Mansa Musa’s Journey to Mecca and Its Impact on Western Sudan

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Abstract

The sacred journey of Mansa Musa to Mecca for pilgrimage in 1324-25 is considered by many historians as one of the major events that brought deep changes on west African societies. These changes affected the social, economic, political and cultural aspects in West Africa. The paper explores the sacred journey of Mansa Musa to Mecca for pilgrimage and its impact on the empire of Mali. The research is divided into three parts, in the first, we attempt to trace this sacred journey and the different urban areas it passed through from Niani, the capital of the Empire of Mali, Walata, Taghza, Tuat, Ghdames, Cairo, Medine arriving in Mecca, with a special reference to the economic and social impacts of this journey on these urban areas. The second part of the paper deals with the route back from Mecca to Niani and the major urban areas it passed through. It is necessary to mention that, for political reasons, at Ghdames, the caravan swerved to the south to reach Gao, then Timbuktu to arrive in Niani. The third part of the paper is devoted to the local and international impact of this journey focusing on the spread of Islam, the Islamic culture and architecture and the boom in the trade of manuscripts, which made of Timbuktu a paramount center of trade and knowledge. Finally, it is important to mention that the journey of Mansa Musa for pilgrimage had deep geopolitical consequences on Africa in which the European sea-powers played an important role.

Keywords: Mansa Musa, The Empire of Mali, Mecca, sacred journey, pilgrimage, Islam, caravan, gold, Cairo

ترجمة الملخص:

تعتبر رحلة الملك مانسوس موسى إلى مكة المكرمة لإداء فريضة الحج في الفترة 1324-25 للميلاد، في نظر الكثير من المؤرخين، نقطة تحول هامة في تاريخ امبراطورية مالي خصوصاً وغرب افريقيا عموماً، بالنسبة إلى انعكاساتها الاقتصادية، الثقافية، الاجتماعية. يتناول هذا البحث تداعيات هذه الرحلة في الحضارات العمرانية التي مررت بها بالإضافة إلى انعكاساتها السياسية، الاجتماعية، الثقافية، والسياسية محلياً واقليمياً. الورقة البحثية تتوزع على ثلاثة محاور، في المحور الأول سلط الضوء على أهم المراكز العمرانية التي مررت بها مانسوس موسى في طريقه إلى الحج، بدءاً من نييني، عاصمة امبراطورية مالي، مروراً بولاية تاغزة، توات، غدامس، القاهرة، المدينة المنورة وصولاً إلى مكة المكرمة وما ترتكبه من آثار اقتصادية، واجتماعية على تلك الحضارات. في

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Introduction:

Pilgrims in the past, used to travel to Mecca on camels, horses, on foot and sometimes on boats. For this, they used to take some routes known as “the routes of pilgrimage”, like the great pilgrim road of West -Central Africa, the route from Marrakech to Mecca through Algeria, Libya and Egypt which is described by al-Ayyachi, the route from Tangier to Mecca taken by Ibn Battuta in his voyage for pilgrimage in 725 AH / 1324 AD, the trans-Saharan route to Mecca, the topic of our paper, in addition to other routes used by pilgrims coming from Europe and Asia.

The focus of the paper falls on the description of the caravan of Mansa Musa and the trip to Mecca for pilgrimage, and the different urban areas it passed through. It also deals with the local and international economic, cultural and political impact of this sacred journey. That is why the attention should be focused on the effects of the hajj, rather than the pilgrimage itself.

The paper starts with a short biography of Mansa Musa, and the reason of this sacred journey. The first part of the paper traces the major urban areas the caravan passed through, focusing on Tuat, Cairo and the Holy Lands. The attention falls primarily on the economic impact of the journey on Cairo. The second part is devoted to the return trip while the last part examines the long and short run impact of the journey at both the local and international levels. In the context, light is shed on the local and international impact of this journey stressing on the spread of Islam, the Islamic culture and architecture, and the flourishing in the trade of manuscripts, which made of Timbuktu a paramount center of trade and knowledge. Besides, the establishment of diplomatic relationships between the empire of Mali and the prominent centers of trade and knowledge will be mentioned. Finally, it will be necessary to examine the long term consequences of the journey on Africa which gave birth to deep geopolitical changes on Africa resulting in exploitation, colonization and underdevelopment, in which the European powers played an important role.
Who is Mansa Musa?

