposed by elders, or a small number of people from the royal family.

Most of the cultural relics of the Mali Empire were lost to the destructive Sahel environment and the passage of time. However, through the tradition of oral histories, griots have preserved and explained the culture of ancient Mali. In the epic poem of Mali, contemporary griots still recount the story of Sundiata's life and his triumphant battles.

2.1.1 The Kurukan Fuga Charter “the Constitution”

The Kurukan Fuga Charter, was proclaimed in 1235, just after the military victory in Kirina battle. The name Kurukan Fuga is a toponym, translating to "thinning on granite / lateritic rock". Constructed for a new departure, the Mande Charter contained 44 articles, divided into several parts. The Charter spoke about peace within a diverse nation, the abolition of slavery, education, and food security, among other things. The charter was created on good mutual relationship, love, freedom and fraternity as declared Youssouf Tata Cissé in his book *Soundjata la Gloire du Mali*, the Charter of Manden opens with an essential statement on the equality of human lives and the second addressing two main evils – hunger and slavery, and social cohesion.

a. Every life being a life, every damage inflicted on a life needs repair. Therefore, nobody may without reason oppose his neighbor, nobody may do his neighbor a wrong, nobody may torment another human being (39).

b. Hunger is not a good thing, slavery isn't a good thing either; there is no worse calamity than these two things, in this world. As long as we have quiver and arrow, famine will not kill anybody in Mande... (and) no village will ever be destroyed by wars fought

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with the aim to capture slaves ... As from to-day, the very substance of slavery is eradicated ... within the borders of Manden (39).

c. The sanankunya (joking relationship)⁵ and the tanamannyonya (blood pact)⁵ have been established among the Mandinka. Consequently, any contention that occurs among these groups should not degenerate the respect for one another being the rule. Between brother's in-law and sisters-in-law, between grandparents and grandchildren, tolerance should be the principle (40).

Considered as one of the oldest constitutions in the world, the constitution clearly spelled out the customs and prohibitions that governed relationship between the Mandingo clans themselves, and between them and other clans or ethnic groups outside the empire. The new constitution also specifies how the system of succession to power had to take place and also describes the characteristics that the successor of a Mansa must possess.

Aiming to promote equality and justice, the charter structure had also created a new conflict between some tribal leaders, who demanded more influence in the Grand Assembly. It had been resulted, later, in an internal conflict in the empire, but was quickly resolved in a diplomatic way by Sundiata and his griot Balla Fasseké.

⁵ The Tanamannyonya is the concept of "blood pacts" between people in the same family, even with people from different ethnic group.

The Sanankounya. Maintain social cohesion and manage conflicts between clans and classes social, "joking alliance" (between surnames, between ethnic groups), in Bambara, "Sanankounya" was instituted by the "Kouroukan Fouga Charter". The "pleasant cousin" or even "alliance joke" works the same as "kinship with jokes", defined by Radcliffe-Brown as: "... a relationship between two people in which one is permitted by custom, and in some cases required, to mock or mock the other; the other, his side, must not be offended". The political value of the alliance lies in the fact that it establishes a sacred pact of non-aggression between allies.

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2.1.1.1 The Imperial Army

The Mali Empire had an organised army, which consisted of different ethnic groups and people of different social classes. There was the aristocracy (nobles and quivers) who were soldiers chosen as elite forces, much more trained and there were also horse breeders and riders. The horsemen were armed with long spears in addition to the bow and arrows. The army was under the control of Mali Mansa who was also the head of the troops.

The Mansa had also appointed a lieutenant general to be in charge of the troops. The lieutenant general was Mansa's second commander and the head of the armed forces. The army was an effective tool in maintaining the peace and protecting important cities such as Walata, Gao, Timbuktu, and Niani. The army was also found along the sensitive borders that linked the Mali Empire to the other Small Kingdoms and to the territory of the former Ghana Empire (Niane 160-4).

According to Wa Kamisso, one of the first tasks assigned to the army of Sundjata after being declared an Imperial Army was the rapid deployment of troops in the territory of Sussu. The troops were commanded by Fakoly Doumbia, who was on a mission to cleanse the fortress of Sumanguru, the defeated king of Sussu of any armed band or soldiers belonging to the Sussu, but the real reason for this mission was to show how bad the Malians were. powerful and numerous the army was (30-31).

2.1.1.1.1 The Capital Niani

Niani was the capital of the Mali Empire and the most known province. It was located in a safe area, near the west bank of the Sankarani river in what is now northeastern Guinea near the Mali frontier. Niani was the homeland of the Mansa and his throne, it remained the capital of the Muslim Mandingo empire for 300 years. At Niani, there were the officials and

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noblemen. Those men were from the elite, who could help and advise the king whenever it was necessary.

They had also the high occupation such as Hari-Farma (the man who was in charge of fishing.), Sao-Farma (the man who was responsible for looking after the forest.), BabiliFarma (the minister of culture.), Khalisi-Farma (The minister of Finance.). Niani was the political and trading center of the Mali Empire during Sundiata's rule. In addition to that, it was also the land where agriculture flourished because it had sources of water (Conrad 355-8). Under Sundiata's leadership, Niani attracted merchants and traders, due to its gold trade, agriculture, and security.

3. Economic Organisation

With the expansion of the Mali Empire, the economy also flourished. Unlike Ghana, the Mali Empire grew further and contained three huge gold mines to the south (Bure, Bambuk and Bourén) and salt deposits to the north, all within its own borders. The empire's economy grew, also due to trans-Saharan trade especially at Walata, an important trading point, a place where heavy taxes were imposed on all goods passing through the empire and even trade inside the empire.

Better situated for agriculture and commerce, the economy was financially stable. During the reign of Soundjata, the Niger River became an important means of transporting goods and people, unlike Ghana, which used animals such as horses, donkeys and camels as a means of transport.

One of the main trades was gold dust for Sahara salt. Gold was sometimes used as a currency, as were salt, cotton, and cloth. Later, in the 14th century, cowry shells from the Indian Ocean were introduced and widely used as currency in the domestic trade of western

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Sudan. Under the leadership of Sundiata, Mali became a relatively wealthy agricultural region.

4. Social Organisation

Social life in the Mali Empire was well structured and patriarchal. However, there were different religions and ethnicities. A society that respected the laws of the empire, which also valued the empire. Composed of different clans, each clan however had a role to play for the proper functioning of the empire.

4.1 Society

The society was well structured, the peoples lived mainly in clan or tribal organization, a distinction was made between free men and slaves; social structures vary between regions and peoples; however, the society was made up of different social classes, such as the Nobles, then the Castes and finally the Slaves. They also differed in their beliefs and way of life (Niane 100).

In Mande society ancient family names that are very common, such as Keita, Kulubali, Koroma, Kamara, Traoré, and Condé, have special significance because they are passed down from the earliest ancestors, who are described in the epic traditions as great heroes and heroines. Mande people with these names acquire their basic identities by the heroic deeds said to have been performed by their ancestors (Conrad 91).

All African peoples had their own religions thousands of years before they felt the influence of any outsiders. In sub-Saharan Africa, traditional religion probably evolved in prehistoric times along with other fundamental aspects of culture. Nevertheless, in most African languages there is no word for “religion” because the spiritual and ritual aspects of life are just part of all life. These cultural values can be referred to as “traditional religions” or “belief systems (Conrad 91).

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4.1.1 Family

The family, both among animists and among Muslims, is the first social unit. but the old family was very extended and the bonds which united, its members were strong. Paternal authority, or more exactly the authority of the oldest, was exercised without limit.

As long as the father lives, all children, whatever their age, are in guardianship; at his death, his younger brother or his eldest son inherits his powers. Mali's history is strongly governed by patriarchal values, which makes it difficult to find evidence of strong female figures, but collectively women are mentioned through the work they have done.

Women were not allowed to play active roles in commerce, administration, or religion which arguably gave them personal leeway; however, their influence remained considerable in social life and within the family. Also called Néné Gallé or Diom Soudou, that is to say the mother of the family or the hostess.

The task of producing and preparing food is one of its main functions; she must therefore maintain a private garden, help the man of the fields to ensure the subsistence of his family. More than the father, it is the mother who is responsible for the child's future. It is also from her that the child holds the baraka, an essential viaticum, as the Toucouleur said, the child is a book written by the mother, to the world to read and judge it (Niane 157-159).

5. Ethnicity and Social Classes

The Mali Empire was a multicultural empire, containing several ethnic groups living within the same society. It was also an empire in which ethnicity determined social rank. For example, the Dogon was considered and respected by all for their knowledge, especially in science. And so, this social model of operation allowed the empire to develop.

