

The Songhai Empire

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Introduction



- The Songhai empire was one of the largest states to ever dominate the Sahel region of west Africa during the 15th and 16th century.
- The Songhai empire covered the areas of Mali, Niger, Mauritania, Senegal, Nigeria, Guinea, and Gambia.
- The Songhai empire was the largest Islamic empire at the time.
- At its peak it was estimated to cover over 1 million 4 hundred thousand square kilometers.
- The Songhai empire was successfully able to dominate west Africa for over 300 years

Government



- The Songhai began as a small kingdom near the eastern bend of the Niger river.
- The empire was later expanded under the rule of King Suni Ali who became the first ruler of the empire.
- The Songhai empire was divided into 5 provinces, each province had their own judge and town chief.
- This divide in power eventually caused Ali to be overthrown by one of his generals, Askia Mohammed.

Trading



- The Songhai people relied on trading and agriculture, they traded goods such as gold, ivory, kola nuts, salt, skins, and even slaves.
- The trade centers that were established in Timbuktu and Djenné later turned into stone houses because of its importance.
- Taxes were often collected on trades and were used to expand the empire and build stronger armies.

Agriculture



- The rural people often hunted on animals that lived around the Niger river such as Hippopotamus, and crocodiles.
- The Songhai farmed along the Niger river where the land was most fertile.
- Crops included millet, rice and kola nuts.
- The Songhai fished and used animals for milk, skins, and farming.

Religion



- Religion was important to the Songhai people, Askia Mohammed established 150 Quranic schools teaching over 20,000 children of the Songhai.
- The Songhai made the city of Timbuktu the center of studies.
- The Songhai used the sharia law as the judicial system to deal with common misdemeanors among the people.
- Sharia law is based on the Quran to determine what is and what isn't permitted by God.

Architecture



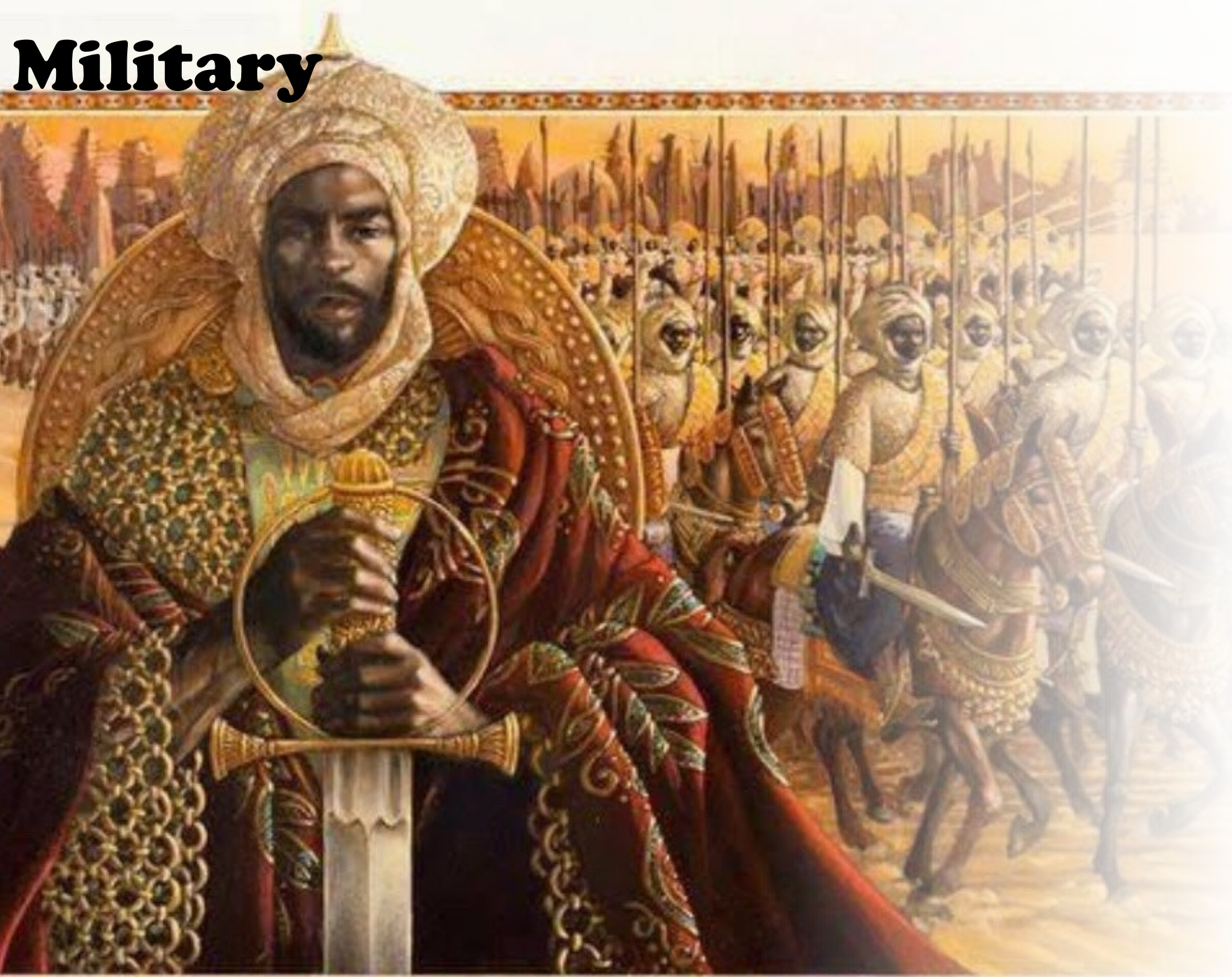
- The creative minds of the Songhai had a huge impact on modern architecture in countries like Niger and Mali.
- The Songhai had constructed 2 story houses in which they had a sewer system built from the second floor down.
- The restrooms were made indoors on the top floor and were powered by water and rocks to get rid of the waste.

Art



- The Songhai empire had a rich history, which was often displayed through their art.
- Sculptures found were made by both men and women.
- Men made mask, while women made pots and bowls.
- Songhai art told stories with figures resembling people and animals.

Military



- King Suni Ali was called "Ali Ber " which means Ali the great.
- He was given this name by his people because of the powerful military leader he was.
- He was said to have never have been defeated in war.
- King Suni Ali attacked neighboring territories in order to expand the empire.

Fall of the Songhai



- The rapid expansion of the Songhai made the empire a target to other empires and warlords.
- Timbuktu was captured in 1591 by the Moroccan king.
- The Moroccans imprisoned many scholars and confiscated many books.
- . The Moroccans destroyed many ancient books and manuscripts that weren't religious.
- The Moroccans were successfully able to take over the Songhai empire because they had far more advanced weapons.

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