Mansa Musa is the tenth Mansa (r.1312 – 1337) in the Empire of Mali, and a grandson of Sundiata Keita, the founder of this Empire, and the son of Abu Bakari II. He is mostly remembered for his famous journey to Mecca for pilgrimage. His period of reign is described by historians as the golden age of the Empire of Mali. In other words, the empire reached its apogee under his rule, its territory stretched from modern Senegal in the West to Agadez in modern Niger in the East; and from Walata in the North to the forest belt in the South. He succeeded his father, Abu Bakari II, who led an expedition to explore the Atlantic Ocean, but never came back. Mansa Musa was a pious and generous man enjoying great esteem amongst his people. Mansa Musa’s period of reign witnessed great changes which affected the whole West Africa. It is agreed that he is responsible for the spread of Islam and the Islamic culture in its wide concept in the region. According to a recent economic study about the richest people in the world over history, Mansa Musa has been put at the top of the list with a fortune estimated at 400 billion dollars, considering time and inflation.

The Journey to Mecca

It is worth noting that most of the kings of Western Sudan travelled to Mecca for pilgrimage, Baramedana, the king of the small Mandingo kingdom which had existed before the foundation of the Empire of Mali by Sundiata Keita has been the first Melli king who made a pilgrimage to Mecca and set an example which was regularly followed by his successors. It is also important to mention that until the advent of the modern means of transport, pilgrims coming from western Sudan had been taking the same route taken by Mansa Musa as illustrated on Map One, except Sakura, the sixth king in the Empire Mali, who in his return from Mecca did not follow the customary route through Cairo, but he came through Eritrea and the Eastern Sudan, following what has now become the great pilgrim road of West-Central Africa. Sakura was killed by the Danakil as he set foot on the African shore.

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1 Sundiata Keita (1235-1255), 2 Mansa Uli (1255-1270), 3 Mansa Wali (1270-1274) 4 Mansa Khalifa (1274-1275), 5 Abu Bakari I (1275-1285), 6 Sakura (1285-1300), 7 Mansa Gao (1300-1305), 8 Mansa Muhamad bin Gau (1305-1310), 9 Abu Bakari II (1310-1312), 10 Mansa Musa I (1312-1337)

2 Abu Bakari II is the son of the sister of Sundiata Keita. Source: E.W. Bovill, Caravans of the Old Sahara, International African Institute, Oxford, 1933, p.71

3 Al-Umari mentions that Abu Bakari II organized two expeditions to explore the Atlantic Ocean and lost his own life while leading the second. Source: Bovill, p. 71

4 Historians use the word Mansa instead of Kankan or Kanku which means Sultan. Source: Abdurrahman Ibn Khaldun, Tarikh Ibn Khaldun, Dar al-Fikr, Beyrut, 2000, Vol. VI, p.268

5 Mansa Musa was a pious and God fearing person, one of the signs of his piety is that he used to emancipate a slave every day. Sources: Mahmud Ka’u, Tarikh el-Fettuch, Arabic source translated by O. Houdas and M. Delafosse, Librarie d’Amerique et d’Orient, Adrien Maisonneuve, Paris, 1982, p. 55, and in Tarikh ibn Khaldun, Dar el-Fikr, Beyrut, 2000, Volume VI, p.267 (Arabic source translated by the author)

6 The messenger of the Sultan of Egypt states that: “Mansa Musa gave the Royal Treasury many loads of unworked gold and other valuables”, Al-Umari cited in Levitzion and Hopkins Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West African History, Cambridge University Press 1981, p. 271

