

## **Mansa Musa I of Mali**



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The great Mansa Musa I is said to be born around 1280 AD within the empire of Mali. The Malian Empire was established by Sundiata Keita who is also the great uncle of Mansa Musa. Emperor Abu Bakari II ruled Mali before Musa began his reign, Musa was appointed the Deputy of Mali before Abu Bakari II was never seen again after taking a voyage to find the Atlantic Ocean. In 1312, Musa was given the title of Mansa Musa and control over an empire with unmatched wealth. Mali controlled gold and salt mines as well as other natural resources they used to generate wealth. Mansa Musa was a very wise ruler who embraced Islam and the expansion of his empire, under his rule the Empire of Mali stretched from the Atlantic coast, through Timbuktu, over to the edge of the Sahara Desert. The empire was thriving under the rulership of Mansa Musa; the emperor's reputation for his faith and wealth was about to become legendary.

Musa was a devout Muslim and his Hajj Pilgrimage to Mecca was a very important event for him, little did he know his travels would change the world. It took several years for him to prepare for his journey; in 1324, Mansa Musa became the first West African ruler to make the Hajj Pilgrimage to Mecca. The journey was over four thousand miles but he was well prepared. It is estimated that he was accompanied by 60,000 men, 12,000 servants, messengers wearing expensive silks, over 80 camels, and all of his fellow travelers carried riches and materials worth millions. One of the

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greatest aspects of this story is that Mansa Musa gave out money, gold and other riches to the poor and organizations as he journeyed to and from Mecca. Mansa Musa singlehandedly disrupted the economy of Egypt by giving out so much gold during his time in Cairo. It literally took Egypt over a decade for their economy to recover from Mansa Musa visiting their country. During his stay in Egypt Mansa Musa would meet the sultan of Egypt al-Malik al-Nasir, but their interactions was not very favorable initially. Musa was expected to greet al-Nasir and humble himself as a subordinate, Musa did not see himself as a subordinate of al-Nasir and was not initially interested in al-Nasir's company or hospitality. Eventually Musa obliged al-Nasir's hospitality and made the best of his brief stay in Cairo.

The expansion of the empire of Mali was always a goal of Mansa Musa, during his Hajj he was able to acquire Songhi's city of Gao which became the site of a Mosque Musa built after returning from Mecca. Upon his return from Mecca he brought back aspects of the different cultures he thought could enhance his empire. Architects, scholars, government officials and others returned to Mali with the emperor. An architect named Ishaq El Teudjin is said to have taught the Malian architects techniques that were used to build the great mosque of Timbuktu, the mosque of Gao, the emperors chamber at Niani, and the Madagou palace for Musa. He was able to increase the lore and fascination of Mali, he made Timbuktu a leading educational and Islamic center throughout the world, and the wealth of his empire continued to grow as the reputation of the emperor grew. Mali was literally recognized as a global empire, and was included in the maps that Europe and other nations produced when mapping out the world.

Mali was a true world power that consisted of over four hundred cities under its rule. Under the rulership of Mansa Musa not only was Timbuktu made a leading Islamic and educational center, it became the home of the great Djinguereber Mosque which is still standing to this day. Mansa Musa was able to thrive as the emperor of Mali in a time before the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade ravished the African continent. Stories of rulers such as Mansa Musa were hidden from the children of Africa so white supremacy could reign. This particular story was hidden in my opinion, because white supremacist didn't want us to know that the wealthiest man ever was an African Emperor who ruled Mali. From the time of Sundiata to the time of Mansa Musa, Mali became one of the most powerful and wealthiest empires the world has ever seen. To the great Mansa Musa I of Mali, we proudly stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KPCyrz4Utio>

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