

## Lesson 3 The Empire of Mali

### MAIN IDEAS

**Economics** Mali expanded and built upon Ghana's trading network to establish its empire.

**Government** Problems such as weak rulers and rebellious subjects led to Mali's decline.

**Government** Songhai was a powerful African empire that promoted Islam and learning.

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## Mali Builds on Ghana's Foundation

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** How could Mali build on Ghana's empire?

### Sundiata Comes to Power

- Empire of **Mali** formed in 1240—southern area of Ghana's empire
- **Sundiata**—great chief of Malinke people; first Mali leader
  - his powerful army captured Ghana capital; he extended empire
  - reestablished gold-salt trade; expanded trade routes
- **Timbuktu**—city on Niger River, center of trade, culture, Islamic scholarship
- Sundiata supported development of crops, cotton farming, weaving trade
- Like Ghana kings, Sundiata balanced Islam with traditional religion
- Sundiata was popular; still considered a hero by Africans today

### Mansa Musa Expands the Empire

- **Mansa Musa** takes power in 1307—devout Muslim, Mali's most famous king
  - allowed subjects to practice other religions
- Musa's elaborate pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324 was legendary
  - caravan attracted many merchants to Mali; gold trade boomed
  - gold trade with Europe helped support European Renaissance
- Musa returned to Mali with an architect, Arab scholar
- Timbuktu became international hub of scholarship, art, architecture
  - Musa's architect designed Sankore mosque built in Timbuktu
  - city attracted poets, artists from Africa, Asia
- Musa continued to expand empire until his death, in 1332

### REVIEW QUESTION

What were the effects of Mansa Musa's pilgrimage?

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# Decline of Mali

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** How did weak rulers lead to Mali's decline?

## Internal Problems

- Battle for rule after Musa weakened empire; Timbuktu raided, burned
- **Songhai**—rebels in east Mali empire, near bend of Niger River
  - in 1365, recaptured the city Gao from Mali; declared independence

## External Problems

- North African Berbers seized Mali lands, captured Timbuktu in 1433
- Bandits in south raided trade caravans, military outposts
- By 1500, Mali Empire reduced to original Malinke people area

## REVIEW QUESTION

What internal problems led to the decline of Mali's empire?

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# The Empire of Songhai

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** What benefits did a strong leader bring to Songhai?

## Songhai Expands

- In 1468, Timbuktu leaders ask Songhai king Sunni Ali to defeat Berbers
- Powerful Ali drove out Berbers, took control of Timbuktu
  - Ali was a harsh leader; expanded empire to include Djenné (trade hub)

## Askia Muhammad

- **Askia Muhammad**—leader who overthrew Ali's successor in 1493
  - felt Sunni Ali, followers did not practice Islam correctly
  - took control of north's salt mines; expanded empire larger than Mali's

## Askia's Organization

- Greatest achievement was organizing the government of vast empire
  - divided Songhai into provinces run by governors; created tax system
  - appointed directors of empire's finance, army, navy, agriculture
- Scholars converted many people in cities to Islam, which flourished
- In rural areas, traditional beliefs continued, but blended with Islam

## Songhai Falls

- Askia's son removed his father from the throne
- During 1580s, Morocco battled weak Songhai rulers, raided salt mines
- In 1591, Moroccan army captured Gao and Timbuktu
  - soon after, the Songhai Empire collapsed

## REVIEW QUESTION

What was Askia Muhammad's greatest achievement?

## Lesson Summary

- Mali expanded and developed into a powerful empire.
- Internal and external problems caused the empire of Mali to collapse.
- Songhai developed into a powerful, well-organized African empire that promoted Islam and learning.

## Why It Matters Now . . .

West Africans later suffered greatly from the slave trade to the Americas and the colonization of their continent by Europeans. Today Africans look back with pride to the great achievements of the empires of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai.