

2. Sarki Abdullah Burja of Kano (ruled 1438-1452 AD)

Northern Nigerian monarch who created the first golden age in that region

Abdullah Burja, the eighteenth ruler of the Hausa city-state of Kano, was the architect of great prosperity in the northern Nigeria region. In 1438 AD he was crowned Sarki (i.e. King) of Kano. Within a few years, he became the most powerful sarkuna (i.e. king-but plural) within in the Hausa Confederation. His general led military campaigns for seven years in the regions to the south. The campaigns attempted to open the trade route to Gwanja on the edge of the forest belt. The Kano cavalry, typical of the time, were equipped with plumed iron helmets and chainmail. Their horses were protected with lifidi - a thick quilted armour made of cloth. Burja's raids proved successful. Twenty one thousand prisoners were captured. The General dispatched the captives to twenty-one settlements in Kano City. From Gwanja, through this newly opened trade route, kola nuts and gold dust flowed into Kano.



Meanwhile, serious diplomatic problems had emerged with the neighbouring state of Borno to the east (roughly modern Chad and Niger). The Kano Chronicle, the chief Hausa history, attempts to put a brave face on it but admits that after the conflict "many towns were given to Borno." This indicates that Burja was defeated in whatever-it-was the authors of the Chronicle were trying to conceal. The city of Kano remained independent and surprisingly, direct trade was established with Borno despite the conflict. Moreover, the Sarki sent gifts to the ruler of Borno, acknowledging the Bono King's supremacy as an Islamic leader. This started a tradition that continued late into the eighteenth century.

Of the Hausa rulers, Abdullah Burja was the first to encourage the use of camels as beasts of burden. Previously, Kano businessmen and traders waited on camel caravans controlled by the Tuaregs to arrive from the north. Under Burja's new policy, Kano merchants could transport their own goods across the desert. In the footsteps of these merchants followed the Hausa language and culture. Hausa became the biggest indigenous language spoken in Africa after Swahili. In reputation, Hausa merchants came to rival the legendary Wangaran merchants of Guinea, the economic powerhouse behind Mali. It is worth remembering that the BBC in the Millennium series described Mali as the richest empire in the fourteenth century world. In Kano Burja established the Kurmi Market. A veritable magnet, it attracted goods from all over the world.

1. Abd-al-Mumin of the Almohades (ruled 1133-1163 AD)

Moroccan Founder of the Almohad Empire that ruled in North Africa and Spain

Abd-al-Mumin was a Negro Berber from Morocco. He became the leader of the Almohades, a radical Islamic movement that eventually became the Third Islamic Dynasty in Moslem Spain. Abd-al-Mumin took control of the movement in 1133 AD. A brilliant organiser, he unified the various Berber groups, not just the Mesmuda (his own group), into a cohesive force. In time, a power struggle took place between the ruling Almoravid establishment, an African power that radiated from Senegal, and the newly rising Almohades. The newcomers triumphed. In 1147 they seized the Moroccan city of Marrakech and executed the last Almoravid monarch that ruled there. Abd-al-Mumin commissioned the great Koutoubia mosque to be built there as a symbol of his conquest over the Almoravides.

By 1150 he became master of Spain. "Thus for a second time" wrote Lady Lugard, a great English historian, "a purely African dynasty reigned upon the most civilised throne of Europe". By 1160 his armies took control of Tunisia and penetrated Libya. These actions gained control of trade routes. Dr Basil Davidson, another great historian, explained that: "the Magreb blossomed once again." Furthermore, "cities like Fez and Tlemsen rivalled the urban beauty and learning of Granada and Cordova, unsurpassed by now throughout the western world".



3. Mansa Abubakari II of Mali (flourished 1311 AD)

Malian king who sailed to America 181 years before Columbus

An Egyptian scholar, Ibn Fadl Al-Umari, published *Masalik ab Absar fi Mamlalik al Amsar* in Cairo around 1342. In the tenth chapter of this work, there is an account of two large maritime voyages ordered by the predecessor of Mansa Musa, a king who inherited the Malian throne in 1312. This mariner king is not named by Al-Umari, but modern writers identify him as Mansa Abubakari II. According to Al-Umari, this king launched two hundred ships filled with men and a further two hundred ships amply stocked with food, gold and water to last for two years. The ruler sent them with a mission to explore the extremity of the Atlantic Ocean. In time, one ship returned. Its captain told the Malian king of his adventures. "Prince," he said, "we sailed for a long time, up to the moment when we encountered in mid-ocean something like a river with a violent current. My ship was lost. The others sailed on, and gradually each of them entered this place, they disappeared and did not come back. We did not know what had happened to them. As for me, I returned to where I was and did not enter the current." The Mansa decided to see for himself. He had two thousand ships prepared, one thousand of which were equipped with provisions. They set sail across the Atlantic with a large party and never returned. Abubakari II left Mansa Musa I in charge of leading the empire.

This account implies that Malians visited the Americas in 1311. This was 181 years before Christopher Columbus "discovered" the continent. It is, of course, well known that Columbus himself was fully aware of this important fact. Columbus, to give just one example, reported that he acquired metal goods of West African manufacture from the Native Americans. Other evidence of this African voyage comes from an analysis of maps. Old maps of the Mexico region, drawn by Europeans, show that the Malians renamed places in the region after themselves. Names such as Mandinga Port, Mandinga Bay and Sierre de Mali exist as place names. Moreover, two skeletons of Negro males have been recovered from a grave in Hull Bay near the Danish Virgin Islands. Dated at 1250 AD, this is only 61 years away from the period of the proposed Malian visit. In addition, an old inscription was discovered at the bottom of a waterfall in the Reef Bay Valley, not too far from the African skeletons. This inscription was written in an old African script called Tifnagh. Originally of ancient Libyan origin, a Berber group in Mali used this script at that time. The inscription translates as follows: "Plunge in to cleanse yourself. This is water for purification before prayer." Finally, the scholarly art historian, Count Alexander von Wuthenau, a scholarly art historian, directed attention to fourteenth century carvings that were found in the Americas. These sculptures show men and women, clearly African, wearing turbans. Many have tattoo marks cut into their cheeks. This art may well depict people from Mali.