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5.1 The Major Ethnic Groups

The major ethnic group of the Mali Empire were the black Mandingos in the South and the white Nomad at the North.

5.1.1 The Black Mandingos

The Mandingo was one of the inhabitants of the upper Niger river. They were divided into sub-groups: Soninke, Bambara or Dyula, Mandinka (Keita¹) and Djallonké Soussou. Which extends from the south of Wagadougou to the mountain of Futa-Djallon; the Djallonké-Soussou formed clans of artisanal miners living in semi-autonomy, the emperors of Mali, even at the time of their omnipotence, did not impose Islam on them, their beliefs were mainly animist.

The Senoufo occupied the left of the Niger River from Woyo-Wayanko next to Bamako to Nandan, and because of the conflict with Sundiata who was a Mandingo, the Senoufo had to overflow the right bank of the Niger and even spread throughout the West Africa. However, the Bambara were a minority group in Mande. they settled in Bani between Bougini and Sekoro, they were totally against Islam, and distrusted merchants and marabouts (Koranic masters).

The Soninké founders of the first great empire, Ghana, were grouped together in the provinces of Bakounou and Wagadou. They actually belong to the Mandé linguistic group. Converted to Islam from the 11th and well versed in trade thanks to long contacts with the Arab-Berber caravanners, they counted among them several scholars and rich merchants at the end of the 15th century (Niane 53-54).

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5.1.1.1 The White Nomads

From the Atlantic to the Adrar des Iforas, the Sahelian zone was the domain of nomads, Berbers or Tuaregs. The first was divided into three fractions, one was found: the Djoddala at the edge of the Atlantic in the extreme west; to the east of these, the Messoufa and the Lemtouna, all pastoral peoples. They formed the Berber Sanadja group, whose wealth in camels and sheep had become legendary, and to the east of the Sanadja and to the north of the curve of the Niger, were the nomadic, veiled Tuaregs, different in their spoken languages and their customs from the previous group. Beyond, still to the east, the Lemta tribes, who extends to the shores of Lake Chad.

It seems that in the eleventh century the installation of these nomads in the Sahel was a relatively recent phenomenon and there were blacks long before their arrival in the field of nomadism, notably the Fulani, Songhoi, Zarma. However, a necessary coexistence is established between white nomads and sedentary blacks. The latter have long contained the aggression against their villages and battles with the Berbers, thanks to solidarity and the solid organization of empires (Niane 45).

5.1.1.1.1 Other Ethnicities

There were also a few tribes and minor clans that were under the sovereignty of the Mali Empire. From the west of the Futa and all along the bank of the Senegal River, there were the Tacorors, who were not Muslims but after the arrival of the Berber tribes with whom they mixed, and they became theirs. muslim tour. Tacoror, was the well-known name of black Muslims in West Africa. The South of the Senegal River, housed the Woloffs. The origin of Woloff can be traced back to different ethnic groups such as; the Berbers, the Mandingo, the Serer and the Fulbe. The Woloffs were very black and were divided into

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many social classes (aristocrats, artisans and slaves) in which each specific class remained linked to itself, that is to say that a man of the artisan class could not marry high society women and vice versa (Niane 46).

The Woloff were numerous, they depended on agriculture and animal husbandry as they dominated fertile lands and water sources like the Serer tribe who lived between modern Gambia and the Senegal River. This tribe constituted the weak cycle of the community of the Mali Empire because they were less influential than other ethnic groups such as (Mandinka and Berbers), who monopolized commercial life (trade in gold and salt with the North Africa) and political, and next to that, they inhabited the most important and urban cities (Niani, Timbuktu, Djenne), where there were Islamic schools and the center of decision-making (Dandash 36).

5.2 Social Classes

The Mali empire was made up of different social ranks, all of which had a very particular role in society for the proper functioning of the empire.

5.3 Aristocrat Nobles

The aristocrats were the upper class of old Malian society; They are generally a question of warrior families, and also of the 32 founding clans of Mali. Many people envied the aristocracy who would enjoy certain privileges in the empire, as a result; they had decided to keep this class among themselves even by marrying them, even the practice of polygamy had no control over the extension of these families, there were thousands of people living in the royal houses of the empire of Mali and also obtaining the title of aristocrat, by obtaining it by a heroic gesture, towards the empire or the king. At that time, there was a clear distinction between the king's children and other children. The children of the royal family

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had more social privilege, than the children of the inhabitants, or even those from out of wedlock, and each time the crown was unoccupied, it was the council of the high or the aristocrats who decided who would be the king. In general, the royal children had the upper hand. The reasons given above allow us to understand a true noble class that has failed to grow (Niane 103-104).

The royal family would constantly grow by adding new elements the failure to respect the law of the Elders did not make it possible to preserve the line of the royal heritage, thus until the 14th century, the great dignitaries and officials recruited from the royal family or the great allied family: the Keita, Conde (mother clan de Sundjata) and Koroma even in terms of marriage, while the other subclass did not have these rights (Niane 103-04).

During the Mali Empire, the Wagues were themselves the meaning of being an aristocrat. The six sons of Mama Dinga Khorè and their descendants founded and managed an important city called Wagadou. The Wagues were divided into six large clans: Soukouna, Béreté, Khomma, Djànè, Touré and Cissé. The quality of Wagué is Waguèya. This word originally designated the man par excellence, the aristocrat who knows how to show restraint, decency, and elevation of mind in his actions (Cissé 199-200).

5.3.1 Castes Serfs

In the 13th century, dignitaries were chosen because of their parental ties to the king (Mansa), but in some provinces the privilege was granted to the oldest family. Made up of people from different ethnic groups during Mansa's reign such as; the Mandingo, Thakur and Soninké. However, the supreme power was in the hands of the king himself. He attached great importance to the army; the armies were those which also protected the king when he was present; in other words when he is seated. However, other functions in the remote region

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were occupied by the king's relatives. They were considered viceroys, and they were highly respected, every time they moved, they were accompanied by drummers.

Indeed, the governor was known under the name of "Kourmina-Fari" or governor of the province. while the "Dendi-Fari" (the governor of Dendi) who was the cradle of the Empire, like the bara or "Bara koi", had the right to advise the king, because he had the power of veto over the king's decision. The governor of "Dirma" was the only person who had the right to enter the king's palace without dismounting his horse, and the dirma was responsible for guiding what follows when the king left the capital, until "Qadi" (judge) be considered, they were both promoted to the rank of advisers, and they also had the right (or honor) to shake hands with the king, i.e. relative monopolized representation of the king in the system of administration of the empire, and influential positions such as ministries (Treasurer General, Ministry of Forests... and so on).

The freed slaves also worked as spokespersons for the griot at the royal court, which means that they accompanied the songs and words of the griots in public. And next to the two previous classes, comes the class of soldiers who were also selected according to certain criteria that the soldier had to possess (Niane 104-10).

However, one of the most respected officials in the Mali Empire was a member of the Dozo Brotherhood, also known as a traditional hunter. Members of a co-fraternity containing initiate hunters and sons of Dozo, called Donzo Ton. This is not an ethnic group, the Dozo is primarily Mande speaking groups, but are also found among the Dyula, Dogon speaking communities.

According to Conrad, Unlike the professional exclusivity of blacksmiths and other members from the class of Caste born into their social class, any man can be a hunter. He accomplished it by apprenticing himself with a master hunter, and be accepted into a hunter's association. The determining factor in the acceptance was not the number of animals killed

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by the hunter, but his moral character. Historically, the authority in Mande was generally based on seniority, with the eldest son of a particular family succeeding the father. But with the hunters, the leader was the one who was introduced to society before anyone else. Among regular members, a son or younger brother who was initiated the first was the eldest of his father or his eldest brother. The leader of the hunters did not have to be a great hunter or, of a particular social status (91-92).

They were therefore at the origin of the creation of several Mandingo agglomerations tells us the ethnologist Youssouf Cissé. On the other hand, they are recognized as having a security mission. Most historians relate the importance of the politico-military role played by the Dozo in the Empire: " Defenders of the villages against enemies from outside: warriors, brigands, beasts, and wizards from within, hunters were the elite of the whole army, and we had to reckon with them during armed conflicts more than at any other time" specifies Youssouf Tata Cissé.

We cannot speak of the caste without evoking the blacksmiths craftsmen (Noumou) very famous of the famous people under the empire of Mali, they manufacture a multitude of agricultural tools. Some groups of artisans have a greater reputation than those in another village and their products transcend its borders. An important place is given to artisanal work and in particular to the blacksmith-potter couple because, in each village, the blacksmiths form a clan. Thus, any woman of a blacksmith or of a blacksmith's clan manufactures pottery and participates through her shaping work in the creative work.

