

The wealth of Africa The kingdom of Mali

6: WHY DID THE KINGDOM OF MALI DECLINE?

Empires do not last forever, and Mali was unable to keep its extensive territory intact for long. A combination of internal weakness, external aggression from North Africans and Songhai, and the sheer difficulty of keeping rebellious tribes such as the Mossi in line proved too much.

Source 1

The people of Mali were very powerful and their strength passed all limits... Their oppression, arrogance and excess at the end of the dynasty caused Allah to destroy them by his punishment... They became weaker from that moment.

Tarikh-al-Sudan (1655) in Levtzion 1973: 83

Source 2

Raids sapped the strength of the empire on its frontiers, but the decline and fall of Mali was more from internal decay than external enemies. The court was frequently torn by fighting among rivals seeking to influence the Mansa [king] while manoeuvring to succeed him.

Collins 2007: 85

Source 4

The truth was that Mali had outgrown its political and military strength. Only supremely skilful leadership at the centre could hold this wide empire together. Mansa Musa had that skill; his successors, generally, did not.

Davidson 1998: 44

Source 5

The Songhai were descended from the Sorko fishermen of the Middle Niger whose canoes gave them mastery of the river and control of its trade. As the camel was the mobile military vehicle of the desert, so the war canoe became the swift means to dominate the farmers and trading villages.

Collins 2007: 87

Source 6

For nearly three decades, Sunni Ali [king of Songhai] waged continuous war upon the peoples of the Middle Niger until he brought the area under his control.

Gomez 1990: 7



Source 3: Mossi cavalry
They were a problem for Mali
Binger 1892: 445