Link: [Abubakari II--the Great African Explorer](#)

7. Queen Ahmose-Nefertari of Ancient Egypt (flourished c.1709 BC)

The most venerated figure in the history of Ancient Egypt

Pharaoh Ahmose (ruled 1709-1683 BC) founded the Eighteenth Egyptian Dynasty. Ahmose-Nefertari, his wife, was highly distinguished and did much to help reconstruct the country after centuries of foreign rule. She held the position of Second Prophet of Amen and also that of Divine Wife. In these roles she performed various civil and religious duties. She maintained a college of priestesses, controlled the divine offerings to the deity Amen, was in charge of the workers of the temple fields and also controlled a number of dignitaries. She later ruled the country as Queen-Regent for Amenhotep I, her son. Some building projects date back to her time such as the reconstruction of the Deir-el-Medina necropolis.

Amenhotep I succeeded her when he became of age. Of this great woman, Sir Flinders Petrie, master of the British archaeologists, wrote that she was "the most venerated figure of Egyptian history."



S. Pharaoh Akhenaten of Ancient Egypt (ruled 1501-1474 BC)

The most extraordinary figure in Ancient Egyptian history

Akhenaten (1501-1474 BC), of the Eighteenth Egyptian Dynasty, is best known as a religious reformer. Of this great man J. A. Rogers, the great Jamaican historian, says the following: "Lord Supreme of the then civilized world, with the mightiest army at his command, he preached a gospel of peace and preached it so consistently that when subject nations rebelled he refused to attack them. Living centuries before King David, he wrote psalms as beautiful as the Judean monarch. [Several] hundred years before Christ, he preached and lived a gospel of perfect love, brotherhood, and truth. Two thousand years before Mohammed he taught the doctrine of the One God. Three thousand years before Darwin, he sensed the unity that runs through all living things. Akhenaten [sic], too was the richest man on earth."



Having dispatched the High Priest of Amen to oversee a quarrying expedition, he promoted the minor deity, Aten, to the position of sole deity throughout the country. In the city of Karnak, he built a temple to this deity enforcing a more strict monotheism. The king surrounded himself with a new set of officials. Many of these were foreigners or Egyptians of the lower orders. In this way the Amen priesthood/civil service were sidestepped.

Unhappy with Waset, the king built a new capital further north called Akhetaten. The American urban planner, Earl Faruq, in an interesting essay, noted that: "Great importance was attached to cleanliness in Amarna [i.e. Akhetaten], as in other Egyptian cities. Toilets and sewers were in use to dispose waste. Soap was made for washing the body. Perfumes and essences were popular against body odor. A solution of natron was used to keep insects from houses ... Amarna was landscaped with flowers and beautiful gardens as part of Akhenaten's [sic] land use scheme. Amarna may have been the first planned "garden city" ... The temples and personal chapels built throughout the city were open to the air. This allowed for the worship of the sun which was contrasted with the closed temples of Thebes. Officials laid out great estates, attractively incorporating nature into their plans. Workman[s] houses were erected on well ordered streets in grid iron fashion."

By 1493 or 1492 BC the king's religious revolution was complete. He changed his name from Amenhotep IV to Akhenaten and instituted a revolution in Egyptian art. Gone were the old stylised representations. In some of the new statues, Akhenaten is portrayed as father and mother to the nation with an appropriate synthesis of male and female body shapes.

21. Oba Esigie of Benin (ruled c.1504-c.1550 AD)

Great ruler of the southern Nigeria region who commissioned great art

Great Benin, also known as Edo, was an important state that flourished in southern Nigeria. Oba Esigie ascended the throne in c.1504 and had a long and eventful reign of perhaps 46 years. He introduced a special post in the administration for his mother called the *Iyoba*, the Queen Mother. A Dutch chronicler would report a century later that the Oba "undertakes nothing of importance without having sought her counsel". The art of the time reflects this reality. Esigie commissioned a highly improved metal art that has since achieved worldwide distinction. Of the best-known pieces are the famous Queen Mother *Idia* busts. Professor Felix von Luschan, a former official of the Berlin Museum für Völkerkunde, stated that: "These works from Benin are equal to the very finest examples of European casting technique. Benvenuto Cellini could not have cast them better, nor could anyone else before or after him ... Technically, these bronzes represent the very highest possible achievement."

Afonso d'Aveiro and other Portuguese agents returned to Benin. They aroused Esigie's interest in the possibility of acquiring firearms from Portugal for future campaigns. There was, however, a catch. Manuel, the Portuguese king wrote Esigie, explaining to him that: "When we see that you have embraced the teachings of Christianity like a good and faithful Christian, there will be nothing within our realms which we shall not be glad to favour you, whether it be arms or cannon and all other weapons of war for use against your enemies; of such things we have a great store, as your ambassador Dom Jorge will inform you."

It was not to be. In 1516 and without Portuguese arms, Esigie scored a crushing defeat on Igala to the north. They had attempted an invasion that posed a threat to the very existence of Benin. Esigie compelled the defeated Igala to pay reparations. The Portuguese king did, however, send missionaries to Benin who successfully converted the Oba's son to the Christian faith. Bini Christians also established a few churches in Benin City at Ogbelaka, Idumwerie, and Akpakpava. The last church became the Holy Cross Cathedral. Christianity, however, remained distinctly a minority religion largely restricted to a few members of the court. It seems that the indigenous religion was just too well organised to be undermined by this foreign threat.

16 The Labyrinth in the Egyptian city of Hawara with its massive layout, multiple courtyards, chambers and halls, was the very largest building in antiquity. Boasting three thousand rooms, 1,500 of them were above ground and the other 1,500 were underground.

17. Toilets and sewerage systems existed in ancient Egypt. One of the pharaohs built a city now known as Amarna. An American urban planner noted that: "Great importance was attached to cleanliness in Amarna as in other Egyptian cities. Toilets and sewers were in use to dispose waste. Soap was made for washing the body. Perfumes and essences were popular against body odour. A solution of natron was used to keep insects from houses . . . Amarna may have been the first planned 'garden city'."

18. Sudan has more pyramids than any other country on earth - even more than Egypt. There are at least 223 pyramids in the Sudanese cities of Al Kurru, Nuri, Gebel Barkal and Meroë. They are generally 20 to 30 metres high and steep sided.

19. The Sudanese city of Meroë is rich in surviving monuments. Becoming the capital of the Kushite Empire between 590 BC until AD 350, there are 84 pyramids in this city alone, many built with their own miniature temple. In addition, there are ruins of a bath house sharing affinities with those of the Romans. Its central feature is a large pool approached by a flight of steps with waterspouts decorated with lion heads.

20. Bling culture has a long and interesting history. Gold was used to decorate ancient Sudanese temples. One writer reported that: "Recent excavations at Meroe and Mussawwarat es-Sufra revealed temples with walls and statues covered with gold leaf".

