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

## CHAPTER IV THE EMPIRE OF MALI

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As for Mali, it is very huge and extensive region lying in the far west in the direction of the Atlantic Ocean. Kaya-Magha<sup>1</sup> was the one who founded the first empire in that area. The seat of his government was Ghana<sup>2</sup>, which was a great metropolis in the country of Baghina<sup>3</sup>. It is said that their kingdom was in existence before Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was commissioned as a prophet. And by that time there had already ruled some twenty-two kings, and after Muhammad's prophetic commission there ruled twenty-two kings. Thus the total numbers of their rulers were forty-four kings, and they are considered to be among the *baydaan*.<sup>4</sup> However, we do not know to whom they trace their origin. Their subjects were Wangarian<sup>5</sup>. When their kingdom came to an end, the people of Mali succeeded them in sovereignty. They were black in origin. Their government became very extensive, dominating all the lands as far as the territories of Jenne'. Among the principle provinces of Mali were: Kala<sup>6</sup>; Bindouku<sup>7</sup>; and Sibridouku<sup>8</sup>. For in each one of the three provinces there were twelve principalities, each with its own ruler.

As for the rulers of Kala they were eight which were established on the island of Kala bordering one another. The first of them, *Waruna-Koy*, bordered the kingdom of Jenne'. Next to him were the kingdoms of the *Wanzu-Koy*, the *Kamay-Koy*, the *Fadku-Koy* (some pronounced it *Farku-Koy*), the *Kirku-Koy*, the *Kaw-Koy*, the *Farma-Koy*, and the *Zuna-Koy*. These were eight city-states all which bordered one another. As for the remaining four, they were beyond the Niger river in the direction of the north. The first of them was *Kukiri-Koy* which was on the borders of the land of Zagma in the west. Then there were: *Yara-Koy*; *Sana-Koy*; *Saama-Koy* also called

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Tarikh 'l-Fattash the term *kaya-magha* means, in the language of Soninke, 'kings of gold'.

<sup>2</sup> According to the Tarikh 'l-Fattash this capital was called Qunbu (Kumbi Saleh) which was located between Ni`ma and Gumbu. This ancient town was founded by Yugu Khore' Dina according to oral traditions.

<sup>3</sup> Baghana is the Malinke name for the region called Waghadu, the ancient origin of the Soninke people. The word *waghadu* means in the Soninke 'the land of the Wagu'. Wagu refers to the ruling clans among the Soninke.

<sup>4</sup> The term *baydaan* - 'white' refers to the Moors, Arabs and Sanhaja peoples who inhabited the city. The term 'white' in the context of *Sudanese* societies is relative. It should not be confused with Europeans.

<sup>5</sup> Here Wangarian refers to the Malinke' or Mandinke' people.

<sup>6</sup> This region is now known as Sokolo on both sides of the Niger river.

<sup>7</sup> This is present day Banduk on both sides of the Bani river.

<sup>8</sup> Also known as Sibiridugu is south-west of Kala.

*Sansanba*. The *Fala Faran*<sup>9</sup> was the prime minister of the above *koys*, who would sit at their head with the ruler of Mali when he gathered them around him to take counsel with them. As for the rulers of the province of Bindouku, all of them were on the other side of the river to the south. The first of them, *Kau-Koy*, was also adjacent to Jenne' sharing a common border; then *Kighna-Koy*; *Sama-Koy*; *Tara-Koy*; *Da`a-Koy*; *Ama-Koy*; *Ta`ba-Koy*; and I have forgotten the remaining five. As for the rulers of the province of Sibridouku, all of them were beyond the province of Bindouku lying adjacent to them in the direction of Mali.



Map of the Empire of Mali

The kingdom of Mali ruled Songhay, Timbuktu, Zagha, Mima, and Baaghin and all of their possessions up to the limits of the Niger river. Its people had tremendous military strength and great fortitude which reached all bounds. The ruler of Mali had two generals. The first of them was the 'commander of the south' whose title was *Sanqara-Zawma*. The second was the 'commander of the north' whose title was *Faran-Suraa*. Under the authority of each there developed a considerable amount of commanders and soldiers, who were eventually responsible for much oppression, coercion and brutality in the end of their rule. Then Allah ta`ala destroyed them with a punishment from Himself. He ta`ala made soldiers of Allah ta`ala appear upon them in the seat of the government in a single day during the noon, they appeared in the form of humans. They used the sword against them so well that they were almost completely annihilated. They then disappeared in one moment by the power of the Mighty the overpowering. No one knew from where these warriors came nor to where they went.

From that point onward impotence and deterioration affected the kingdom of Mali up until the emergence of the government of *Amir 'l-Mu'mineen* Askiya al-Hajj Muhammad. He and his descendents continued to make war against them until there was not a single person left among them. As a result the rulers of Mali were divided into three different factions that dispersed with their followers to the borders of the country. Each one of the leaders claimed that he was the true *sultan* of Mali. Two of the leaders disputed and each of their governments remained independent from the other. During the days when they were strong and united they desired to enter the people of Jenne' under their hegemony. However, the people of Jenne' rejected this

<sup>9</sup> The title *Faran* comes from the Soninke title *kormina-fari* or *kan-fari* meaning *sultan* or vicegerent. Chiekh Ant Diop suggest that this title has its origin in ancient Egypt from the title *pharaoh*. The *faraariya* were the commanders of the armies and the governors of the diverse regions of Mali.

endeavor. This resulted in the people of Mali making frequent war and ghastly engagements against the people of Jenne'. Until the number of expedition reached ninety-nine military engagements and in each of them the people of Jenne' defeated them. It has been mentioned in the accounts that the wars between them in the end of time must conclude with one-hundred. And in that one the people of Jenne' will be victorious also.