7 Es-Sharq al-Awsat Newspaper, Issue number 12379, October 19th, 2012, Celebrity Net Worth Website

8 Bovill, op. cit., pp. 67-68

9 Ibid., p. 71
According to Mahmud Ka’ti, a major event happened to Mansa Musa caused deep changes in his life by becoming a pious and God-fearing man. It is reported that he killed his mother Nana Kanku by mistake, he felt strong regret for this, and asked the jurisprudents about deeds and actions that may bring him the forgiveness of Allah. The Jurisprudents advised him to visit the tomb of Prophet Muhamad, Peace Be Upon Him, in Mecca to ask him for intercession and the forgiveness of Allah.10

Mansa Musa called upon his professor, the sheikh of the town to ask him for advice about the journey to Mecca for pilgrimage. The sheikh told him: “You have to start your journey on a Saturday falling on the twelfth of the month, and you will not die until you get back home safe, if God wishes.”11 That Saturday was believed to be a good day to start a long journey. For this, he had to wait nine months. In fact, such a decision seems to be based on superstition in which the African peoples strongly believe. When he decided to make the trip to Mecca, he appealed to all the inhabitants of the empire asking for food and subsidies.

It is reported that the length of the caravan was so important that it arrived in Timbuktu while Mansa Musa had not yet left his palace. In the context, Bovill states: “He rode on horseback preceded by 500 slaves, each carrying a staff of gold weighing 500 mithkal or about 6 pounds. In his baggage train of camels were 80 to 100 loads of gold each weighing 3 kantar or about 300 pounds.”12 Ka’ti, in Tarikh el-Fettach, estimates the number of men in the caravan at 800013 while es-Sa’adi, in Tarikh es-Soudan, said that Mansa Musa left to Mecca for pilgrimage with an incredible force constituted of 60 thousand men and 500 slaves, each carrying a stick of gold weighing 500 mithkal.14 This number seems to be exaggerated with regard to the purpose of the journey, which was the accomplishment of the fifth pillar in Islam, that is, al-hajj. In other words, it is hard to believe such a number of men in a peaceful journey. Al-Umari says that the caravan was included 100 camels, each carrying a load of 100 pounds of gold, 500 slaves, each carrying 4 pounds of gold, thousands of men in addition to 500 servants accompanying his wife Inari Conté. James Oliver, in his book “Mansa Musa and the Empire of Mali” argues that: “The Mansa’s personal servants, 12,000 in all, wore colorful brocades or silk from Persia. Five hundred of them, each of whom carried an ornamental staff made of gold, walked as a unit just in front of where he rode.”15 According to Mary Quingly, the number of people who travelled with Mansa Musa to Mecca was estimated at more than 15,000.16 On his way to Mecca, he gave orders to build a mosque when passing by a village if it coincided with a Friday, and that was the case in Goundam and Doukoure17. After Timbuktu, at every step in the Sahara, thanks to a powerful and rapid catering service, Mansa Musa received fresh fish and vegetables.18

10 Ka’ti, op. cit., pp. 56-57
11 Ibid., p. 57
12 Bovill, op. cit., p. 71
13 Ka’ti, op. cit., p. 58
15 P. James Oliver, Mansa Musa and the Empire of Mali, Great Britain, 2013, p. 29
17 Ka’ti, op. cit., p.59
18 Ibid., p.59
In the Region of Tuat

One of the most striking events that marked this journey to Mecca happened between Taghaza and Tuat, (See Map One) when Mansa Musa’s wife showed a strong desire to take a bath, she felt depressed because she missed the Niger River where she used to make her antics in water. Mansa Musa called upon Farba, the chief of the servants, and told him about the story. The latter soon ordered his men to dig a large hole and to fill it with water. After few hours of work and before sunrise, they could make a huge artificial lake. Inari Conté and her servants uttered cries of joy and rushed into water in an atmosphere of great happiness. After they spent some time in water, the caravan resumed its journey towards Tuat where they marked a long rest because of an illness which caught some of Mansa Musa’s men. It is reported that when the caravan arrived in the region of Tuat, about five hundred men suffered of an illness which affected feet, it is called in their language “tuat”. Mansa Musa ordered these men to stay there, and since then the location has taken the name of this illness. The caravan continued towards Warkala, a location in the south-east of modern Algeria. The latter was mentioned, in 1072 AH, by Abdullah ibn Muhamad al-Ayyachi, as an important