However, the profession of blacksmith is reserved for men, while that of potter is reserved for women: they then play an essential role within the family nucleus, while men play a more decisive role on the financial level (Conrad 360-370).

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6. Traditional Beliefs and Religions

During Sundiata's period of reign Mali was partially converted, Islam religion was practiced by the merchants, and people with cultural, political economic links with North Africa, whereas the working people who farmed, mined the all-important gold still practiced traditional African religions

6.1 Traditional Beliefs

In ancient West African culture, people believed in the power of nature as deities; these deities played a vital role in the ancient traditions of Sudan (Mali). The deities were considered solely responsible for the rains and, therefore, they also became responsible for the correct agricultural season. In each village, people had deities while the names of these deities and spiritual practices varied from village or ethnic group to another. For example, the Malinke organized feasts and offered sacrifices under the order of the "Konkoba" who was the head of crops for the Malinke, and the end of the harvests; they threw parties and danced.

Deities were many among them there was Kodoba which was considered the deity of fertility, and there was also a deity called "Massa-Dan-Bali" or "Man-Tigui" which was the greatest of all in the city. Mandingo community.

Magic and prophecy also went hand in hand with deities in West Africa in the 13th century, that is, magic had great importance in the lives of old Malians. In magical practices, West Africans used their king's body parts as the head because they thought it was a pure spirit. These practices were considered by the Mandingo as a cultural and spiritual heritage (Niane 244).

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6.1.1 Islam

Long before power fell into Sundiata's hands, the first village in the Manden to have been Muslim was Màmbara. Outside of this agglomeration, there was not a single village in Mande where Islam took root as the Mandingo were known everywhere for their practice and knowledge in the animist religion.

Moreover, when we met Mandingo people, having embraced Islam, observing Islamic practices and saying their prayers, it could only be people converted by the inhabitants of Màmbara, or by the Soninké living in Mande, or by a tribal chief of royalty. In addition, some Mansa, after their enthronement at the head of the Manden, went to Kong to be crowned by the marabouts, asking them to bless them (Cissé 277-279).

7. The Cultural Legacy of the Mali Empire

The great legacy of Sundiata's reign was the enhancement of the Griots by making them the spokesperson, the ambassador and the heart of the empire.

7.1 Oral Tradition

Traditionally, Africans have always loved good stories and good storytellers, like most people of yesterday. The oral tradition has always been fascinating across the world, especially in Africa whose history has been learned orally.

Ancient writing traditions also existed in Africa (Egypt), but most Africans used oral rather than literary art. Unlike writing, "literature", "African" orature (to use the term of the Kenyan novelist and critic Ngugi Wa Thiong'o) is made by oral transmission and created to be interpreted verbally and in common with dance, and the music. The oral arts of Africa are

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rich and varied, developing with the beginnings of African Empires, and they remain living traditions that continue to evolve and flourish today.

7.1.1 The Griot

Griots are historians, praises and artists of music. Yet, none of these descriptions really capture their unique status in Mandingo society. In Sundiata's time, griots taught princes and gave advice to kings, the best griots held a special place, working in the king's quarters and using all his knowledge and wisdom to advise the king and rulers. The griots were educated and wise, and they used their detailed knowledge of history to shed light on the empire's dilemmas.

A Griot is also an African historian, they were a revered member of all the clans in the Mande, who would memorize all the important events of a village, such as births, deaths, marriages, hunts, seasons and wars, ensuring the continuity of the collective heritage, culture and the lineage of the clan. A Griot could speak for hours, if not days, drawing inspiration from a practiced and memorized story, passed down from Griot to Griot for generations.

The Griot was usually an honorable civic title or occupation in West Africa as in old Mali, this job was connected to a particular family, clan and ethnic lineage, in other words, the griot as a job was passed or inherited (Oulhadji 21).

The griot's ancient art, jeliya⁶, is still practiced today, though some say it has declined under the pressures of modern, commercial society [a central theme of Keita: The Heritage of the Griot]. These days, Manding families generally cannot afford their own private griot, so the musicians move from family to family, performing at weddings and baptisms, entertaining and praising the guests.

⁶ Jeliya is the art of Jeli (griot), the term Malinké Jeli (in Malinké they are called Jalis) refers to a type of musical and verbal artist.

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Critics claim that this way of working forces griots to know a little bit of everybody's history, but prevents them from knowing all the rich detail that their ancestors had to master.

- **Conclusion**

The first chapter is mainly dealing the origin and foundation of the Mali Empire during the 12th century under its first emperor Sundiata Keita (1210-1255), it also examined important points such as the ruling system of the empire, also its political, social and economic organization, in addition to that, this chapter studied different ethnic groups, social classes, religions and traditional beliefs. Close to that; it analyzed the cultural heritage, especially the oral tradition. However, the second Chapter will handle another important era of the Mali history which is known as the golden age of the Empire under Mansa Musa's (1280-1337) authority in the 13th century.

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- Introduction

Following the death of Sundiata Keita in 1255, the king of Mali was referred to as Mansa Sakoura in 1285. Sakoura was a former slave of the royal court who became emperor and was one of the most powerful rulers of Mali, which had also considerably expanded the territory of the empire. He made a pilgrimage to Mecca during the reign of the Mamluk Sultan An-Nasir Muhammad (r. 1298-1308) but died on his return trip. After the reign of three other emperors, including Musa I, his father Abu-Bakr II, described in the history of Mali as the man of infinite ambitions, especially of adventure, he reigned from 1310 to 1312, and announced dead in Malian stories. Musa Keita thus became mansa⁷ in 1312.

The Mali Empire reached its peak under Kankan Musa (or Moussa), also known as Mansa (Emperor) Musa. inheriting a vast empire, powerful military, but having problems within the empire itself. Musa came to power at a very critical time in the history of the Mali Empire due to internal issues between different ethnic groups. Mansa Musa succeeded in keeping the Empire on track by imposing his vision of how an empire should be run, it was amazing that in a short time he could keep the peace and bring prosperity to the economy and to the trade movement of Mali.

Known for his great leadership, the next chapter will talk about Mansa Musa (Biography, period of reign) and the famous pilgrimage he made in 1324 with an entourage of thousands of escorts. The following chapter will also shed light on the economic (sources of income, trade route and shopping center) and educational situation at the end of the establishment (universities and mosques), in addition to the learning process, the channels

⁷ **Mansa** is an Akan name given to a third born with other variants such as Mensah. In Mandinka, the word **Mansa means** "sultan" (king) or "emperor". It is particularly associated with the Keita Dynasty of the Mali Empire

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and the traffic. students. and scholars, later the chapter will discuss the legacy and death of Emperor Mansa Musa.

1. Mansa Musa

Mansa Musa is the tenth Mansa (1312 - 1337) in the Empire of Mali. Knowing Arabic, Mansa Musa has been described as a Muslim traditionalist. The Mali Empire reached its peak during the reign of Mansa Musa. Under his reign, his territories stretched north, reigning for more than 20 years, he succeeded in maintaining peace and stability in the empire and in placing his empire among the powerful Muslim empire of the world, making a pilgrimage extravagant in 1324.

1.1 Mansa Musa's Biography

Son of Abu Bakari II and the grandson of Sundiata who is the founder of the Mali Empire. Musa Keita was born in 1280, he became mansa in 1312, following the tradition which said that "the king must appoint a representative during his pilgrimage to Mecca or any travel outside the empire⁸", Musa was chosen as representative, then took power in 1312. He became the tenth Mansa of the Mali Empire.

Indeed, Mansa Musa was named by various names such as "King of Kings" or "Emperor" of the Malian Empire. His name is also found as Mansa Musa in West Africa manuscripts and literature. The name also might appear as Kanku Musa, which means "Musa, son of Kanku", as Kanku is the name of his mother and he is also named by Arab

⁸ A pilgrimage is a journey, often into an unknown or foreign place, where a person goes in search of new or expanded meaning about their self, others, nature, or a higher good, through the experience. It can lead to a personal transformation, after which the pilgrim returns to their daily life.

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historians “El hajj Musa of Melli 2” in Al-Sadi book. He had also some alternatives such as Mali-koy Kankan Musa and the Lion of Mali.

1.1.1 Accession to the Throne

Mansa Musa ascended the throne after his father (Abu Bakr II) who reigned from 1310 to 1312, who decided to undertake an expedition to the Atlantic Ocean to discover the New World and hoisted his empire higher than his predecessors, unfortunately, he never returned from this expedition, Thus, following the tradition and the orders of the kings who had chosen Musa as his representative after his departure, Mansa Musa thus becomes king by the practice of the appointment, thus following the charter of Kurukan fuga.

