

The wealth of Africa The kingdom of Mali

7. Comparing Sources

Source 1

He is a miserly king, not a man from whom one might hope for a rich present. I went forward and saluted Mansa Suleiman. After I left the [sultan's] hospitality gift was sent to me. I stood up thinking that it might be robes of honour and money, and it was three cakes of bread, and a piece of beef fried in native oil, and a calabash of sour curds. When I saw this I burst out laughing, and thought it a most amazing thing that they could be so foolish and make so much of such a feeble gift.

Ibn Battuta describes Mansa Suleiman in 1352, in Hamdun & King 1998: 44–45

Source 2

This king is the greatest of the Muslim kings of the Sahel. He rules the most extensive territory, has the most numerous army, is the bravest, the richest, the most fortunate, the most victorious over his enemies, and the best able to distribute benefits.

Al-Umari describes Mansa Suleiman in c. 1350, in Levtzion & Hopkins 1981: 261

Source 3

For Tuareg, the salt caravan is not something just for money, it is tradition. 'If in your life you do not do it once or twice you are not considered Tuareg. So for me [the trucks mean] the end of Tuareg culture. I am not saying the camels will disappear, but I'm very worried that in three to five years all the salt caravans will be by truck.'

Harding 2010



Source 4

Tuareg man on camel
© Patrick Smith

Source 5

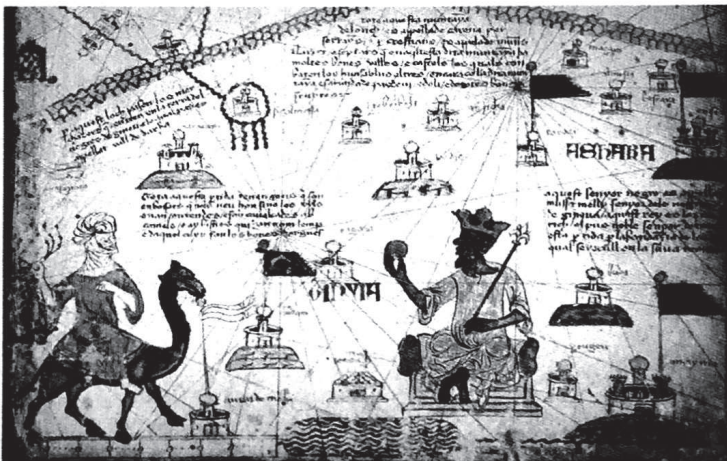
Well placed for the caravan trade, Timbuktu was badly situated to defend itself from the Tuareg raiders of the Sahara. These Tuareg were repeatedly hammering at the gates of Timbuktu, and often enough they burst them open, with sad results for the inhabitants.

Davidson 1998: 56

Source 6

This is a picture from a medieval atlas, drawn in modern day Spain. It shows the King of Mali, Mansa Musa, who reigned between 1312 and 1327.

Catalan Atlas © Bibliothèque Nationale de France



Source 7

This man [Mansa Musa] flooded Cairo with his gifts. He left no court emir nor holder of a royal office without the gift of a load of gold. The people of Cairo made incalculable profits out of him and his men in buying and selling and giving and taking. They exchanged gold until they depressed its value in Egypt and caused its price to fall.

Mansa Musa described by al-Umari, quoted in Levtzion & Hopkins 1981: 270–271