

A Short History of the Mali Empire (1235 – 1600 AD)

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The Mali Empire (1235 – 1600 AD) was one of the greatest African Empires. At the time, it had the second largest army on Earth. The largest Army was the Mongol Army in China. The Mali Empire was part of the Ghana Empire (300 – 1200 AD). But after the Ghana Empire fell, the Mali Empire became bigger and more powerful than the Ghana Empire.

The Mali Empire had over 400 cities at its most powerful. It controlled the city of Timbuktu, which was one of the world's leaders in science, mathematics, medicine, law, astronomy and architecture. The Empire was world famous for many things: from goods to knowledge. Some of the things the Mali empire contributed to the world included: gold, salt, iron, meat, books, dairy products, copper, pearls, shells, cloth, animal skins, kola nuts and ivory. The Empire made almost half of all the gold in Africa. Spanish maps from 1375 AD show the King of Mali at the time, 'Mansa Musa Keita II' holding African gold.

The Keita Dynasty ruled the Mali Empire. They were Muslim. Looking at their family history, you could discover that they were one of the first people to become Muslim in the world. Their ancestors were also the first Africans to help spread Islam in Arabia and around the globe. The 'Keita' name is still used in Mali today, for example the current President of Mali is Ibrahim Boubacar Keita.

The Mali Empire had 23 Kings. The first King, who founded the Empire, was called King Sundiata Keita. The 6th King of the Empire, King Mansa Sakura Keita had been a slave when he was born. It was the Empire's tradition that slaves could rise to higher positions. King Mansa Sakura Keita became a general in the army and expanded territory into Senegal and Dyolof.

The 9th King of the Empire, King Mansa Abubakari Keita II gave up his throne because he wanted to sail the oceans. He sailed to Brazil in South America. He then sailed to North America and discovered it over

180 years before Christopher Columbus found it in 1492 AD. Some of the King's captains returned to Africa and told people what they had found. In fact, Christopher Columbus knew that Africans had reached America. This is because original Americans had told Columbus that long before him, African people had already come to North America on boats. Columbus wrote this down in the 'Journal of the Second Voyage.' To prove the story further, in 1974, two skeletons of African males were found in the Caribbean. They were sent to laboratories and were found to be from 950 AD and 1350 AD.

The 13th King of the Empire was 'Mansa Musa I Keita' in 1312 AD. He is also known as the 'Lion of Mali.' He is the wealthiest King to ever rule anywhere in the world. He went to Mecca in 1325 AD, with 60,000 men. He founded the University of Timbuktu, which is still running in present day Mali.

The Mali Empire contributed a lot to humanity. It gave us knowledge in science, maths, law and astronomy and the rulers of the Mali empire discovered North America. The Mali Empire also gave the world gold, salt, books, ivory and helped spread Islam.

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