1.1.1.1 The Reign of Musa I

During Mansa Musa's 25-year reign, the Mali Empire was the most visited place of all in West Africa and indeed all of Africa. Musa was still a young man, perhaps not yet thirty, when he succeeded the head of Mali in 1312 from Abubakari Keita II, who had decided to embark on an expedition to cross the Atlantic Ocean. And under Musa's reign, the empire flourished and expanded to cover a significant part of West Africa, from the Atlantic coast to the interior trade center of Timbuktu and parts of the Sahara Desert. As the territory grew while Musa was on the throne, so did the economic situation of its citizens.

It was not until 1324 that the world outside the Malian border would have a glimpse of the king's considerable wealth. A devout Muslim belonging to a predominantly Muslim community, Musa traveled to Mecca for his Hajj pilgrimage. Mali was particularly rich in gold, and Musa took much of it to Mecca with him as an offering. Along the way he gave gold gifts to the inhabitants of the Egyptian cities he passed through - causing problems over the price of gold which had fallen in the international market, and throughout the

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Mediterranean region for more. of a decade. When Musa returned home from Mecca, he brought with him some of the greatest Muslim architects and scholars of the time, to work for and improve the empire he owns.

Pursuing the good relations established between the Arab countries (especially Egypt) and his country, according to Niane, Mansa Musa sent to the Sultan Mameluk a book of Maghrebian writing which [...] contained a treatise which he had composed on the rules of decorum (Set of rules to be observed to maintain one's rank in a good society.) [...]. It also contained greetings and a recommendation for the bearer to whom he had given a sum of five thousand gold mithqals, as a donation (37).

Of strict Malekite⁹ obedience, Mansa Musa only bought works of this sect in the cities of the East; however, he had attracted scholars and artists to his country to whom he granted royal pensions. He thus laid the foundations for the Negro-Muslim culture of Sudan. By becoming king under the sign of Islam, Mansa Musa, was the first king of Mande to be regarded as a completed model of devoted Muslim, and who had laid the foundations of a new culture which did not however deny anything essential to traditional culture.

Basically, the political structure doesn't. exchange. The Emperor of Mali, like his predecessor of Ghana, derives his power from the strength of tradition; the aspect of the court was however somewhat modified with the installation of a greater number of Arab scholars and merchants in the capital (Niane 38-39).

Mansa Musa brought stability, security and good management to Mali, consequently; Mali witnessed a great commercial prosperity, which impact had touched both the region of gold and salt-producing since gold mines were under his order and control. During Mansa

⁹ Relating to Malikism, a doctrine of Sunni Islam which predominated in the Muslim world during Mansa Musa's period of reign. Malikite is one of the four schools of jurisprudence (mādhhab) of Sunni Islam, formerly called the school of Medina, the Malikite current is centered on the teaching of Imam Mālik ibn Anas (circa 715-795), who spent most of his life in Medina.

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Musa's leadership, Mali became an attractive area for traders from the north and from the south of the empire.

Mansa Musa selected a good governing staff and he built a strong army who could maintain order even among the chaotic areas in Mali of the Sahara, accordingly; traders and visitors could move and cross Mali in a safe way, as a result commerce became very rapid and traders from different lands such as Egypt and Morocco could be found in the commercial towns (Oulhadji 29-30).

1.2 The Pilgrimage of Mansa Musa 1324-1325

When Mansa Musa went on a pilgrimage (hajj) to Mecca in 1324, his journey through Egypt caused a stir. The kingdom of Mali was relatively unknown outside of West Africa until this event. Arab writers of the time said he was traveling with an entourage of tens of thousands of people and dozens of camels, each carrying 136 kilograms (300 pounds) of gold. In Cairo, Mansa Musa met the Sultan of Egypt and his caravan spent and donated so much gold that the overall value of gold declined in Egypt over the next 12 years. The stories of its fabulous wealth have even reached Europe.

The Catalan Atlas, created in 1375 CE by Spanish cartographers, shows West Africa dominated by a depiction of Mansa Musa seated on a throne, holding a gold nugget in one hand and a gold staff in the other. After the publication of this atlas, Mansa Musa established himself in the world imagination as a figure of prodigious wealth (Conrad 37).

Following his pilgrimage, on the way back, he brought with him Muslim scholars, teachers, architects to build his city as he had seen in some important cities during his trip, and even some Muslim leaders of the Arabian Peninsula, to help it build cities like those in the East, but also to promote Islam, knowledge, and draw the world's attention to its empire.

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1.2.1 The Journey to Mecca

In 1324, an enormous caravan left Niani, the capital of Mali in West Africa. The sprawling mass of people, pack animals and gear was on its way to Mecca in Arabia, leading the caravan was the King himself, Mansa Musa. He was a Muslim, and making a hajj, or pilgrimage, to Mecca was an important duty of Islam (see Map 2, p. 53).

When he decided to make the trip to Mecca, he appealed to all the inhabitants of the empire to ask them for food and subsidies; on the advice of one of his teachers he had to leave his capital on a Saturday falling on the twelfth of the month. The expected Saturday did not appear until nine months later. The head of his caravan had arrived in Timbuktu when he had not yet left his palace; every time he passed through a town on Friday, he gave orders to build a mosque there: Goundam and Dire were among these towns. After Timbuktu, at each stage in the Sahara, he received fresh fish and vegetables sent by a powerful courier service (Niane 37).

Mansa Musa headed a great caravan from the capital of the Mali Empire Niani which was on the upper Niger River -, to Walata (Mauritania), then to Tuat or Adrar (south of Algeria) where he camped to rest because the caravan campaign gets tired and some of them felt sick. And after that, they resumed the journey, they passed by Ghadames (Libya) in the way to Cairo (Egypt). From there he went on to Mecca and Medina (Oulhadji 30).

Mansa Musa was accompanied by a huge caravan, whose number of people, and materials taken during this trip are unfortunately inaccurate; moreover, rough estimates have been made by historians, such as David Conrad, who said that the number of people who accompanied Mansa Musa on the long and extremely difficult journey across the Sahara Desert is said to have been in the thousands. There were the Mali court officials and merchants, soldiers to protect the caravan, camel drivers, servants, and slaves. There were also thousands of camels and donkeys to carry food, water, and other supplies. The

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caravan is said to have included 80 loads of gold dust (34). In addition to that, Ka'ti, in *Tarikh el-Fettach*, also estimates the number of men in the caravan at 8000 while es-Sa'adi, in *Tarikh es-Soudan*, reported that Mansa Musa left to Mecca for pilgrimage with an incredible force constituted of 60 thousand men and 500 slaves, each carrying a stack of gold weighing 500 mithqal (Abbou 4).

It is in the Sahara that one of the greatest extravagances of his pilgrimage is located: The Empress Niéba Condé, who accompanied her husband, one evening, between the Touat and Teghazza, experienced violent itching. She expressed the desire to take a bath, she wanted the river to have a in the water. Immediately the 8,700 men of the imperial escort were awakened and the camp turned into a construction site, a large basin was dug which was filled with water from the bottles. This is the story given by the Tombouctouan chronicler, three centuries after the passage of the great pilgrim (Niane 37).

After 8 months, Mansa Musa's caravan arrived in Egypt, it was in July 1324, under the reign of one of the greatest Mamluk kings, King Muhamad al-Nasir ibn Qalawun. He had stayed near the Pyramids of al-Giza for three days before moving to a palace, offered by the king of Egypt to his host. The caravan stayed there for three months while awaiting the Hajj season. The arrival of the caravan in Cairo was described as the greatest event of the time. According to Conrad, Mansa Musa's visit to Egypt caused a stir as he brought such an amount of gold with him and was extremely generous in his gift as a gift. Among the gifts he sent to the Sultan were 40,000 dinars (gold coins) (Abbou 6). However, we must also understand that these gestures of kindness from Mansa Musa towards the Egyptian people and their King were not only religious, but also political. At the end of the spirits, according to Conrad "Mansa Musa distributed so much gold as gifts, and the Malians spent such large amounts in the market, that gold declined in value and did not recover for several years" (Abbou 6).

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The Malians bought fabrics, women-slaves, Abyssinian slaves, singers. But they noticed that the traders of Cairo were deceiving them and they conceived a great aversion against them, to the point that “if they see the greatest of the princes of science and of faith, and say that he comes from Cairo, they will scold him and they will have an unfavorable opinion of him, in memory of the bad behavior that his compatriots had towards them” (Niane 38).

