

## **WEEK 4 AND 5**

### **Topic MALI EMPIRE**

#### **EARLY HISTORY OF MALI EMPIRE**

The empire which came to be known as Mali originated from the little Malinke Kingdom called Kangaba, Mali evolved from the unification of a number of small villages known as Dugu and ruled by local chieftains called Dugutigi. It is likely that the fusion of the villages were motivated by the desire of the people to present a united front against enemies and also to participate more in the trans-Saharan trade.

The Mali Empire was a medieval West African state that existed from around the 13th century CE to the 16th century CE in the region that is now Mali, Niger, and Senegal. It emerged as a successor to the Ghana Empire and was founded by Sundiata Keita, a legendary king who is revered in Malian folklore. The Mali Empire grew in size and power under the leadership of subsequent kings, such as Mansa Musa, who is known for his famous pilgrimage to Mecca and his patronage of scholarship and the arts.

The early king of Kangaba were not known to historians, however, according to one Sheikh Uthman, a Muslim scholar and writer, the first king of Kangaba to be converted to Islam in the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century was Baramandana [i.e. AD 1050]. Unlike Ghana, Mali became a Muslim state from very early stage of its existence as an empire.

#### **SOCIO POLITICAL STRUCTURE OF MALI**

Socio-political structure of the Mali Empire: The Mali Empire was ruled by a king, known as the Mansa, who held absolute power over his territories. The Mansa was advised by a council of elders and had a complex administrative hierarchy that included provincial governors, village chiefs, and court officials. The Mali Empire was divided into provinces that were governed by appointed officials who were responsible for maintaining law and order, collecting taxes, and ensuring the well-being of their people.

#### **RELIGION OF MALI EMPIRE**

Islam was the dominant religion of the Mali Empire, and it played a significant role in the empire's social and cultural life. The Mansa and other members of the ruling elite were Muslim, and the empire was known for its mosques, Islamic schools, and centers of learning. The Mali Empire's religious practices were also influenced by traditional African beliefs, and many people in the empire believed in the existence of ancestral spirits and other supernatural forces.

#### **THE ECONOMY OF MALI EMPIRE**

Socio-economic structure of the Mali Empire: The Mali Empire's economy was based on agriculture, trade, and the production of gold. The empire's control of the gold trade allowed it to accumulate wealth and power, and it became a major center for trade in the region. The Mali Empire's economy was also supported by a system of taxation that allowed the Mansa to maintain a large army and invest in public works projects, such as the construction of mosques and other public buildings.

## **FACTORS FOR THE RISE OF MALI EMPIRE**

1. Geographical location (presence of mineral resources like gold and salt).
2. Good political leadership
3. Strong successors to Sundiata;; In addition to the political role played by Sundiata to the rise of Mali Empire were the caliber of kings that reigned after him, for examples, kings such as Mansa Uli [1255-1270], Mansa Musa [1312-1337], who continued the expansionist policy started by Sundiata and also made the empire to be known to the outside world.
4. Islamic religion scholars: these scholars assisted in religious activities and also established the oldest West African university in Mali (the Sankore University).

## **FACTORS THAT LED TO THE FALL OF MALI EMPIRE**

1. overexpansion of Mali
2. weak rulers
3. Constant attack by enemies.

## **ASSIGNMENT**

State the factors that led to the rise of Mali Empire

Give reasons for the fall of Mali Empire