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Mansa Musa

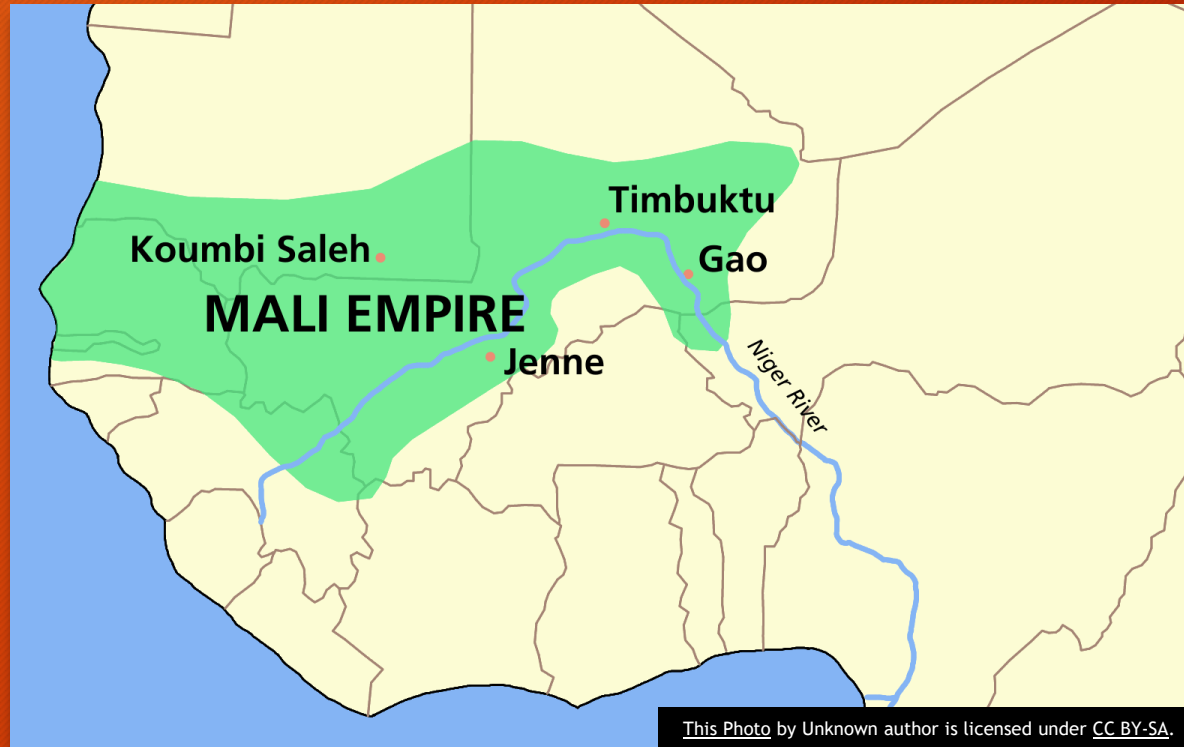
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The Ruler of Mali

- Mansa Musa (Musa I of Mali) was the ruler of the kingdom of Mali from 1312 C.E. to 1337 C.E. During his reign, Mali was one of the richest kingdoms of Africa.
- Mansa Musa inherited an already prosperous Mali kingdom. *Mansa* was the traditional Mali title meaning 'king' and Musa was the grand nephew of the founder Sundiata Keita. Mansa Musa gained the throne after his predecessor, Mansa **Abu Bakr II**, sailed out into the Atlantic with a large fleet of ships and was never seen again



His Kingdom

- With an army numbering around 100,000 men, including an armoured cavalry corps of 10,000 horses, and with the talented general Saran Mandian, Mansa Musa was able to extend and maintain Mali's vast empire, doubling its territory and making it second in size only to that of the [Mongol](#) Empire at the time.
- Mali controlled lands up to the Gambia and lower Senegal in the west; in the north, tribes were subdued along the whole length of the Western Sahara border region; in the east, control spread up to Gao on the Niger River and, to the south, the Bure region and the forests of what became known as the Gold Coast all came under the Mali Kingdom .



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Pilgrimage to Mecca

- Mansa Musa, like many other devout Mali rulers before and after, set off for a pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324, but when he arrived in Cairo in July of that year en route, he caused an absolute sensation. The Mali ruler's camel caravan had crossed the Sahara and when he arrived in Egypt, even the Sultan was astounded by the wealth this West African king had brought with him. In some accounts, each of 100 camels carried 135 kilos or 300 pounds of gold dust while 500 slaves each brandished a 2.7 kilo (6 pounds) gold staff. In addition, there were hundreds of other camels loaded down with foodstuffs and textiles, horse riders waving the huge red and gold banners of the king, and an impressive human entourage of servants and officials that numbered in the tens of thousands.
- THE KING OF MALI HAD GIVEN 50,000 GOLD DINARS TO THE SULTAN OF EGYPT MERELY AS A FIRST-MEETING GESTURE.

Known to the world

- An indication of the impression Mansa Musa had made is that news of his Cairo visit eventually reached Europe. In Spain, a mapmaker was inspired to create Europe's first detailed map of West Africa. Created c. 1375, the map, part of the *Catalan Atlas*, has Mansa Musa sitting regally on a throne, wearing an impressive gold crown, and holding a golden staff in one hand and, somewhat gleefully, a huge nugget or orb of gold in the other. It was such tales of gold that would inspire later European explorers to brave disease, warlike tribes, and inhospitable terrain to find the fabled riches of Timbuktu, the golden city of the desert that nobody quite knew where to place on the map even in the 18th century.



Death and Successor

- Mansa Musa was succeeded first by his son Mansa Maghan I (r. 1337-1341), who had also ruled as regent while his father had been on his famous pilgrimage, and then by his brother Mansa Sulayman (c. 1341-1360). That Maghan's reign lasted only four years and his place was taken by his uncle.
- The discovery of new goldfields and access to the southern coast of West Africa meant that by the mid-15th century Mali no longer monopolised trade in the region. Significantly, the *Mali mansas* were also guilty of fighting amongst themselves as civil wars wracked the empire. As a consequence, first, the Tuareg attacked Mali cities like Timbuktu, and then the burgeoning Songhai kingdom, ruled by King Sunni **Ali** (r. 1464-1492), definitively took over most of the Mali territories in the 1460s.



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Reference Citation

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