After Mansa Musa and the caravan had put feet in Medina, Mansa I went in order to visit the Islamic sacred places. First, he visited the Prophet Muhammad’s (PBUH) tomb and Mosque, then left Medina towards *Al-Baqiaa*’s graveyard where he had the chance to salute the prophet’s companion tomb too. After completing the pilgrimage rituals, the Mansa became hajji, a title given to people who completed their pilgrimage. According to Suret-Canale and Tamsir Niane, the Mansa bought houses in Mecca to welcome future pilgrims who would come from Mali, and distributed twenty thousand gold coins in alms to the poor. He also tried to persuade certain scholars and jurists to accompany him to Mali (Abbou 8).

After the religious rituals performed by Mansa Musa, he decided to take with him a part of the Oriental culture that he admired so much in particular the styles of construction of the buildings through which another architectural style emerged in his empire, books were also important for him, and especially people qualified in these different fields.

1.2.1.1 The Return Journey

Little has been written about the return trip from the Holy Lands to Mali except for the change of her itinerary, for political reasons, but also the fact that she got lost in this great desert. After marking a short stay in Cairo to buy his needs for the rest of the trip (Abbou 8). According to Ibn Khaldoun, when Mansa Musa and his entourage were returning from

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Mecca to Cairo, they separate from the main caravan. Without Arab companions to show them the way, they were completely lost and could not find water (38).

During his long journey back from Mecca in 1325, Moussa learned that his army, led by General Sagamandia, had captured Gao, in Songhai country. This city had been part of the empire even before the reign of Sakoura and was at that time an important commercial center although its rebellious tendencies are notorious. Moussa makes a detour through the city where he receives the two sons of Songhai dia Yasibo, Ali Kolen and Souleyman Nar, as hostages.

He then returned to Niani with the two boys and has them educated at his court. Mansa Musa returned to Niani in 1325, leaving behind the reputation of a Sudan with inexhaustible riches in gold (Niane 38).

1.2.1.1.1 The Impact of Mansa Musa's Journey

Mansa Musa's pilgrimage to Mecca was so grand that it was evident that it was going to have an important impact not only on local life, but also outside the empire. He came back with scholars and architects to build mosques and universities to spread the knowledge of Islam across his kingdom.

Among his best achievements was the mosque of Gao, and that of Djinguereber, both of which still exist today, in addition to the Sankore University in Timbuktu, and the royal palace of Madougou in Niani. These mosques, Koranic schools, libraries and universities allowed the empire to be more influenced by Islam and Arab culture, which the emperor also needed to be included among the Muslim empires, especially in matters of trade (Abbou 9).

Conrad reported that due to Mansa Musa's extravagant pilgrimage and the resulting publicity in Cairo, Mali has become better known in North Africa and the Middle East.

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the East, and even Europe. The stories of Mali's wealth have attracted more and more from North Africans to business ventures across the Sahara (41).

2. Economic Organization

The land of the Mali Empire was rich in resources. At its peak, the Empire witnessed a remarkable improvement on economic income, under the reign of Mansa Musa, he changed his economic strategy, by relying on several sources of income, while exploiting mineral resources (gold, salt and copper) and giving more importance to agriculture, trade route and taxation.

2.1 Gold and Salt

Gold was an important commodity that came from the south. North Africans traded it to Europeans, who used it as their main currency from 1252. West Africa was the main supplier of this gold, much of it coming from the Wangara mines in the south, likewise western Mali, also from the mine in the forest region south of the savannah between the Niger and Senegal rivers. Miners in West Africa dug gold in shafts up to 30 meters deep.

Despite that, gold was available in large quantities, but it was scarce in the market as miners used simple methods to dig it. In addition, gold was valuable in Mali and neighboring kingdoms and even in the country and kingdom of the north coast of the Midstream, while under the reign of Mansa Musa gold became available and therefore lost its value on the international market, a large part due to his pilgrimage he made in 1324 to Mecca.

Salt, another important product traded in West Africa, came from the Taghaza salt mines in the northern Sahara. Salt is a critical commodity. It is an important nutrient for both humans and livestock, helps to prevent dehydration in hot temperature, and is a food preservative.

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Surprisingly, Mansa Musa himself identified copper as his empire's most important trade item. The most famous copper mines were at Takedda, 250 miles east of Gao. All North Africa drew copper from there. As a result, Takedda was a centre for caravan trade; by some reports, more than 12,000 camels passed through each year (Mini-Q 204).

The geographical location of the Mali Empire that was in between water gave it some characteristics to be more than a gold producer, because there were large fertile lands at the Niger, Senegal and Sankarani River that could be used in agriculture, fishing and network of transportation from an area to another through water routes. And it was a factor for varying the source of income rather being bound to gold and salt trade, so it was necessary to look forward encouraging farmers and handicraft men and depending on their own efforts in order to decrease importation of goods (Collins 82-87).

2.1.1 Trading Centres

Trade across the Sahara dates back to before the time of Jesus of Nazareth. In fact, Islam came to Mali via these trade routes. In the thirteenth century, Mansa Musa controlled and had also contributed to the widening of these trans-Saharan routes, camels made this trade possible, although some areas used caravans of donkeys or head portages (men carrying goods on head) to transport goods (see Map 3, p. 54)

Timbuktu, Djenne, Gao and Walata were all trading centres; they were the southern end points of desert routes heading north via Taghaza, then further north to Morocco or east to Egypt. Trade west of Timbuktu followed the Niger River towards the Atlantic (Mini-Q 203).

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2.1.2 Timbuktu

Timbuktu, founded c. 1100 CE by the nomadic Tuaregs, was a semi-independent trade port which had the double advantage of being on the Niger River bend and the starting point for the trans-Saharan caravans. During the 14th Century Timbuktu was a reference for all of Africa in matters of Islam, and scientific knowledge.

According to the tradition adopted by Abderrahmane Sa'di, these nomads came to this place to graze their herds. Not far from the river, they built a makeshift camp during the summer season, and, in the fall, they retreated further north to the Arouane coast. During their stay near this water point, the Tuaregs placed their effects and utensils under the care of an old woman named Bouctou. Timbuktu, deformation of Tin-bouctou, would mean in Targui place or place of Bouctou. This is the origin of the name of the city (Niane, 66).

In 1325, Mansa Musa honored the city with a visit; the devout emperor laid the foundations of the great mosque of Djinguereber and had a pied-à-terre called Madougou (the royal palace) built in the west of the city, not far from the Kabara canal (Niane 67).

The city would be monopolised and then taken over by the Mali kings who made it into one of the most important and most cosmopolitan trade centres in Africa. It was under Mansa Musa's area that Timbuktu reached the peak of development and urbanism because it was influenced by the other people who passed by to trade in its Market, for getting knowledge and also for diplomatic visit from different places such Haussa land, North Africa (Morabit, Berbers and Sunhaja), and the east of Africa (Cairo and Alexandria).

Timbuktu was not a city chosen at random by Mansa Musa to make it a modern and more active city, because Timbuktu was located 7 kilometers from the Niger River to which a 17-kilometer canal connected it. The city was accessible to the large boat. In addition to that, Timbuktu and its port on the Niger were thus in communication in all seasons, either by water or by caravan route (Niane 70).

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2.1.2.1 Djenne, Gao and Walata

According to Djibril Tamsir Niane, Sa'adi of Timbuktu presents Djenne as the blessed city that caravans flock to Timbuktu from all points of the horizon, from the east, the west, the south, the north. It is in these terms that he described Djenne. Founded around the year 800 by the Bozos fishermen (an ethnic group), Djenne however only rose to prominence under the Mali Empire.

Initiated to trade by a long coexistence with the Arabo-Berbers, they discovered in the Bozos excellent auxiliary for their commercial enterprises. Indeed, these boatmen "masters of the water" ensured the transport of their goods in all the valley of the great river. Thus early, the prosperity of Djenne was founded (Niane 78).

Djenne was also a centre of learning and Islamic culture which was spread by the Berbers, who were the first North African people to settle in Djenne as Levzion Stated: "Djenne is one of the greatest Muslim markets, where traders carrying salt from the mines of Taghaza meet other traders with the gold...." (157).

Gao is also considered an interesting economic center in old Mali, it is located at the eastern bend of the Niger river, it is about 400 kilometers far from Timbuktu (modern Mali), it rose before the growth of Timbuktu, Gao was not as interesting as Timbuktu which was the first influential economic zone in medieval times in West Africa. The Gao market was full of products such as salt, gold and copper, but most of these products came from different regions, as mentioned by El Wazan (167).

Walata (Mauritania) also had a major role in the trading movement; it is located in the North West of Mali Empire, it was inhabited by Berbers and Sanhaja who used to pass through as well as to trade and exchange goods, Walata was the point that connected the trading caravans of North Africa with the markets of the Mali empire and that of Hausa land as a result Walata grew up to be the Back port for Timbuktu (Oulhadji 39).