21. In around 300 BC, the Sudanese invented a writing script that had twenty-three letters of which four were vowels and there was also a word divider. Hundreds of ancient texts have survived that were in this script. Some are on display in the British Museum.

22. In central Nigeria, West Africa's oldest civilisation flourished between 1000 BC and 300 BC. Discovered in 1928, the ancient culture was called the Nok Civilisation, named after the village in which the early artefacts were discovered. Two modern scholars, declare that "[a]fter calibration, the period of Nok art spans from 1000 BC until 300 BC". The site itself is much older going back as early as 4580 or 4290 BC.

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9. Professor Ahmed Baba of Songhai (died 1627 AD)

Greatest scholar of the sixteenth century world

The Songhai Empire ruled about two thirds of West Africa, including the lands now called Mali, Mauritania, Guinea, Senegal, Gambia, Northern Nigeria and Niger. When the Empire collapsed, due to an Arab and European invasion in 1591 AD, its intelligentsia were arrested by the conquerors and dragged in chains across the Sahara. One of these scholars was Professor Ahmed Baba. The author of 60 books, Professor Baba enjoyed a very high reputation. Amongst the Songhai, he was known as "The Unique Pearl of his Time". In a Moroccan text from the period, the praise for him was even more gushing. He is described as "the imam, the erudite, the high-minded, the eminent among scholars, Abu l-Abbas Ahmed Baba."

In Morocco, the Arab scholars petitioned to have him released from jail. He was released a year after his arrival on 9 May 1596. Major Dubois, a French author, narrates that: "All the believers were greatly pleased with his release, and he was conducted in triumph from his prison to the principal mosque of Marrakech. A great many of the learned men urged him to open a course of instruction. His first thought was to refuse, but overcome by their persistence he accepted a post in the Mosque of the Kerifs and taught rhetoric, law, and theology. An extraordinary number of pupils attended his lectures, and questions of the gravest importance were submitted to him by the magistracy, his decision always being treated as final."

Despite this adulation, Baba was careful to credit his learning to the Almighty and thus maintained his modesty. A Moroccan source tells of an audience he obtained with Al Mansur. It appears that the scholar gave the sultan something of a dressing down. Baba complained about the sultan's lack of manners, his ill treatment received during his original arrest, the sacking of his private library of 1600 books, and the destruction of the Songhai Empire. We are told by the Moroccan author that Al Mansur "being unable to reply to [any of] this, put an end to the audience."

The professor was detained in Morocco for a total of 12 years. Eventually he received permission from Al Mansur's successor to return to Songhai. Just before his departure across the desert, he vowed in the presence of the leading scholars of Marrakesh who had gathered to give him a send off, "May God never bring me back to this meeting, nor make me return to this country!" He returned to a devastated Timbuktu and died there in 1627.

11. Kentake Amanirenas of Kush (flourished c.24 BC)

Defender of the Sudanese Kingdom of Kush against Roman aggression

The Roman conquest of Egypt in 30 BC brought a new challenge to the Kingdom of Kush, to the south. Augustus Caesar, the Roman emperor, threatened an invasion, following his Egyptian campaign. According to Strabo, a famous geographer, sometime between 29 and 24 BC the conflict with Kush began. Kentake (i.e. Queen-Mother) Amanirenas, the Kushite ruler, gave the order to march into Egypt and attack the invaders. Akindad led the campaigns against the Roman armies of Augustus. The Kushites sacked Aswan with an army of 30,000 men and they destroyed the statues of Caesar in Elephantine. The Romans, under Petronius, counterattacked. Though described as a strong and fortified city, they captured Qasr Ibrim in 23 BC after their first assault. The Romans invaded as far as Napata and sacked it, though Amanirenas evaded their clutches. Petronius returned to Alexandria with prisoners and booty leaving behind a garrison in Lower Nubia. Amenirenas ordered her armies to march a second time with the aim of seizing the Roman garrison. This time, however, a standoff with Petronius was reached without fighting. The Roman army retired to Egypt and withdrew their fort declaring Pax Romana (peace). In fact, the full extent of the Roman humiliation has yet to be disclosed since the relevant Kushite account of the affair has yet to be published. The Kushite account of this encounter, written in the Meroitic script, cannot as yet be fully understood.

12. Pharaoh Amenemhet I of Ancient Egypt (ruled 3405-3376 BC)

World famous founder of the Songhai Empire of West Africa

Amenemhet I, founder of the Negro Twelfth Egyptian Dynasty, was the Prime Minister of Pharaoh Mentuhotep IV, but overthrew him in 3405 BC. He moved the royal residence to a site near the modern town of el-Lisht, near to Memphis. Returning to old ideas, he built a mortuary temple of fluted columns. He also erected a pyramid. Rising to a lofty 352 feet, it was the largest built since the Fifth Dynasty. His officials were buried nearby in mastabas. Waset remained the centre of Amen worship. In this city, he built the statues and altar in the Temple of Amen in Luxor. In the Nubian cities of Buhen and Wawat, he built great castles with walls 16 feet thick and nearly 30 feet high. These monuments guarded Egyptian control over the Nubian gold mines and quarries. In the eastern Delta, he built fortifications to secure routes to the Sinai peninsular. This led to Egyptian control of the copper and turquoise mines. Amenemhet I, however, was unable to secure the western border with Libya. He thus resorted to occasional campaigns to deal with this element. The king's palace was astonishing - a veritable fever of the gods. Its doors were overlaid with sheet copper fitted with bolts of bronze. The floors were inlaid with silver. Its walls were embellished with gold leaf. The roof was made of sycamores. Finally, lapis lazuli decorated its ceilings.



23. Negus Negaste Ezana of Ethiopia (flourished 330 AD)

The first Christian Emperor in the world

Ezana proclaimed Ethiopia to be a Christian state in the early fourth century AD, one of the oldest surviving Christian nations in the world. An inscription of the period recorded a prayer of the Negus Negaste (i.e. King of Kings): "May the Lord of Heaven make strong my kingdom! And as He has this day conquered for me my enemy may he conquer for me wheresoever I go ... (I will rule) the people with righteousness and justice, and will not oppress them." The coins and inscriptions illustrate the reality of this. The early coins of Ezana's time show the crescent-and-disk emblem of the old deity Mahrem. The later coins issued just after 330 AD show the Christian cross with the motto: "May the country be satisfied" - the first coins in the world to carry this Christian design.



