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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ وَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ وَسَلَّمَ تَسْلِيمًا

## CHAPTER III

### THE REIGN OF THE SULTAN OF MALI, KANKAN MUSA, OF SONGHAY

The ruler Kankan Musa was the first of the rulers of Mali to completely politically dominate the kingdom of Songhay.<sup>1</sup> He was a pious and just ruler, the like of which had not ever occurred among the kingdoms of the *Sudan*. He made the pilgrimage to the Sacred House of Allah, and Allah knows best, during the beginning of the eighth century of the Prophetic *hijra* in great strength and with an extensive gathering of people.<sup>2</sup> His soldiers that accompanied him numbered sixty-thousand men. When Kankan Musa rode, there marched in front of him five-hundred slaves, each carrying a staff of pure gold and on their heads were five-hundred *mithgals* of gold.

Kankan Musa traveled by way of Walata from Al-`Uwala<sup>3</sup> until he reached a place called Tuat<sup>4</sup>. There he left behind many of his companions due to an ailment which affected his foot due to the extent of the journey. The name of the ailment in their language was called "*tuat*". These companions of his stayed there and settled and named the place with the name of the ailment which affected Kankan Musa. To this day it is called Tuat.

The people of the East recorded Kankan Musa's journey to their lands and were amazed at the strength of his kingdom. However they failed to describe him with the attributes of generosity and magnanimity due to the fact that he only donated twenty-thousand pieces of gold while in the two Holy places although he had a great kingdom and much wealth; in comparison to what Askiya al-Hajj Muhammad donated when he went - which amounted to about one-hundred thousand pieces of gold.

After Kankan Musa returned from the pilgrimage, he entered the kingdom Songhay under his dominion. On his return he built a mosque with a *mihrab* just outside the city of Khago (Gao) in which he prayed the Friday prayer (*al-jum`a*). This mosque is still in existence. The building of a Friday mosque became his custom in every place which he conquered. He then took the road to Tinbuktu and conquered it. He was the first ruler to conquer Tinbuktu. He placed there a vicegerent who acted as his representative and built an edifice which was the seat of political authority. It was called in their language "*Ma`-duku*"<sup>5</sup> which meant 'the seat of authority' (*daar's-*

<sup>1</sup> Mansa Kankan Musa's reign lasted from 1312 to 1337, in which the Malian empire witnessed its greatest expansion and development.

<sup>2</sup> This famous pilgrimage took place in 1324 C.E..

<sup>3</sup> Al-Uwala was the capital of the region of Walata when it was under the sovereignty of Ghana.

<sup>4</sup> Tuat lies about 1250 kilometers northeast of Tinbuktu.

<sup>5</sup> The term *duku* or *dougou* means 'village' in the Malinke language.

*sultan*) and it is a place which is well known even now. It has become a slaughter house for the butchers of the city.

Abu Abdallah Muhammad **ibn Batuta**, may Allah be merciful to him, said in his *Ar-Rihla*: "After the ruler Mansa<sup>6</sup> Musa, meaning the *Mali-Koy*<sup>7</sup> Kankan Musa, made the pilgrimage, he disembarked in Alexandria and took lodging in the garden which belonged to Siraj ad-Deen ibn al-Kuwayk, one of the prominent and notable businessmen of the people of Alexandria in a place called *Birkat'l-Habash* ('the Pond of the Abyssinians') just outside of Cairo proper. It was in this place that the ruler lodged. While there he became in need of monies, so he borrowed it from Siraj ad-Deen. The *amirs* of Kankan Musa also borrowed money from him. Thus, Siraj ad-Deen dispatched with them to Mali an agent who would claim the money which was owed to him. This agent eventually settled in Mali in so Siraj ad-Deen came himself along with his son to Mali in order to claim the money owed him. On their arrival at Tinbuktu, Abu Ishaq as-Saahili received them hospitably, as guest with food, refreshments and lodgings. It was that same night Allah decreed that Siraj ad-Deen should die. As a result the people of the city started talking about that, making accusations that he had been poisoned. However, his son said; "I, along with others, ate the same food which he ate. If there was poison in it then we would have been killed along with him. However, his appointed day came to an end at its proper time." The son later reached the country of Mali and took possession of the wealth which was owed to his father and then left for the lands of Egypt." Ibn Batuta continued; "In this land is the grave of the famous poet from Grandada, Abu Ishaq, who was known in his country as at-Tuwayjin. In this land also is the grave of the above mentioned Siraj ad-Deen." Here ends what Ibn Batuta had to say. It was in the year 754 *hijra*, and Allah knows best, that the Shaykh Abu Abdallah **ibn Batuta**, the author of the *ar-Rihla* arrived at Tinbuktu.<sup>8</sup>

It has been recounted that the ruler, Kankan Musa, was the one who built the large minaret of the grand mosque of Tinbuktu. Soon after that during the days of their dynastic rule the ruler of the kingdom of Mossi made war against their government accompanied with a mighty army. The people of Mali became frightened of the armies of Mossi and fled leaving the lands of Tinbuktu to them. The people of Mossi entered the country causing much corruption, burning, laying in ruins, killing at will and devouring the wealth of the city.<sup>9</sup> The ruler of Mossi appointed a governor over the country, but the people of Mali returned, conquered them and governed them for one-hundred years.

The erudite jurist (*faqih*) Ahmad Baba<sup>10</sup>, may Allah be merciful to him, said; "Tinbuktu was destroyed three times: the first time was by the hand of the ruler of Mossi; the second time was at the hands of Sonni Ali; and the third time was at the hands of the *pasha* Mahmoud ibn Zarqun which was weaker than the first two. It was

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<sup>6</sup> The term *mansa* in the language of the Malinke is 'king'.

<sup>7</sup> The Soninke title *koy* means 'administrator' and is interchangeable with the Malinke titles *farba* and *mundzu*. Thus, the title *Mali-Koy* means 'the governor of Mali'.

<sup>8</sup> This coincided with 1352 C.E. during the reign of *Mansa* Sulayman. The governor or *farba* of the city was a Masufa chief named Musa.

<sup>9</sup> This occurred from 1400 until 1433 when the Malian reestablished their sovereignty over the city.

<sup>10</sup> He was Ahmadu Baba ibn Ahmad ibn 'l-Hajj Ahmad ibn Umar Aqit ibn Muhammad Aqit, [d. 1626 C.E.]. He was the most celebrated of the scholars of Tinbuktu. He was present during the sacking of Tinbuktu in 1591 by the Moroccans and was taken by them along with many of the scholars as slaves to Merrakesh. He is the author of many excellent works on jurisprudence, theology, grammar and history. His most renowned work being the *Nayl 'l-Ibtihajj*, a biography of the scholars of the Maliki school of thought from the time of Imam Malik up until the time of the author.

said that in the destruction caused by Sonni Ali there was much slaughter and killing, much more even than the destruction caused by the ruler of Mossi."

In the end of the rule of the government of the people of Mali over Tinbuktu, the Magsherin Tauregs took the city after a series of incursions. They conquered it attacking the city from every region and direction causing much corruption in the country. Their ruler was Akillu-Akamalwal. The people complained on account of the damages and losses incurred and the fact that (the Malians) were unable to stand up against them. They said; "A country which cannot be defended by its sultan, it is not permitted for him to rule that land." The people of Mali surrendered the lands of Tinbuktu over to the Tauregs and returned to the lands of Mali. The above mention Akillu ruled the city of Tinbuktu for forty complete years.



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