

The wealth of Africa The kingdom of Mali

3: How Religious Were People in the kingdom of Mali?

Mansa Musa was famed for his devotion to Islam, and some later rulers were also very devout. Muslims had a high status in Mali but outside the court many still practiced their old religion.

Source 1

On Fridays, if a man does not go early to the mosque, he cannot find a corner to pray in, on account of the crowd. It is a custom of theirs for each man to send his boy [to the mosque] with his prayer-mat; the boy spreads it out for his master in a place befitting him [and remains on it] until he comes to the mosque.

Ibn Battuta (1352), in Hamdun & King 1998: 58

Source 3

The king is a declared enemy of the Jews. He will not allow any to live in the city. If he hears it said that a Berber merchant does business with them, he confiscates his goods.

Leo Africanus c. 1526

Source 4

The [Malian] court observed Islam, and literate Muslims were secretaries and accountants. Beyond the capital, however, local priests continued to give offerings to the ancestors and look after their gods.

Collins 2007: 84

Source 6

Another of their good qualities is their habit of wearing clean white garments on Fridays. Even if a man has nothing but an old worn shirt, he washes it and cleans it, and wears it to the Friday service. Yet another is their zeal for learning the Qur'an by heart. They put their children in chains if they show any backwardness in memorizing it, and they are not set free until they have learnt it by heart.

Ibn Battuta (1352), in Hamdun & King 1998: 58–59

Source 7: The Great Mosque at Timbuktu

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Source 2: Great Mosque at Djenné

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Source 5: Mosque of Djingereyber, Timbuktu

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