Another feature attributed to Ezana's reign was the introduction of a new written script - the vocalised Ethiopic. A refinement of the Proto-Ethiopic/Sabaeen script of the Yeha period, vocalised Ethiopic influenced the Armenian and Georgian scripts of Eastern Europe. A Russian historian, Y. M. Khobishanov noted that: "Soon after its creation, the Ethiopic vocalised script began to influence the scripts of Armenia and Georgia. D. A. Olderogge suggested that Mesrop Mashtotz used the vocalised Ethiopic script when he invented the Armenian alphabet".

Several monuments date back to Ezana's time such as the Ta'akha Maryam, the Cathedral of Saint Mary of Zion, several other churches, and also convents. Scholars have attempted to reconstruct the Axumite castle complex of Ta'akha Maryam, now in ruins, using evidence provided by the obelisks and other monuments. The palace was a massive four-towered structure of stone and timber with windows of timber frames. It rose to a lofty height, being of four storeys. Axum also contained the Cathedral of Saint Mary of Zion, one of the oldest Christian cathedrals on Earth. Francisco Alvarez described this monument in around 1520 AD as follows: "In this town, we found a noble church; it is very large, and has five naves of a good width and of great length, vaulted above, and all the vaults are covered up, and the ceiling and sides are all painted; it also has a choir after our fashion. This church has a very large circuit, paved with flagstones like gravestones, and it has also a large enclosure, and is surrounded by another large enclosure like the wall of a large town or city."

13. Pharaoh Amenemhet III of Ancient Egypt (ruled 3242-3195 BC)

Defender of the Sudanese Kingdom of Kush against Roman aggression

Amenemhet III, the last great ruler of the Egyptian Twelfth Dynasty (3242-3195 BC), built two important pyramids, at Hawara and Dashur. The former monument had a sepulchral chamber weighing a staggering 110 tons of yellow quartzite. He built a hall of granite pillars for Sobek. At Medinet Madi he built a temple to Renenutet, the Goddess of the harvest.

At Hawara he built the Labyrinth with its massive layout, multiple courtyards, chambers and halls. The very largest building in antiquity, it boasted 3,000 rooms. One thousand five hundred were above ground and the other one thousand five hundred were underground. Herodotus, the notable Greek historian of antiquity, saw it in ruins three thousand years later. He was still somewhat impressed: "I visited this place, and found it to surpass description; for if all the walls and other great works of the Greeks could be put together in one, they would not equal, either for labour or expense, this Labyrinth; and yet the [Greek] temple of Ephesus is a building worthy of note, and so is the temple of Samos. The pyramids likewise surpass description, and are equal to a number of the greatest works of the Greeks; but the Labyrinth surpasses the pyramids."



17. Dahia al-Kahina of Mauritania (ruled 688-705 AD)

Defender of Northern Africa against the Arabian invasion

In 639 AD a new conquering force swept into Africa. The Arabians seized Egypt, Cyrenaica, Tripoli, and pushed on to Carthage and Numidia. The invasion swept away 600 years of Roman occupation. The new conquerors spread Islam from Egypt to Morocco and also into Spain. The Spanish conquest was achieved with African help. The invaders also destroyed many Africans, enslaved many, and caused others to flee further south to evade their clutches. Kuseila of Mauritania resisted but he was defeated and killed in 688 AD. Dahia al-Kahina (cf. Cohen) became leader of the African resistance. She is generally held to have been a Jewess but we believe that she could just as well have followed the old Carthaginian religion. This differs from Judaism but also shares some affinities with it. There are, of course, Negro Jews in many parts of Africa such as the Falasha of Ethiopia and the Lemba of South Africa. Arab records describe her as having "dark skin, a mass of hair and huge eyes" - the comment referring to her hair may refer to an afro or perhaps dreadlocks. Dr John Clarke describes her as a nationalist who favoured no particular religion. This may explain her effectiveness in bringing together a united front against the invaders. She counterattacked the invaders and drove them into Tripolitania. This was so effective that some Arabs doubted whether Africa could be taken. As one African army was beaten another replaced them. The Arabs seized Carthage in 698 AD. Dahia defeated them and instituted a scorched earth policy to prevent the Arabs from being able to find crops to feed on in the region. That desolation can be seen even today in southern Tunisia. Eventually, however, the Arabs returned. Dahia was finally defeated in battle in 705 AD. North Africa was overrun. Today Black people are a minority in North Africa. Furthermore, Africans in Mauretania and Sudan continue to face the threat of enslavement.

19. Pharaoh Djoser of Egypt (5018-4989 BC)

Builder of the highly celebrated Saqqara Complex

With the Negro Third Egyptian Dynasty (5046-4872 BC) there was a change in public administration. The Prime Minister now led the bureaucratic structure. The great ruler of this dynasty was Pharaoh Djoser. During his 29 years, Egyptian power was felt in Lower Nubia and in the Sinai region. In the latter region, Egyptian miners worked the copper and turquoise mines. There were developments in art. Statues for the first time were made life-sized. Some stone statues were carved for private persons. There were other developments in relief sculpture. As an example of this, the wooden plaques recovered from the tomb of Hezyre were distinguished and show this artistic development.



The city of Saqqara was originally south of the Memphis necropolis. Here Djoser built a complex that replaced an older temple of wood, brick and woven mats. Imhotep, his Prime Minister, designed the building. This structure contained Egypt's first pyramid. The Step Pyramid and its surrounding complex represent major developments in technological achievement and artistic sensibility. The Step Pyramid was built of six steps. Its shape represents the primeval mound of creation. It contained chapels of blue tiles that depict the Heb-Sed festivals. There was also a life-sized statue of the king, which Mr Rice feels "deserves to be recognized as one of the wonders of the world." The symbolic meaning behind the construction is that the pharaoh was continually having his vitality renewed and has thus become immortal. Mr Rice further notes that: "The Djoser complex is unique. Once again, it is totally without precedent, not merely in Egypt but in the entire world. For centuries its high white limestone curtain walls and the elegant, superbly proportioned kiosks, magazines, and shrines which were built within the walls made it the most remarkable building in the world: perhaps indeed it remains the most remarkable ever built."

This period was not always tranquil and positive, however. There is a famous document called the *Famine Stele* associated with Pharaoh Djoser. It describes a famine that lasted seven years caused by low Nile floods. At the end of the famine the king offered land to the priests of Khnum of Nubia. They helped to end the famine.