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2.1.2.1.1 Trans-Saharan Trade

The regular commercial and cultural exchange between Western Africa and the Mediterranean world did not start properly until the 8th century AD. Yet the beginning of trans-Saharan trade was not such a sudden and dramatic event like the coming of Europeans to America, but it had a long history of sporadic encounters for more than 1000 years. When and how the very first contacts took place is still obscure, although their origins can be traced already to the prehistoric times. The Trans-Saharan Trade is one of the four major routes that linked classical civilizations. Its major exports were gold, salt, copper and slaves. This route also helped to the spread of Islam and Islamic scholarship in West Africa.

It was almost entirely in the hands of Arab traders from Sidjilmassa, Fez, Touat and Tripolitania. The large caravans linking the Maghreb to Sudan were organized by North African trading companies. The trans-Saharan trade made Sidjilmassa, Ouargla and Zouila very important warehouses and most of the Berber tribes of the West benefited greatly from it. (Niane 198-199).

Located along the trade routes the Mali Empire had as well benefited economically from this it and influenced culturally by this contact. Some of Mali's major towns were located conveniently along the trade routes enabling them and hence the empire to grow. For instance, Taghaza town where people traded in salt. In Takedda people exchanged copper for gold.

By the middle of the 14th century, when Mali was at its highest point of imperial domination, the Trans-Saharan trade had increased dramatically in volume. Ivory, slaves, salt, copper, and animal skins continued to be important in the Trans-Saharan trade, but gold was the most important commodity. There were three main gold deposits under the Sahara.

For Mansa Musa, the Trans-Saharan trade was not only to economically enrich his empire, but also to develop Eastern culture in his empire, especially the Muslim religion,

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which eventually succeeded in establishing itself as the most practical religion within his empire, and in its influence on society was so strong that many laws and punishments have been changed to follow the teachings of the Quran.

3. Intellectual Life

Mansa Musa's reign was characterized by his search for knowledge, especially Islamic ones. For which he relied on the help of students from Mecca and Africa in general.

3.1 Mosques (Djinguereber, Sankore) and Universities

Djinguereber Mosque (Masjid) in Timbuktu (Mali), is a famous learning centre of Mali built in 1327, and cited as Djingareyber or Djingarey Ber in various languages. About 85 m long and 30 m wide, this mosque by its dimensions clearly shows that El Haji Mansa Musa wanted to leave a monument worthy of him. In this massive construction, like the previous monument, the maintenance material was lacking, it is for this reason that it fell into ruin and that in the 16th century El Aqib restored it but using banco, Sudanese material par excellence. Here is how, at the beginning of the 19th century, the first European explorer who visited Timbuktu described it.

The Djinguereber Mosque is made entirely of earth plus organic materials such as fiber, straw, and wood. It has three inner courts, two minarets and twenty-five rows of pillars aligned in an east-west direction, and prayer space for 2,000 people. The interior is gently darkened, the light only filtering through the openings of the eastern facade which overlook a courtyard-cemetery. The pillars are covered with carved inscriptions which are pieces of the Koran or praises of the Almighty. On the walls and on some pillars were applied ornaments made of yellow earth, geometric patterns or arabesques. (Niane. 72).

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The mosque of Sankore that became the university of Timbuktu which was built with the same style as Djenne and Djinguereber mosques but it was very small. Sankore Mosque and University is the oldest continuously-operating institution of higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is believed that the mosque and university were erected in the 1100s C.E. (Twelfth Century) by Berbers who settled in the Timbuktu region of modern-day Mali. Sankore mosque and university consisted of numerous buildings made of clay, stone beams, and a wooden scaffold for repairs after rainy seasons, modeled after the Malian indigenous mud structures. Each building was run by its own imam (worship leader) or ulema (Islamic scholar). There was no central authority within the school besides the ruler of Timbuktu. Classes were conducted in private rooms or open courtyards. Students used locally-made wooden boards and ink to complete assignments.

Mansa Musa I, ruler of the Mali Empire from 1312 to 1337, made several improvements to the mosques after his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324; he staffed it with scholars in various fields and helped it gain more visibility within the Islamic world. The learning structure of the Sankore Madrasa focused on Arabic grammar, literature, Islamic law, and the sciences (e.g., astrology).

4. Mansa Musa's Achievements and Death

All goods traded in the regional markets of the Ghana Empire from the 10th to the 12th century continued to generate income in the markets of Mali from the 13th to the 15th century. In the early 14th century, Mali's expansion into the Inner Delta, Gao, and the eastern provinces of Songhay dramatically increased the empire's agricultural, grazing, hunting, and fishing resources. The new territories also provided additional sources of slaves for trade, military service, and agricultural production. Tributes from newly subordinate kings and chiefs and tariffs from newly controlled trade routes enriched the government's treasury. Due

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to Mansa Musa's extravagant pilgrimage and the resulting publicity in Cairo, Mali has become better known in North Africa and the Middle East, and even in Europe. The stories of Mali's wealth have attracted increasing numbers of North Africans to business ventures across the Sahara. In the decades following the Mansa Musa pilgrimage, Egyptian traders were regular visitors to Mali, and Malian citizens in malls like Walata dressed in clothing imported from Egypt. (Conrad 40-41).

4.1 Mansa Musa's Achievements

One of the main things that led Mansa Musa's Kingdom to prosperity was not only the possession of gold fields, but rather the spread of Islamic civilization through the entire Kingdom. As a devoted Muslim; he attempted to incorporate Islam for the spiritual wellbeing of his people. He devoted a great deal of his time purifying, fostering and spreading Islam in Mali, especially after his famous pilgrimage to Mecca. Mansa Musa returned in Mali with the goal to promote Islam education and introduce some of the new things he saw during his journey. This period represented the expansion of Islam in Western Sudan. Many members of his royal court, as well as provincial chiefs and officers followed him; but some people remained loyal to their ancestral beliefs (Traoré 17).

Considered a strong leader Mansa Musa, extended its territories far to the west. He did this by establishing a huge, well-trained army, which was used to expand the territory of the empire. It was also used for peacekeeping in that whenever there was a rebellion in any of the Small Kingdoms, the army was sent to suppress it, thus facilitating the rise of the Mali Empire. The military also facilitated trade by protecting traders while they engaged in trade and while they traded.

The kingdom of Mansa Musa was characterized by its stability, good governance and commercial prosperity. He ruled the Mali Empire for over 20 years, to be precise 25 years.

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According to Ibn Battuta during his trip to Mali after Mansa Musa's death, he found “complete and general security” in the empire and within his own borders (Oulhadji 35).

For countries as for empires, the succession to power is always a crucial moment for the future of an entire people. Because it is also the moment of the fragility of political life. Mansa Musa had not been spared by the plots, despite everything, he very quickly succeeded in establishing himself as an essential king in various fields such as the conquests of new territories, at his death the borders of his empire extended from the Atlantic Ocean to the west, Lake Chad to the east and the Sahara Desert to the north. On top of that, Mansa Musa established an efficient system of government than his predecessors.

It was during the reign of Mansa Musa that Mali reached its apogee; At that time, the size of the Mali Empire was around one point two million square kilometers. It had the greatest commercial volume and the greatest military strength.

4.1.1 The Death of Mansa Musa

The date of Mansa Musa's death is the subject of debate (the kingdom of Mali having no written records). If one takes into account the reign of his successor, his son Maghan (1332-1336), as well as the fact that he would have reigned 25 years, the date of his death would be 1332. Yet, the Arabs had proposed a different date the great North African historian, Ibn Khaldun, whose writings is considered as one of the best primary sources of information on the dates of the rulers of Mali and West Africa kingdom. Arabs had recorded that Musa was still alive until 1337.

When Mansa Musa died in 1337, his greatest legacy was not only the spread of Islam in western Africa caused by his great hajj, but also the prosperity and stability he had brought to the Empire of Mali. That's why his 25-years of reign (1312–1337 CE) is described as the golden age of the empire of Mali (Bell 224-225).

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After the death of Mansa Musa in 1337, the rule was transferred to his elder son Magha. Mansa Magha, who ruled Mali Empire about five years (1337 to 1341). Magha was as sufficient as his father was, he was able to impose order, sustain peace and secure Mali border (Oulhadji 45).

5. Cultural Heritage

Mansa Musa left a realm notable for its extent and riches, his organisation and administration of a purely African empire, the founding of the University of Sankore, the expansion of trade in Timbuktu, the architectural innovations in Gao, Timbuktu, and Niani, later adopted throughout Mali and the subsequent Songhai empire are all testimony to Mansa Musa legacy.