Source: P. James Oliver, Mansa Musa and the Empire of Mali, Great Britain, 2013, pp. 50-51

19 Teghaza sometimes spelled Teghezza was the name of a famous salt mine located at few kilometers at the north-west of present Tawdeni, south-west of Tuat. Ibid., p.59
20 Ibid., p.59
21 Es-Sa’adi, op. cit., p.13
urban area for pilgrims in their trip from Marrakech to Mecca. The caravan then continued its trip to Ghdames, in present day Libya. (See Map One) Nothing important happened during this step of the journey except the call for help and support Mansa Musa received from Muammar Abu Abdullah ibn Khadija el-Kumi who was oppressed by the Emir of Ghdames, as reported by Ibn Khaldun. After giving help and support to Muammar, the caravan resumed its journey towards Egypt.

**In Egypt**

After 8 months, the caravan of Mansa Musa arrived in Egypt, it was in July 1324, during the reign of one of the greatest Mamluk kings, King Muhamad al-Nasir ibn Qalawuun. It had stayed near the Pyramids in al-Giza for three days before moving to a palace, offered by the king of Egypt to his guest. The caravan has stayed there for three months waiting the season of al-Hajj. The arrival of the caravan in Cairo was described as being the greatest event at that time. In the context, James Oliver states:

‘People stopped whatever they were doing and stared in amazement at the incredibly spectacular leader of some unknown land who was riding slowly down their street... Even the Egyptian official responsible for meeting incoming caravan exclaimed, “In all my life, I have never seen anything like this. Why, this caravan competes in glittering glory with the African sun itself!”’

During the three-month-stay in Egypt, Mansa Musa and his men were pending generously, which had remarkable economic consequences which were still evident twelve years later. In the context, al-Umari states:

“When Mansa Musa came to Egypt in 1324, the mithkal of gold did not go below 25 dirhams, but from that time, its value dropped to 22. This situation has remained for 12 years because of the large amount of gold which they brought into Egypt and spent there.”

Mansa Musa spent much of the wealth he brought with him, which was estimated at fifteen tons of gold, on gifts and alms. The man flooded Cairo with his generosity, he distributed gifts on the officials, emirs and notables. The Mansa and his companions spent much gold on shopping, they were excited by the variety of goods. With his lavish spending and generosity in Cairo, he ran out of money and had to borrow at high rates of interest for the return journey. Ibn Battuta says that Mansa Musa borrowed 50,000 dinars from Siraj al-Din ibn al-Kuwayk, a rich merchant from Alexandria, after he had spent all his wealth. Al-Umari who visited Cairo twelve years after the famous journey of Mansa Musa reports:

“Merchants of Cairo and al-Fustat have told me the profits which they made from the Africans, saying that one of them might buy a shirt or cloak or robe...”

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23 Ibn Khaldun, op. cit., p.267
25 James Oliver, op. cit., pp. 44-45
27 Ibid., p. 190
or other garment for five dinars when it was not worth one. Such was their simplicity and truthfulness that it was possible to practice any deception on them.”

When the Malians realized that they were abused by the Egyptian merchants, they conceived a great aversion against them to such an extent that if a Malian sees the most pious man and to be told he is an Egyptian, he will have an unfavorable opinion, in memory of the unfair deal his countrymen had towards them. After a three-month-stay, the caravan left Cairo towards Mecca, it had to cross 1,000 miles more to reach its final destination. Mansa Musa and his companions found themselves again in a harsh desert that lies between the Nile River and the Red Sea. After they crossed the desert they arrived at the northern part of the Red Sea, then they stepped out from Africa into Asia. At the northern end of the Gulf of al-Aqaba, where the route from Africa joins the route from Europe and Asia, and there Mansa Musa saw peoples coming from different places and different cultures all seeking Mecca for pilgrimage.