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25. Admiral Hanno of Carthage (sixth or fifth centuries BC)

Carthaginian explorer of the West African coast

The North African civilisation of Carthage was much engaged in exploration. There are accounts of Carthaginian exploration in the sixth or fifth centuries BC. Hanno, one of their admirals, commanded sixty ships that carried 30,000 people along the north and west coast of Africa. The large numbers of people were transported to establish new colonies and the last of them were landed at Morocco as far south as Arguin. Hanno and the others continued their journey around the west coast of Africa and sailed past the Senegal River, noting that it abounded in crocodiles and hippopotami. There they encountered people but, as the document records it: "They drove us away by throwing stones at us". The expedition sailed on passing forests of odoriferous trees. Furthermore, they witnessed the locals clearing the forests using slash and burn techniques. At night, they overheard local music of pipes, cymbals, drums and shouts. Elsewhere, they saw a volcano. Finally, they encountered gorillas. They returned when their provisions failed them.

26. Queen/Pharaoh Hatshepsut of Egypt (ruled 1650-1600 BC)

One of the most powerful women in history

Hatshepsut was the next great woman of the Negro Eighteenth Egyptian Dynasty, after Ahmose-Nefertari. In September 1650 BC Thutmose I, her father, elevated her to the position of co-regent. Following this in 1628 BC she became the Great Royal Wife of Thutmose II. In 1615 BC she ruled as Queen-Regent for Thutmose III but later deposed him. She proclaimed herself pharaoh in his place and took the religious titles the "female Horus" and the "daughter of Ra". She was deeply religious and did much to undermine the veneration of Set, the deity promoted by the Hyksos and identified as their deity Ba'al. Her leading statesmen, both of humble origins, Senenmut and Hapuseneb, oversaw her building activities. She also appointed Asians to powerful positions within the administration, the first pharaoh to do so. At Karnak she erected two giant obelisks that rose to almost 100 feet: "To make the obelisks still more conspicuous [says J. A. Rogers], she had their tops encased in electrum, a metal costlier than gold. (Electrum was a composition of silver and gold. Silver being rather rarer in Egypt, it was more precious.) In the bright sunlight of that rainless land the obelisks shone like glittering peaks. Their brilliancy, in the queen's own words, lit up the two lands of Egypt."



In Deir-el-Bahri, she built her celebrated rock-hewn temple dedicated to Amen, Anubis and Hathor. In this temple are records of her famous maritime voyage to Punt (i.e. Somalia). In that land, the Egyptians bought incense, animals, animal skins, gum, gold, ivory and ebony. To pay for it, they brought weapons, jewellery and wares. On the cultural front, great lyric poetry was composed during her period.

27. Mai Idris Alooma of Kanem-Borno (ruled 1564-96 AD)

Greatest ruler of the Central African state of Kanem-Borno

Mai (i.e. King) Idris Alooma (1564-96) was a most successful politician of the period who gained considerable international prestige. Mahmud Kati, the great Songhai historian, wrote that: "The mass of our contemporaries hold that there are four Sultans not counting the supreme Sultan [the Sultan of Constantinople] to wit - The Sultan of Baghdad, the Sultan of Cairo, the Sultan of Bornu [sic] and the Sultan of Melli [i.e. Mali]". Dr Heinrich Barth, the nineteenth century German traveller, described Idris as "an excellent prince, uniting in himself the most opposite qualities: warlike energy, combined with mildness and intelligence; courage, with circumspection and patience; severity with pious feelings".

His military prowess was outstanding with armies, possibly the first in Africa, to have muskets. Acquiring them from the Turkish Empire, "[n]orth, south, east, and west he carried his conquering arms", says Lady Lugard. "To give a list of the many [peoples] that he subdued could only weary the reader". Imam Ahmad, the royal chronicler and aide, wrote a detailed account of Idris' campaigns. Part of his first hand report reads as follows: "Abd ul Jalil ibn Bi fled and escaped, fearing our army. He had left his wife, the daughter of Yarima, in his house, turning from her when he saw the dust of our army, rising to the skies. For he was certain that the safety of a man himself is better for him than the safety of his wife. So he fled, deserting his wife, since personal necessity is more compelling than the lack of a wife, as the author of the book Ifrikiya has said."

Idris reformed and standardised the judiciary by establishing a system of Islamic courts. He himself ruled according to Islamic political theory, taking a stand against, among other things, immorality in the capital. Oliver and Atmore wrote that: "[H]e presided over a court famous for the high standard of its legal and theological disputations". Like his Songhai contemporaries, he was a patron of learning, encouraging scholars from many other African countries to take up residence in Borno. He improved navigation on the Yobe River. He commissioned the building of longer, flat-bottomed boats initially for his navy. For land transportation, he imported a much greater number of camels replacing the dependence on mules, oxen and donkeys. The great Mai was also a builder, raising new brick mosques in the cities that replaced the older buildings. He also founded a hostel in Mecca for Borno pilgrims. Following the fall of Songhai in 1591, the great Mai became the undisputed champion of the Muslims in the region. The empire became the Borno Caliphate. Phillip Koslow, a modern historian, declared that: "His contemporary, Elizabeth I of England, a shrewd and strong-willed monarch who gave her name to an age and has been repeatedly celebrated in books and films, could hardly have claimed greater achievements in war, administration or diplomacy."

30. Sarki Muhammad Kanta of Kebbi (early sixteenth century AD)

Founder of the Hausa city-state of Kebbi and builder of a planned city

Muhammad Kanta founded the city state of Kebbi in the early sixteenth century. The son of a Katsina princess, he had an extraordinary career. A brilliant soldier, his army was the only one to withstand the hegemony of Songhai. Some accounts, accepted by historians such as Trimingham, and Stride and Ifeka, claim he overthrew Songhai imperial power in Hausaland and imposed tribute on these captured territories himself. Less controversially, he founded imposing cities, the ruins of which are still in existence. Surame, the capital of Kebbi, proved almost impregnable. Surrounded by a moat, it had seven concentric stone and clay walls. Philip Kosew, a modern historian, suggests that the wall construction involved a work force of 10,000 people. Gungu, another of Kanta's constructions, was a garrison town. Finally, Leka was the holiday residence for the royal family.

