

# Rulers of the West African Empires

## **Tenkamenin King of Ghana 1037-1075 A.D.**

The country of Ghana reached the height of its greatness during the reign of Tenkamenin. Through his careful management of the gold trade across the Sahara Desert into West Africa, Tenkamenin's empire flourished economically. But his greatest strength was in government. Each day he would ride out on horseback and listen to the problems and concerns of his people. He insisted that no one be denied an audience and that they be allowed to remain in his presence until satisfied that justice had been done. His principles of democratic monarchy and

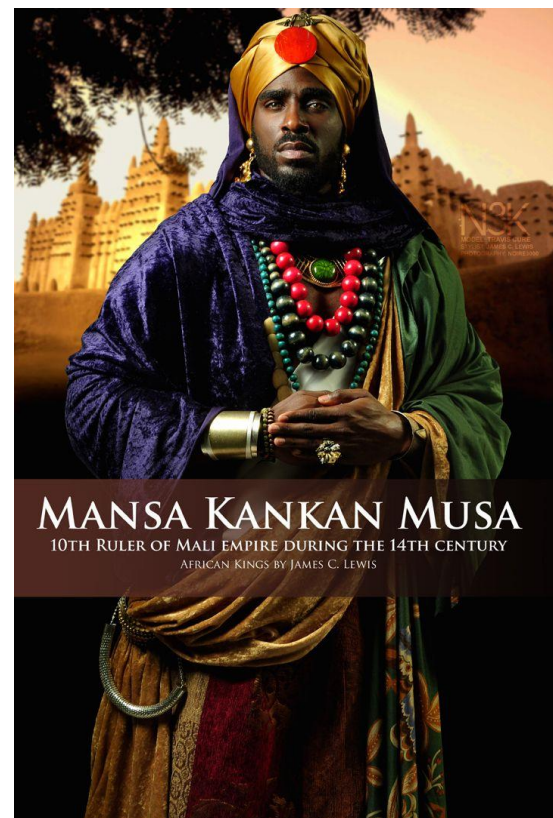
religious tolerance made Tenkamenin's reign one of the greatest examples of African rule.



## **Mansa Kankan Musa King of Mali 1306 – 1332 A.D.**

A leader and world figure, Mansa Musa distinguished himself as a man who did everything on a grand scale. An accomplished businessman, he managed vast resources to benefit his entire kingdom. He was also a scholar, and imported noteworthy artists to heighten the cultural awareness of his people.

In 1324 he led his people on the *hadj*, a holy pilgrimage from Timbuktu to Mecca. His caravan consisted of 60,000 people whom he led safely across the Sahara Desert and back, a total distance of 6,496 miles. So spectacular was this event that Mansa Musa gained the respect of scholars and traders throughout Europe, and won international prestige for Mali as one of the world's largest and wealthiest kingdoms.





**Askia Muhammad I Emperor of Songhai 1443 – 1538 A.D.**

Born **Muhammad Ture**, later called **Askia**, also known as **Askia the Great**, he was an emperor, military commander, and political reformer of the Songhai Empire in the late 1400s, Askia Muhammad strengthened his empire and made it the largest empire in West Africa's history. His policies resulted in a rapid expansion of trade with Europe and Asia, the creation of many schools, and the establishment of Islam as an important part of the empire.

Due to his efforts, Songhai experienced a cultural revival it had never witnessed before, and the empire flourished as a center of learning and trade.

1. How did Tenkamenin help Ghana reach the height of their greatness?
  - a. he led them into battle against Macedonia
  - b. his careful management of the gold trade
  - c. his agricultural skills that helped create a surplus
  - d. his strict code of laws that focused on social structure
2. According to the passage, how can you infer why Tenkamenin was respected by his people?
  - a. he listened to the problems of his people and made them feel valued
  - b. he used force and strict punishments to make examples of people who disobeyed him
  - c. he gave money to his people to help them survive
  - d. he required that all men join the military
3. From the reading passage, what do you think the word hadj means?
  - a. holy war
  - b. the language of Mali
  - c. a holy pilgrimage
  - d. the resource most traded by Mansa Musa
4. What contributed to the fast growth of trade between Songhai and Europe / Asia?
  - a. Songhai was the largest West African Empire
  - b. Askia Muhammad was a military commander
  - c. the establishment of Islam
  - d. Askia's trade policies