**In the Holy Lands**

After a long exhaustive journey, the caravan arrived in Medina. Mansa Musa went to the Prophet’s Mosque where he visited the tomb of Prophet Muhamad Peace Be Upon Him to ask for his intercession for the forgiveness of Allah for the mistake he committed by killing his mother, as it has already mentioned. He also went to the cemetery of al-Baqiaa to visit the tombs of the Prophet’s companions. During his stay in Medina, the Mansa met a number of jurisprudents and scholars, some of whom he invited to accompany him to the empire of Mali to teach Arabic and the Islamic religion and culture. The season of pilgrimage was approaching, the Mansa ordered his men to get ready to leave to Mecca.

The caravan left Medina following the same route Prophet Muhamad Peace Be Upon Him had taken as mentioned by Abi al-Qassim Obeid Allah ibn Abdullah ibn Khurdazabah in his book “al-Massalik wal-Mamalik”. The route extends over 245 miles passing through eleven locations listed as follows:

1- From Medina to Shajara (6 miles)
2- From Shajara to Malal (12 miles)
3- From Malal to al-Siyala (19 miles)
4- From al-Siyala to al-Rwaitha (34 miles)
5- From al-Rwaitha to al-Suqiya (36 miles)
6- From al-Suqiya to al-Abwa (29 miles)
7- From al-Abwa to al-Juhfa (27 miles)
8- From al-Juhfa to Qudayd (26 miles)
9- From Qudayd to Asafan (24 miles)
10- From Asafan to Batn Marra (16 miles)
11- From Batn Marra to Mecca (16 miles) at 4 miles from Batn Marra, there is the tomb of Meymuna, the wife of Prophet Muhamad Peace Be Upon Him, and then remains 6 miles to the Mosque of Aisha which is at 6 miles from Mecca.

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29 Levitzon, op.cit., p.190
31 James Oliver, op.cit., pp. 49-52
While approaching Mecca, Mansa Musa heard people shouting “there is it!” “There is Mecca!” “We made it! Praise be to Allah!” the Mansa exclaimed.\textsuperscript{33} Before entering Mecca, pilgrims must cleanse themselves and wear seamless garments, generally two white towels, one to cover the upper part of the body and the other for the lower part, in a ritual called al-Ih’ram. Women wear long robes covering all the body except the face. This ritual is performed to show that all people are equal before God, and that there is no distinction between rulers and ruled.

It should be reminded that the attention should be focused on the route taken by the caravan of Mansa Musa from the empire of Mali to Mecca for pilgrimage, and the political, economic and cultural impact of this sacred journey on both the different urban areas it passed through and the empire of Mali rather than on pilgrimage itself. Thus, we will not develop the different rituals performed by the pilgrims to accomplish the fifth pillar in Islam, that is, al-Hajj, which are:

1. al-Tawaf (circumambulation performed seven times around the Ka’ba anticlockwise),
2. al-Sa’i (the shuttling between the two hills: as-Safa and al-Marwa),
3. al-Wuqaf bi Arafa which takes place on the Mount of Arafa on the 9\textsuperscript{th} of Dhul-hijja, the 12\textsuperscript{th} month in the Hegira calendar, referring to the Day of Vigil,
4. Jamrat al-Aqaba, that is, stone the largest pillar,
5. al-Jamarat, that is, stone the three pillars,
6. Tawaf al-Wadaa (the farewell circumambulation).