Surame, the great city founded by Kanta, even in ruin, was an impressive sight, built on a horizontal vertical grid. Mr E. J. Arnett, a modern scholar, describes it thus: "The walls of Surame are about 10 miles in circumference and include many large bastions or walled suburbs running out at right angles to the main wall. The large compound at Kanta is still visible in the centre, with ruins of many buildings, one of which is said to have been two-storied. The striking feature of the walls and whole ruins is the extensive use of stone and tsokuwa (laterite gravel) or very hard red building mud, evidently brought from a distance. There is a big mound of this near the north gate about 8 feet in height. The walls show regular courses of masonry to a height of 20 feet and more in several places. The best preserved portion is that known as sirati (the bridge) a little north of the eastern gate ... The main city walls here appear to have provided a very strongly guarded entrance about 30 feet wide, approached from left and right by a passage deepening to the point of entrance and sloping up from there into the town. The entrance, however, is filled in with a solid masonry wall in remarkable preservation. It stands from 25 to 30 feet high ... From its name, sirati, or bridge ... [it is probable that] the entrance gateway of the town was surmounted by an archway, or bridge ... Surame is said to have been abandoned by the successors of Kanta about 1715 A.D."

32. Pharaoh Khufu of Ancient Egypt (ruled 4824-4761 BC)

Founder of the Hausa city-state of Kebbi and builder of a planned city

In 4824 BC Pharaoh Khufu of the Negro Fourth Dynasty succeeded to the royal throne of Egypt. He built the first Great Pyramid of Giza. This building, though noteworthy due to its great size, accuracy, and orientation, was no more impressive than the other two Giza pyramids. The great pyramid complexes all consisted of a causeway, a valley temple, a mortuary temple, and the pyramids themselves. Surrounding the first Great Pyramid were 5 rock-hewn pits that contained boats. One such boat was 143 feet long. The distinguished Egyptologist, Professor Hornung, observed that: "The immense expenditure entailed was intended not for the glorification of a king but rather the welfare of the state, which in any case depended on the monarch: his creative powers, which held together the very order of the world, had to be preserved even behind death's doorstep. The construction of the pyramid was thus a communal religious effort on the part of the Egyptians of the old Kingdom, who were certainly not "free" in our sense of the world but rather were in various ways bound to and dependant on the king and the other divine powers."



Of the Great Pyramid, Mr Marsham Adams, a noted Oxford University historian of the nineteenth century, wrote that: "The Monument in stone is unique, solid almost to indestructibility, incapable of variation, and standing unchanged and unchanging, regardless of the assaults, whether of time or of man. That extraordinary pile, the most majestic and most mysterious ever erected by the hand of man, stands close to the verge of the immense desert which stretches its arid wastes across the whole breadth of the African continent to the shore of the western ocean, just at the spot where the busy life of the earliest civilisation on record was bordered by the vast and barren solitude. Of all the other structures which made the marvels of the ancient world, scarcely a vestige is left. Where are the hanging gardens, the boast of the monarch of Babylon? Where is the far-famed Pharos of Alexandria? Centuries have passed since earthquake laid low the Colossus which bestrode the harbour of Rhodes; and a madman's hand reduced to ashes the temple of Artemis, the pride of Ephesus. But the Grand Pyramid of Ghizeh [sic] still remains, undestroyed and indestructible, ages after the lesser marvels have passed away, as it stood ages before ever they came into being."

34. Pharaoh Mena of Ancient Egypt (ruled 5660-5998 BC)

First King of the First Dynasty of Ancient Egypt

The first pharaoh of a unified Egypt was Mena from the Southern Egyptian city of Thinis. After conquering Northern Egypt, he is thought to have reigned for 62 years and he started the first golden age in the land - the Old Kingdom Period. Egypt, during this age, was a Negro society and there are portraits of the king with very handsome African features.

Herodotus, the excellent Greek historian of antiquity, collected other information on this king during his visit to the country: "The [Egyptian] priests said that Mên [i.e. Mena] was the first king of Egypt, and that it was he who raised the dyke which protects Memphis from the inundations of the Nile. Before his time the river flowed entirely through the sandy range of hills which skirts Egypt on the side of Libya. He, however, by banking up the river at the bend which it forms about a hundred furlongs south of Memphis, laid the ancient channel dry, while he dug a new course for the stream half-way between the two lines of hills ... Besides these works, he also, the priests said, built the temple of Vulcan [i.e. Ptah] which stands within the city [i.e. in Herodotus' time], a vast edifice, very worthy of mention."

There is a famous palette associated with an Egyptian king called Narmer. Most historians believe that he is the same person as Mena. This document, exquisitely carved, shows the king wearing the White Crown of Upper Egypt and he stands with his arm raised holding a mace just about to strike an enemy. On the other side of the palette the king is seen wearing the Red Crown of Lower Egypt. He is in procession with the company of high officials. This document shows that the king has defeated the rulers of Lower Egypt. On the palette are lions with serpent-like heads intertwined symbolising unification. From this date onwards, the kings of Egypt wore the Double Crown - the White and the Red Crown combined. He was thus the first king to take the title of the "Two Ladies" referring to the goddesses Nekhbet and Wadjet. Finally, Mena led expeditions southeast to the mountain regions where the stone quarries stood. From here, building materials were obtained.



35. Pharaoh Mer-Meith of Ancient Egypt (ruled 5524-c.5507 BC) *First Female Pharaoh of Egypt*

Pharaoh Mer-Neith (5524-c.5507 BC), of the Negro First Egyptian Dynasty, succeeded to the throne and ruled as its first female pharaoh. Her name means 'beloved of Neith', named after the same goddess that the Greeks would, at a much later date, call Athena. She had two great tombs built, one in the southern Egyptian city of Abydos, the other, in the northern city of Saqqara. Tradition dictated that these monuments be built to symbolise the authority of the pharaoh as ruler of the north and the south, Lower and Upper Egypt. Her monuments, especially the Saqqara tomb, are as large and impressive as those of the male pharaohs.

37. Askia Mohammed I of Songhai (ruled 1493-1529, died in 1538 AD)

Emperor of the Songhai Empire of West Africa

Sonni Baru Dao, ruler of the Songhai Empire, was also a follower of a traditional African religion and rejected all attempts to convert him to Islam by Muslims in his empire. After several weeks of negotiations and no conversion, the Muslims resorted to battle. Backed by a large section of the army, the Muslims triumphed in April 1493. This brought Mohammed Touré, a former general, to lead the empire. He took the title 'Askia' and all those who followed him took the same dynastic title. A devout Muslim, Askia Mohammed I made a pilgrimage to Mecca in 1496. One thousand infantry and a cavalry detachment of 500 horsemen accompanied him. He also took 300,000 gold pieces. In Mecca, Askia met the Caliph of Egypt, the Pope of the Islamic church. Askia requested that the Caliph appoint him as his religious representative in West Africa. The Caliph agreed. Askia Mohammed returned to Gao in 1497, with a new title. He was now the Caliph of the Western Sudan, spiritual ruler of all the West African Muslims.



