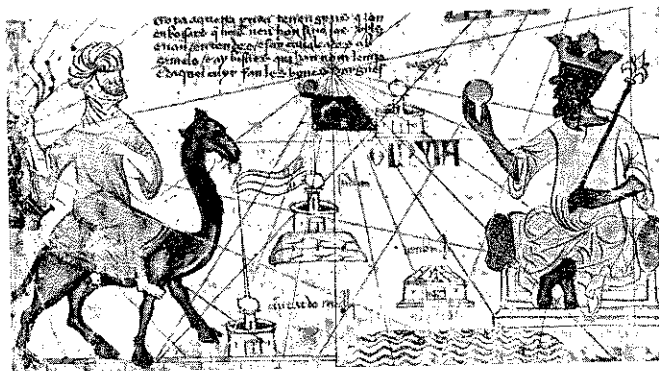


LONG AGO IN TIMBUKTU



Mansa Musa, King of Mali, is shown seated on his throne.

by Jay Dinsmore

Imagine living in Africa 600 years ago. What would it have been like? You might have lived in a small village. Or you might have lived in the wealthy city of Timbuktu! Timbuktu was the most important city in Mali, a great kingdom in the western part of Africa.

The most powerful king of Mali was a man named Mansa Musa. He lived in the 14th century. Mansa Musa controlled several secret gold mines. He used these riches to build Timbuktu into a magnificent city filled with **splendor**.

Set Your Purpose

What ancient cultures have you learned about in history? Read this article to find out about a great African kingdom from the past.



Think About It

What did you learn about
the ancient civilization of
Mali and the city of
Timbuktu?

The kingdom of Mali is shown on a
14th-century map.

Have you ever heard someone complain, “I had to go all the way to Timbuktu”? That means the person had to travel to some remote, faraway place. Going all the way to Timbuktu was worth the trip 600 years ago! Mali was a very advanced **civilization**. The city of Timbuktu had huge libraries and marvelous schools. Poets, scholars, and artists gathered there. Traders from all over the world came to **seek** their fortunes.

Mansa Musa was a Muslim. He practiced the religion of Islam. Once

in their lives, all Muslims are supposed to make a trip to the city of Mecca. Although Mecca was hundreds of miles away, Mansa Musa made the trip in style. His **caravan** included hundreds of camels and servants. He carried more gold in his caravan than most kings could hold in their royal **vaults**.

After the death of Mansa Musa, the great civilization of Mali began to crumble. Eventually, the kingdom fell apart. But the fame of Timbuktu and the stories of Mansa Musa’s fabulous wealth live on.

Name _____

Date _____

Check Your Understanding

Fill in the letter with the best answer for each question.

- During the reign of King Mansa Musa, Timbuktu was
 - a wealthy city in the kingdom of Mali.
 - an imaginary city.
 - a city to which Mansa Musa traveled in a caravan.
 - a small village in Africa.
- Which detail supports the idea that Timbuktu was worth visiting?
 - Mansa Musa lived in the 14th century.
 - The king of Mali made a trip to Mecca.
 - Timbuktu had huge libraries and marvelous schools.
 - Timbuktu was a remote, faraway place.
- How was King Mansa Musa able to build Timbuktu into a magnificent city?
 - He used riches from secret gold mines.
 - He borrowed money from other kingdoms.
 - He made a trip to Mecca.
 - He taxed traders from all over the world.
- The author mentions Mansa Musa's trip to Mecca because he wants to
 - compare Islam to other religions.
 - describe the route.
 - describe the camels.
 - compare Mansa Musa's wealth to that of other kings.
- From the last paragraph, you can guess that
 - Timbuktu is no longer a wealthy city.
 - the great civilization of Mali continues.
 - the gold mines never existed.
 - Timbuktu is not so far away after all.

Vocabulary

Find each vocabulary word in the selection. The words and sentences around it will help you figure out its meaning.

Fill in the letter with the best definition of the underlined word.

- Timbuktu was a magnificent city filled with splendor.
 - weapons
 - glory
 - warmth
 - people
- Mali was a very advanced civilization.
 - station
 - high school
 - society and culture
 - college life
- Traders from all over the world came to seek their fortunes.
 - look for
 - run away from
 - sink
 - bury
- Mansu traveled to Mecca with an enormous caravan.
 - city
 - robe
 - parade of travelers
 - food common in Africa
- The kings stored their gold in their royal vaults.
 - palaces
 - locked rooms or compartments
 - libraries
 - towers or prisons

Name _____

Date _____

Word Work

Synonyms are words that have similar meanings. For example, *small* and *tiny* are synonyms.

Read the sentences and the words. Write the word that means almost the same as the underlined word.

faraway strong enormous
old traders ruined journeyed

1. Timbuktu was a distant city. _____
2. Mansa Musa was its powerful ruler. _____
3. Many artists traveled to Timbuktu. _____
4. Wealthy merchants traveled there, too. _____
5. Scholars visited the huge libraries. _____
6. Years later, the kingdom was destroyed. _____
7. The ancient buildings crumbled. _____

Connotation is the emotional meaning of a word. It affects the tone or mood of the sentence. For example, the word *stomped* below conveys an angry mood. The word *skipped* conveys a happy mood.

Jesse stomped down the hall.

Jesse skipped down the hall.

8. Fill in the letter of the word that suggests that Mansa Musa was kind.

Mansa Musa was a _____ king.

- Ⓐ powerful Ⓒ generous
Ⓑ wealthy Ⓓ stern

9. Fill in the letter of the word that suggests that there were lots of finely prepared food at the banquet.

The king invited them to an _____ banquet.

- Ⓐ interesting Ⓒ elaborate
Ⓑ awful Ⓓ unusual

10. Fill in the letter of the word that suggests that the goods in the store were unusual and from all over the world.

The shop was filled with _____ goods.

- Ⓐ antique Ⓒ useful
Ⓑ expensive Ⓓ exotic

Write Now

Did “Long Ago in Timbuktu” give you some new insights into what life was like in ancient Africa? If asked to describe ancient Africa, many people would write words such as *jungles*, *elephants*, *lions*, and *zebras*. But, as you now know, there was much, much more.

- Plan to write a short description of a place you know well. First, choose a place. Then list the things you know about that place.
- Write your description. Use your list to help you.