After completing the rituals of pilgrimage, the Mansa has become hajji, a title given to people who have completed their pilgrimage. According to Suret-Canale and Tamsir Niane, the Mansa bought houses in Mecca to accommodate future pilgrims who would come from Mali, and distributed twenty thousand gold coins as alms to the poor.\textsuperscript{34} He also tried to persuade some scholars and jurisprudents to accompany him to Mali. In this respect, it important to mention that Mansa Musa was a strict Maliki\textsuperscript{35}, therefore he did not buy books by non-Maliki scholars and jurisprudents when passing by the centers of knowledge during his trip.\textsuperscript{36} Thus, he insisted on scholars, jurisprudents, poets and architects loyal to the Maliki school of thought. Mansa Musa managed to convince some of them to return with him, among whom the famous Andalusian poet and architect Abu Is’haq al-Sahili known as al-Teudjin and some shurafa\textsuperscript{37}.

**Return Trip**

Little has been written about the return trip from the holy Lands to Mali except the change in its itinerary, for political reasons. After marking a short stay in Cairo to buy its needs for the remaining part of the journey, the caravan moved towards Ghdames where it swerved south along the Tassili n’Ajjer to Gao, then Timbuktu. (See Map One) It should be reminded that when the Mansa was in Mecca, a messenger from the empire of Mali brought news about the capture of Gao and

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\textsuperscript{33} James Oliver, op. cit., p. 54
\textsuperscript{35} Maliki refers to a follower of the Maliki school of thought, which is one of the four Sunni schools which are: al-Hanbali, al-Shafi’i and al-Hanafi. The Maliki school of thought is predominant in north Africa.
\textsuperscript{36} Tamsir Niane, op. cit., p.39
\textsuperscript{37} Shurafa is the plural form of sharif, and it refers to the descendants of Prophet Muhamad Peace Be Upon Him
Timbuktu by the army of the Mansa. The latter decided to stop at Gao and Timbuktu on his way back, to confirm the authority of Mali on the two cities, which were submitted by Saga Mandia, one of his generals, and to celebrate this victory. Mansa Musa arrived in Niani in 1325, leaving behind him the reputation of an empire with inexhaustible riches in gold.

The Local and International Impact of the Trip

The trip of Mansa Musa to Mecca for pilgrimage left deep, short and long run impact at both the local and international scenes, which have had remarkable consequences on the African continent for centuries.

a- The Local Impact

According to Mahmud Ka’ti, Mansa Musa contributed, to a large extent, to spreading Islamic civilization in Timbuktu in particular and in Western Sudan in general after his return from pilgrimage to Mecca. The Mansa brought with him a lot of books in different disciplines, scholars and jurisprudents to promote Arabic and religious studies. He also brought the architect al-Sahili who introduced new styles and techniques in building which had not been known in West Africa before like the burned clay to make bricks, pillars, the flat roof, etc. Among his best achievements were the mosque of Gao, Jingary Ber Mosque, which still stands today, and Sankore University both in Timbuktu, in addition to the Royal Palace Madougou and the Chamber in Niani. In fact, as-Sahili’s style in building influenced architecture in the whole Western Sudan. These mosques, Qur’anic schools, libraries and universities allowed for greater and more intensive Islamic education in Mali. For instance, in the fourteenth century, the city of Timbuktu alone had more than one hundred and eighty Qur’anic schools for a population of 115,000. Children were taught the Qur’an and the basics of Islam, while those who could afford studying at Sankore University undertook three further levels of study in Arabic, grammar, literature, Hadith (Prophet’s Sayings), Shariaa (Islamic Law), Sciences and commentaries on the Qur’an.

In a documentary broadcasted on National Geographic, Henry Louis Gates, Professor at the University of Harvard argues that “Before the Renaissance in Europe, there were in Timbuktu as many as 25,000 students and scholars coming from West and North Africa and the Middle East to study Islamic Law, theology and a range of secular subjects.” The daily activity of the scholars in Timbuktu revolved around the three sites of knowledge: Sankore University, the Jingary Ber Mosque and Masjid Sidi Yahya. Trading in books and manuscripts grew more and more, merchants found a new indulgence for their leisure time, books greatly enhanced the status of their owners and gave the pious a deeper understanding of Islam. Knowledge was highly respected in the Islamic world and those enjoying it owe the prestige and power with their professors and their prolific writings. Timbuktu was to become one of the most important learning centers in Africa, Ibn Battuta noted in his chronicles the piousness, tolerance, wisdom and justice of its inhabitants.

b- The International Impact

Politically, the Mansa established friendly relationships with Egypt, Spain and Morocco where he opened an embassy to deal with the affairs of the Malian traders and students. Besides the immediate consequences of the trip on the economy of Egypt left echoes which reached the southern part of Europe which hitherto had not yet established direct contacts with the negro states and kingdoms in West Africa.