The empire Askia inherited from the Sonni Dynasty was already massive, yet he expanded north, east and west by conquest. Ultimately it would cover an area about the same size as all of Europe. By 1514 his armies captured the Hausa Confederation of northern Nigeria. Next to capitulate was the city of Agades in Niger, and finally the regions to the far west of the empire around the Atlantic. As the kingdom grew into an empire, Askia Mohammed I came up with new methods of government, establishing a strongly centralised administration. Among the most important posts were the Minister of Treasury, the Minister of Tax Collection, the Minister of the Army and Navy, and the Minister of Trade and Industry. In some territories, the Askia allowed the regional kings to rule as they had before, just as long as they paid tribute. In other territories, the Askia created a parallel post to the local governor called the mondyo (i.e. inspector), who formed the official link to the imperial Songhai government. Askia Mohammed I died in 1538 and was buried in a Step Pyramid at Gao. He is fondly remembered as Askia the Great.

40. Ngola Ann Nzinga of Ndongo (ruled 1623-1663 AD)

Angolan Queen who defended against the Slave Trade

From the fifteenth century AD onwards, West Africa began to face the rigours of the Slave Trade. The challenge first came from the Portuguese. Later challenges came from other European peoples. In the region now known as Angola, there was a kingdom called Ndongo. Kabasa was its capital city. Portuguese traders exerted a great pressure on this kingdom. After 1608 their army commander-in-chief instituted a new policy of repression. Bento Cardoso devised a system whereby every Ndongo notable would be owned by a Portuguese official and was responsible for delivering a certain quantity of slaves to that official. Should the Ndongo notable fail therein, he too would be enslaved. Over a hundred notables were enslaved in a single year. In addition, the Portuguese killed a further one hundred. Even the ruler of Ndongo, himself a slave trader, resisted the aggression. War dragged on for years but the Portuguese were forced to sue for peace.



In 1622 Ann Nzinga, the Ndongo royal sister, attended a peace conference with the Portuguese convened in the coastal city of Luanda. She demanded (1) that the Portuguese evacuate Kabasa, the Ndongo capital; (2) that the Portuguese wage war on the Jaga, an African people much involved in the Slave Trade; (3) all Ndongo notables who had become vassals of the Portuguese must return to their former loyalty to the Ndongo crown. In return, Nzinga promised to hand over Portuguese prisoners of war. The provisions of the treaty were designed to end all fighting in the region, but alas the Portuguese breached it almost immediately by invading Kongo, the kingdom to the north.

In 1623 Ann Nzinga officially became the Ngola (which means King) [sic], and in this capacity made the regional alliances necessary to fight the Portuguese. She even made common cause with the Jaga. Ndongo was declared a free country the following year. All slaves entering the country were legally declared to be free. By 1629 her forces and allies captured Matamba, the neighbouring state to the east. Incidentally, this state had a tradition of being ruled by females. This too was declared a free country. The fragile alliance with the Jaga ended when their ruler betrayed her and attacked Matamba. Fortunately, dissension among the Europeans - the Dutch were encroaching on Portugal's share of the slave trade - created an opportunity for Nzinga. She established a strategic alliance with the Dutch, pitting them against the Portuguese. After the Portuguese defeated the Dutch, Nzinga retreated to the hills of Matamba, where she established a formidable resistance movement against the Portuguese. One key strategy was to get Black slave soldiers to desert to her side. She promised them land and freedom. She was the only African leader in history known to have attempted this. In 1641 Garcia II, a vigorous king, emerged in Kongo, to the north. He made alliances with the Dutch to fight Portuguese aggression. His death in 1661 ended the great era of Kongolese culture. In Ndongo, the death of Nzinga in 1663 marked a turning point. Her extraordinary and brilliant reign only delayed the inevitable.

41. Queen Oluwo of Ife (c.1000 AD)

Yoruba Queen who paved the southern Nigeria city of Ife

Professor Ekpo Eyo, a former head of the Nigerian museums system, narrates a curious oral tradition concerning Oni Oluwo, a distinguished Yoruba ruler. Apparently she was walking around the capital city of Ife when her regalia got splashed with mud. Oluwo was so upset by this that she ordered the construction of pavements for all the public and religious places in the city. Archaeology confirms that: "Pavements ... are widespread in Africa. Potsherd pavements are the most common types of pavements known in West Africa ... The most consistent reports about excavated pavements in West Africa have so far come from Ife, specifically the sites at: Oduduwa College, Lafogido, Ita Yemoo, Obalara's Land and Woye Asiri Land."

The pavements embellished the courtyards and often had altars built at the ends against walls. Peter Garlake adds that: "Many [of the pavements] had regular and geometric patterns, often emphasized by the incorporation of white quartz pebbles in their surface. Such pavements have been found on prehistoric sites from Tchad [sic] in the northeast to Togo in the west."

43. Sarki Muhammad Rumfa of Kano (ruled 1463-1499 AD)

Most celebrated ruler in the northern Nigeria region

Muhammad Rumfa became ruler of the Hausa city-state of Kano in 1463. He greatly extended the walls of the city and built an imposing new palace, the *Gidan Rumfa*, with courtly attendants adopting fashions from the nearby empire of Borno. They wore extravagant sandals of ostrich feathers and sported fans from the same bird. His principal officers built palaces of their own. Reforming the government, he appointed a nine-member council of advisors and promoted slaves to important positions. Slaves managed the treasury, staffed the palace, attended to the harem, and policed the city. He enforced Islamic law. Humiliating the Abagayawa, a non-Islamic people, he compelled leading citizens to become Muslims and built a Friday Mosque on the sacred Shamuz site. Women were kept in purdah. Additionally, Eid al-Fir, the great Islamic festival after Ramadan, was celebrated for the first time. He offered active support to scholars.