5.1 The Royal Palace

Madougou the royal residence, built by Mansa Musa in 1325. Leon the African says that this palace was large and he attributes its construction to the poet architects Es Saheli; it was probably in "stone masonry with lime mortar" like the great mosque of Djinguereber, that's all that is known about the monument. It must be an ordinary palace but with so many decorations. It said that Mansa Musa wanted to adopt the oriental style, so he suggested constructing on the border of Niger a palace that could make comparison between royal palaces of the orient Kings, and due to the lack of materials, they gave it up. The palace has been occupied now by the slaughterhouse of the town but the Name Madougou remains till today every slaughterhouse is named Madougou (Niane 71- 72).

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5.1.1 Monuments

The Monuments were one of the standing signs of the existence of the Mali Empire. They were in every single corner of Mali. On his return from Mecca to Mali, he had a splendid palace built and offered his Arab architect fifty-four kilograms of gold. The Sudanese style dates from this period. It is in fact an Arab-Berber architectural style, with massive lines, which gives the constructions in earth dried in the sun the appearance of fortified houses (Niane 72).

This demarcation of the traditional style of construction was the sign of a king with disproportionate and futuristic ambition, these most famous works are the Mosques of Djinguereber, Djenne, Sankore and Madougou were the great monuments of the city and they were the admiration of the visitors.

The monuments built in mud to reach us had to be touched up several times when they were not demolished and completely rebuilt. However, the monuments that we could observe of the rest of the Empire of Mali tell us a lot about the beauty and the grandeur of the empire, it was at its peak.

5.1.1.1 Manuscripts

As far as the griot preserved the history of Mali, the Manuscript was an important item that kept the identity of Malians, and it also aided Malians to keep different Islamic and Quranic lecture and courses alive for centuries. Manuscripts were about thousands, the Ahmed Baba Institute in Timbuktu, for instance, houses 120.000 manuscripts written on Islamic or European imported papers and in many local languages that were used in the Mali Empire at the 13th Century such as; Arabic, Haussa, Mande and Songhai. Those Manuscripts were mainly about grammar, Logic, rhetoric, theology, astronomy and old Medicine (Rasmussen 18-20) (See Fig 2, p. 51).

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Under Mansa Musa's reign, the production of books was heavily sponsored by the king and other prominent families with paper imported from China. This bolstered the book trade in Timbuktu. Soon books became the most valuable commodity in Timbuktu. This attracted traders, merchants and scholars alike from around the world. Private libraries became very common in Timbuktu.

By the end of Mansa Musa's reign, the Sankore Madrasa housed 25,000 students and had one of the largest libraries in the world with over 400, 000 manuscripts. Including manuscripts works on African history, culture, papers on philosophic, religious or socioeconomic debates.

- Conclusion

The second chapter deals with the reign of Mansa Musa (1312-1337), who did a gigantic job to bring the empire to its peak. Mansa Musa is considered one of the greatest kings, if not the best known among the kings of West Africa, and the most famous because he made his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324.

The first part of this chapter was based on the biography of Musa I, his pilgrimage and the effect this may have had on the economy and intellectual life of Mali, as well as on his achievements, the chapter examined the organization economic, that is to say, it examined the main resources of economic income such as the trade in gold and salt, but also national and international trade contacts, this chapter also spoke of the great cities of the empire as well as these large shopping centres which constituted a large market for the exhibition and exchange of goods.

General Conclusion

The Mali Empire was the second and largest of three medieval West African kingdoms. Located south of the Sahara Desert in the Sahel grasslands, Mali built its wealth and power upon trade, the transportation and irrigation afforded by the Niger River. The most glorious and triumphal successes of the Mali Empire were achieved by its two famous kings Sundiata Keita, the founding father of the empire (1235-1255), and Mansa Musa the Great (1312-1337).

Under the leadership of both Sundiata and Mansa Musa, the empire reached its zenith. It was during their reign that Mali first began to gain fame and notoriety as well as economic prosperity and power. Sundiata's era witnessed a wide internal ordering that touched the political organisation of the empire such as setting laws and orders, provincial divisions, and changing the political center from Kangaba into Niani.

The governmental system set for the kingdom by Sundiata to manage the political, economic and cultural sectors were fabulous and harmonious. As already pointed out, despite what the title "Mansa" implied, the kings were not absolute monarch though they probably yielded popular authority, the empire was reportedly run like a federation, As imposed by the Kurukan Fuga Charter, with each tribe having its chief representative at the court. In order to keep this vast empire safe, the kingdom was divided into provinces ruled by his generals, in addition to that, Sundiata is renowned for his defeat of Sumanguru at the battle of Kirina in 1230 CE and for his consolidation of Mandinka control over the Western African trading routes.

Mansa Musa was not merely a conqueror that was able to rule over a large empire with different tribes and languages, but also developed Mali's economy and brought several positive changes to the political and social level. Mansa Musa ruled from around 1312 to 1337, he was well known for his devout Muslim beliefs. His era was the brightest period in

Mali's entire history because it witnessed a great event which was the journey of Mansa Musa from Mali to Mecca, he unified Mali behind the Islam faith with his famous pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324.

Mansa Musa's pilgrimage had an impact on Mali's commercial prosperity as well as intellectual life because Mali became the destination that every merchant or scholar from North Africa and Arabian Peninsula wished to travel to, either for gold trading or for accessing knowledge in Timbuktu University.

He was also known for his architectural influence from his trip to Mecca, educational influence of the Arabic language, and good relations with the countries through which he traveled. When Mansa Musa died in 1337, his greatest legacy was not only the spread of Islam in western Africa as a result of his great hajj, but also the prosperity and stability he had brought to the Empire of Mali.

Finally, the history of the multiethnic empire of Mali composed of Bambara, Peuls, Malinké, Berbers, Dogon, Songhay and many others, which reveals the immense potential of a successful civilization in West Africa. This success is probably due to the good governance brought by the rulers to the empire throughout its existence. Tragedy, triumph, are the words that can characterise this warrior empire, an empire built in times of terror, but which quickly understood that it was necessary to unite to triumph. The culture of the Empire of Mali is based on unity and tolerance, which were the roots of the founding of the empire.

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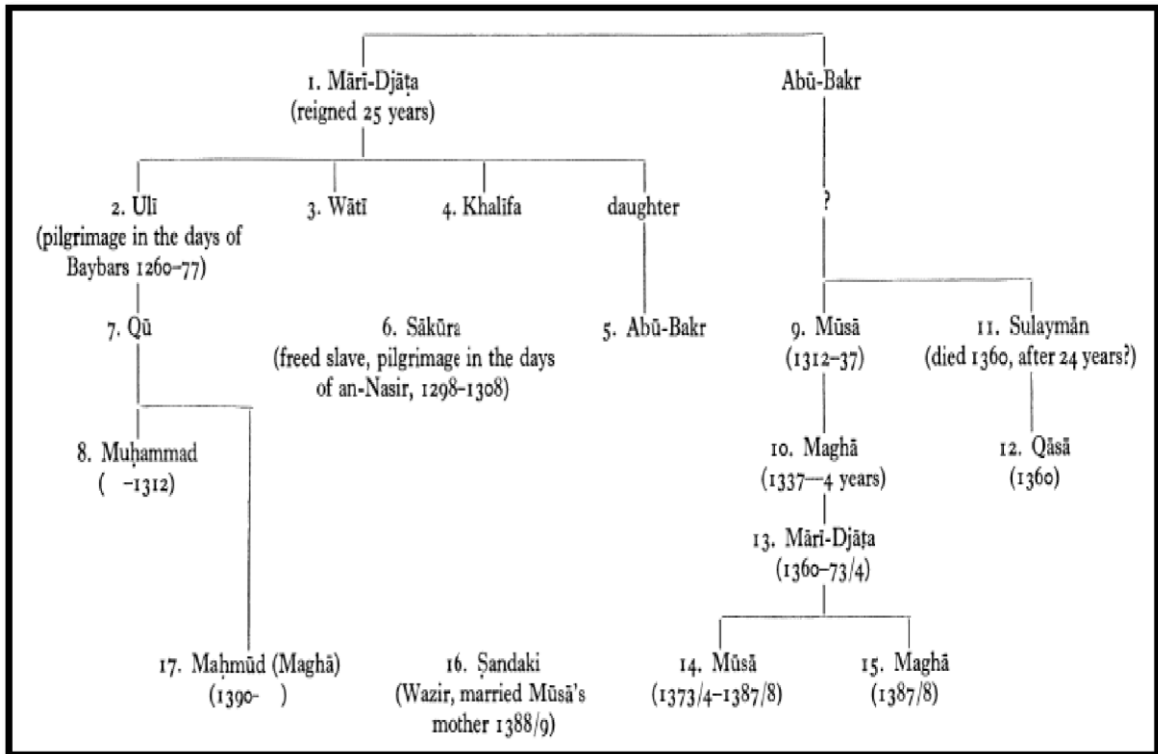
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Appendix: The list of Figures

• **Figure 1:** The Kings of the Mali Empire



Source: Levtzion, Nehemia. The thirteenth and the fourteenth Kings of Mali (pp 341-353).