38 Ka’ti, op. cit., p.58
They used to deal with the intermediate Jews merchants who controlled trans-Saharan trade, which linked West Africa to Europe. The journey of Mansa Musa to Mecca and the economic consequences it left, particularly in Egypt, stirred the European ambitions about exploring Africa to look for the source of gold, and therefore avoid dealing with the north African middlemen merchants who were imposing high prices on the gold brought from West Africa. Furthermore, the Mans's pilgrimage brought the Empire of Mali to the attention of European cartographers. For the first time, in 1339, Mali has been shown on a European map. In 1367, another map of the world showed a road leading from North Africa through the Atlas Mountains into the Western Sudan. In 1375, the Majorcan cartographer Abraham Cresques completed his atlas of Africa in which he showed the king of Mali seated in majesty upon his throne holding a nugget of gold and a scepter, while the merchants of north Africa march towards him. (See Map Two)

Map Two: The Map of Western Sudan from the Atlas of Africa

Source: Gaoussou Diawara, Abubakari II Explorateur Mandingue, L’Harmattan, Paris, 2010, the cover page of the book

Few years later, the Portuguese launched their first expeditions led by Henry the Navigator along the western coasts of Africa. Within the four centuries which followed the first direct contacts between the Europeans and the Africans of West

Africa, the whole continent witnessed major events which had deep social, economic and political consequences, the most important of which trans-Atlantic slave trade and the partition of Africa. In the context, Tamsir Niane argues that the journey gave birth to the myth that bewitched the Moroccan king al-Mansur a-Dahbi and led him to the conquest of Timbuktu in 1591.\(^4^3\)

**Conclusion**

The voyage of Mansa Musa to Mecca for pilgrimage in 1324-25 is considered by historians as one of the major events in the history of Africa with regard to its short and long term impact on this continent. It marked a turning point not only in the history of the empire of Mali but in the history of Africa as a whole. Firstly, it helped spreading Islam at a wider scale and promoting the Islamic culture, education, trade, and commerce. Secondly, the journey brought changes on the urban fabric in the region, after the introduction of new techniques in building. The new architectural style introduced by as-Sahili soon spread in all Western Sudan. Thirdly, diplomatic relations were established with the major centers of trade and knowledge such as Marrakech in Morocco, Cairo in Egypt and Toledo in Andalusia. These relations were promoted into exchanging ambassadors between Mali and Morocco to deal with the affairs of the Malian students and traders. Finally, it is worth noting that the ancient routes which had existed before the advent of modern means of transport, and particularly the trans-Saharan route which was taken by pilgrims coming from Western Sudan, helped the peoples of this part of Africa to develop social, economic and cultural relationships with the peoples in the urban areas they used to pass through.

However, the economic echoes left by the caravan during its passage through Cairo reached the European merchants, and motivated the European sea-powers to send expeditions to explore the Western coasts of Africa looking for the source of gold. The establishment of direct contacts with the peoples of West Africa for commercial purposes at the beginning developed into trading in human beings under what is known as trans-Atlantic slave trade, which has lasted for three centuries caused a loss of about twenty million Africans all trans-shipped to be sold in the Americas to work in mines and plantations. After the abolition of slave trade, the Europeans adopted a new strategy based on an intensive exploitation of the African resources. Then, in the last phase of the European presence in Africa, they decided its partition and the establishment of colonial rule.

Bibliography