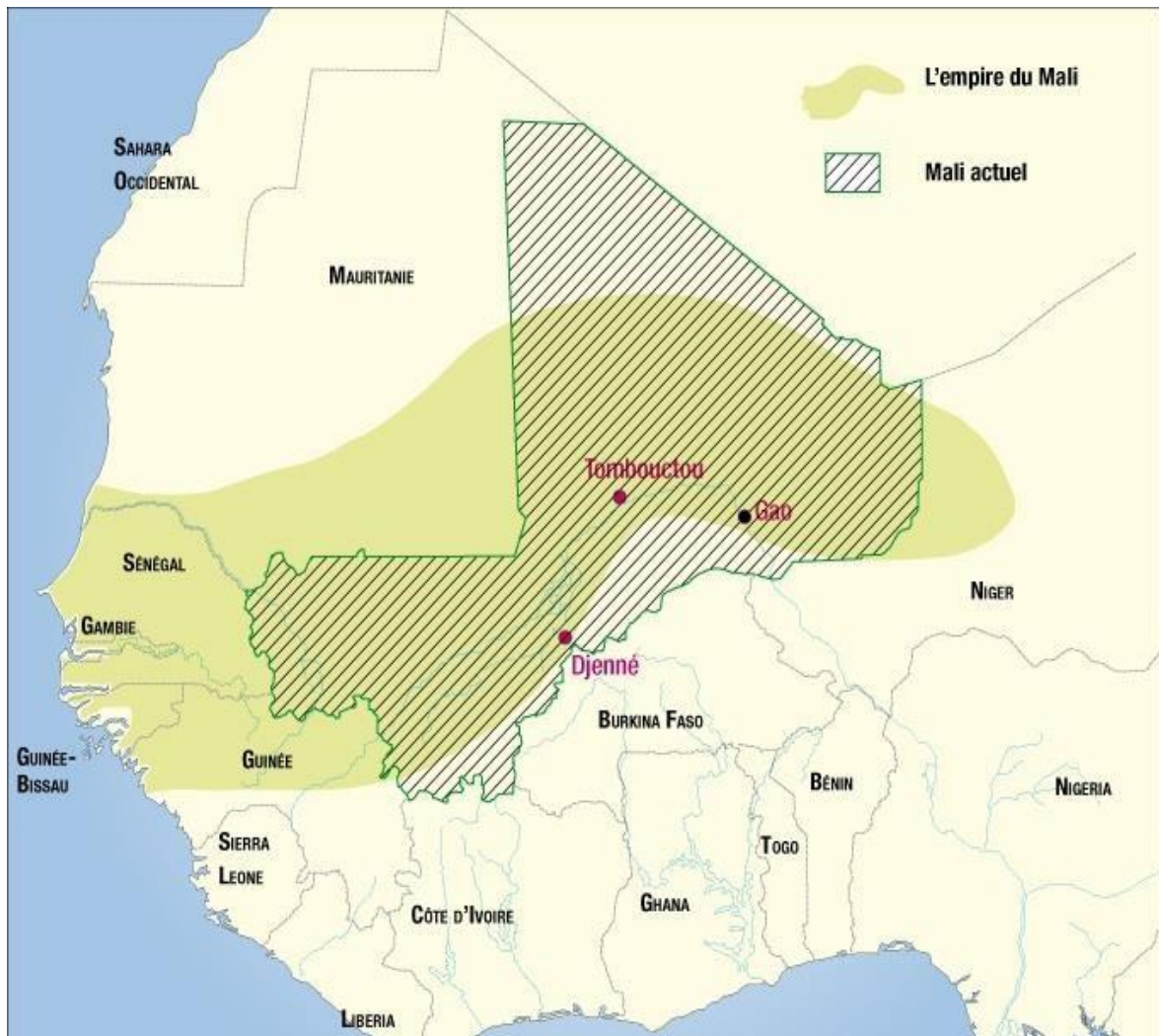
Figure 2: Sample of Timbuktu's Manuscripts



Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timbuktu_Manuscripts#/media/File:%20Timbuktu-manuscriptsastronomymathematics.jpg

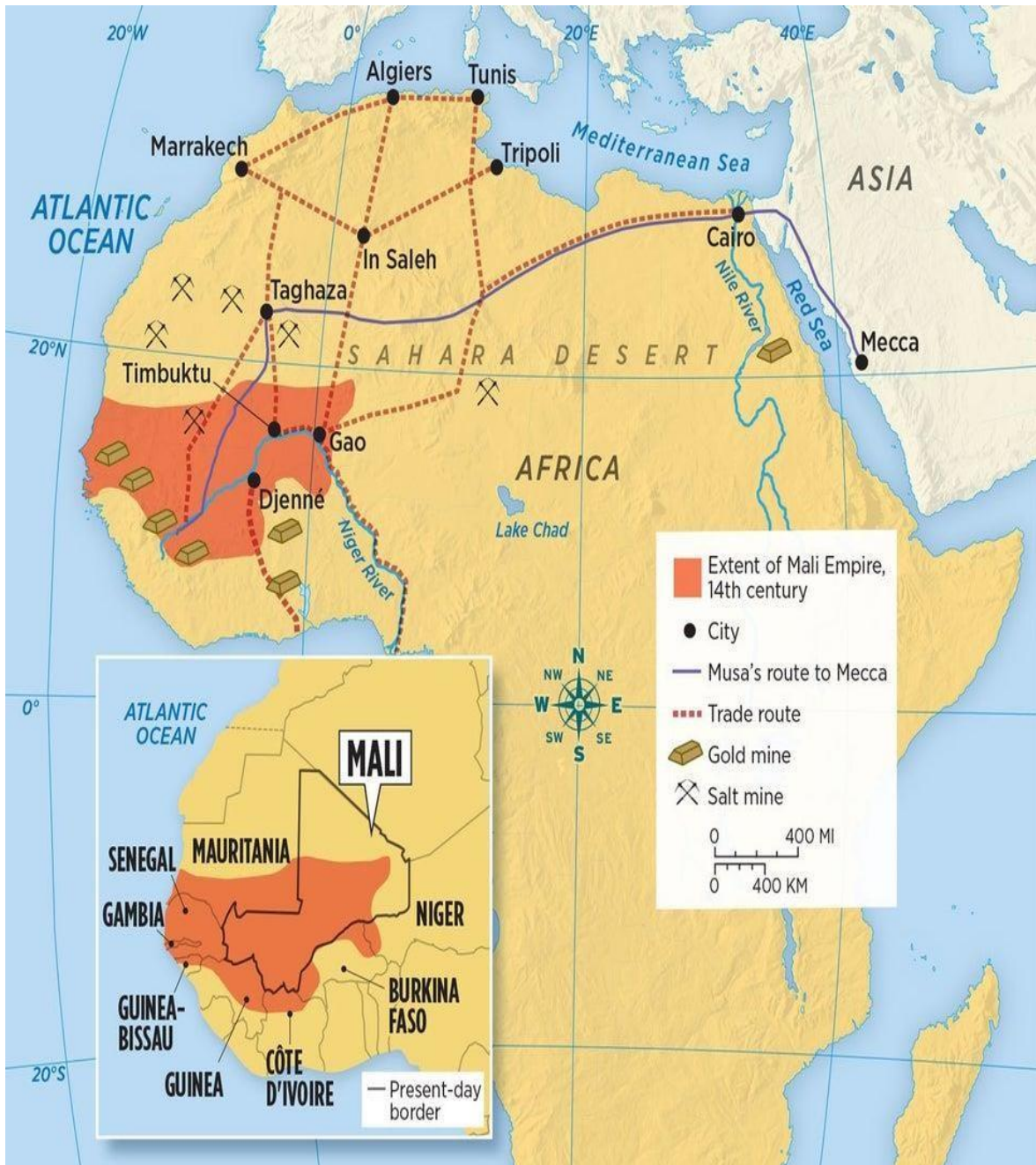
The list of Maps

Map1: The Mali Empire in the 14th century



Source : http://voyagesenduo.com/senegal/3grands_empires.html.

Map2: Mansa Musa's Route of Pilgrimage 1324



Source: Junior.scholastic.com/content...

Map 3: Trans-Saharan Trade Routes



Source: Aa77zz, . "Trans-Saharan Trade Routes." World History Encyclopedia. World History Encyclopedia, 01 Mar 2019. Web. 02 Jun 2021.