One famous scholar, Sheikh Muhammad Al-Maghili, taught Koranic studies in Katsina and law at Kano. He wrote a treatise on government for Rumfa called *On The Obligations of Princes*. One excerpt from this great work reads as follows: "The sojourn of a prince in the city breeds all manner of trouble and harm. The bird of prey abides in open and wild places. Vigorous is the cock as he struts round his domains. The eagle can only win his realm by firm resolve, and the cock's voice is strong as he masters the hens. Ride, then, the horses of resolution upon the saddles of prudence. Cherish the land from the spoiling drought, from the raging wind, the dust-laden storm, the raucous thunder, the gleaming lightning, the shattering fireball and the beating rain. Kingdoms are held by the sword, not by delays. Can fear be thrust back except by causing fear? Allow only the nearest of your friends to bring you food and drink and bed and clothes. Do not part with your coat of mail and weapons and let no one approach you save men of trust and virtue. Never sleep in a place of peril. Have near to guard you at all times a band of faithful and gallant men, sentries, bowmen, horse and foot. Times of alarm are not like times of safety. Conceal your secrets from other people until you are master of your undertaking."

In this work, Rumfa was advised to install an Ombudsman to receive complaints against the government. Rumfa put the advice into practice and Al-Maghili left for the Songhai city of Gao in 1502. The only significant failure of his career was an inconclusive eleven year war conducted against Katsina. The Kano Chronicle says of him: "He can have no equal in might, from the time of the founding of Kano, until it shall end".

45. Queen of Sheba, ruler of Ethiopia and Yemen (ruled 1005-955 BC)

One of the greatest women in world history

In and around Axum, the old Ethiopian capital, there are over 50 obelisks, many of them undecorated. Some are believed to be very old, but firm dates have not been established. Near to some of these obelisks, one kilometre from Axum on the road to the city of Gondar, is a massive building containing a drainage system with 'finely-mortared stone walls, deep foundations and an impressive throne room'. Ethiopian tradition establishes this building as the palace of Empress Makeda, the fabled Queen of Sheba (1005-955 BC). Tradition also establishes one of the obelisks, carved with four horizontal bands, each topped with a row of circles in relief, as the marker of the Queen's grave. It was probably due to this evidence that J. A. Rogers, the famous Jamaican historian, declared that: 'A few years ago her tomb, as well as the ruins of a great temple and twenty-two obelisks of her period, were excavated at Axum'.

The Queen of Sheba was one of the most powerful women in history. She is named as Makeda in the Ethiopian chronicle, the Kebra Negaste, or Bilqis, in the Koran. She presided over Ethiopia and Yemen (Saba or Sheba) and thus controlled the Red Sea, a great trade route. The evidence of the tomb and the obelisks indicate that the Queen of Sheba was an Ethiopian. There are also obelisks that seem to be intermediate in date and style between those of the Makeda period and those of the early Christian era.

There is another theory, which is worthy of discussion, to the effect that the Queen was half-Ethiopian and half-Yemeni. Professor William Hansberry, master of the African-American historians, draws attention to a mediæval manuscript of Al-Hamdani. This Muslim scholar died in the Arabian city of Sana in the middle of the tenth century AD. His account portrays Bilqis as the daughter of Shar Habil, the king of Yemen, and Ekeye Azeb, an Ethiopian princess. Moreover, she was born in the Yemenite city of Marib, but spent her youth in Ethiopia. She returned to Marib just before her father's death. The Yemenis of this period were Negroes and therefore the Queen was fully Black.

The Queen was famous as a trader. She established trading networks carried by 520 camels and 370 ships. Tamrin, her chief merchant, headed the operation. The Book of Ezekiel 27: 22-24 says: "The merchants of Sheba and Raamah were thy merchants; they traded in thy fairs with the best of all spices, and with all precious stones, and gold. Haran, and Calneh, and Eden, the merchants of Sheba, Asshur, and Chilmad were thy merchants. These were thy merchants in all sorts of things, in blue clothes, and embroidered work, and in chests of rich apparel, bound with cords, and made of cedar, among thy merchandise."

Unlike some other personalities in African history, there is an abundance of documents surrounding Makeda. This has made it difficult to separate fact from legend. For example Josephus, the great Roman Jewish historian, portrays her as Queen of Ethiopia but also Egypt. Other sources give her sovereignty over parts of Syria, Armenia, India and Indonesia. We take the more prudent view that she ruled just Ethiopia and Yemen.

46. King Sundiata of Mali (ruled 1230-1255 AD)

Founder of the Malian nation

In 1224 King Sumanguru led the Sosso in a devastating raid on the Malian capital of Djeriba. They razed the city and killed most of the ruling family. Eleven princes were put to death in the massacre, but Sumanguru spared one of them, a crippled boy called Sundiata. Six years later, Sundiata triumphed over his disability and became the ruler of the Malians. He surrounded himself with a private guard made up of the thuggish element of the kingdom, and began a guerrilla campaign against Sosso dominance. Sundiata's first strike, however, was against Sangaran, a neighbouring kingdom. After this conquest, he campaigned against Labe and also the Niger Region. During these conquests he gathered an army recruited from among the defeated peoples to fight the Sosso. In 1235 he challenged the power of the Sosso at the Battle of Kirina. His armies defeated Sumanguru and destroyed the fortified and well-garrisoned capital of the Sosso. Five years later, Sundiata seized the city of Ghana and destroyed it. After these military actions, he returned to the ruins of his capital city, Djeriba, and received the sworn loyalty of the rulers of the conquered people at a triumphant and impressive ceremony. He allowed the Emperor of Ghana to retain the title of king. All the other former rulers were given new titles.

Sundiata never again took to the battlefield. Devoting his time to economic and social development of the empire, he turned his armies into farmers and encouraged a programme of agricultural expansion. The soldiers grew cotton, peanuts and grains, and were also encouraged to raise poultry and cattle. He founded a new capital city called Niani. It was located on the confluence of the Upper Niger and Sankarini rivers. There were other military actions, however, but Sundiata's generals led them. They marched as far as the Atlantic, seized lands way to the east, subjugated the southern forest belt, and overpowered the desert regions of the north. These actions led to Malian control of the gold-fields of Wangara and created the trade route from there to the new capital of Niani.

47. Pharaoh Taharqo of Kush (ruled 690-664 BC)

The most powerful African in history known as the Emperor of the World

Taharqo (also called Taharka) ruled Kush and Egypt from 690 until 664 BC. He inherited a huge empire from Qabih-Hor in Asia to the lands south of the Sudanese city of Napata. In addition, Erathosthenes claimed that he conquered a vast territory in North Africa and "penetrated into Europe as far as the Pillars of Hercules (Gibraltar)." Corroborating this, Professor Ivan Van Sertima wrote that: "We [also] have a clear and indisputable reference to this in a [Spanish] manuscript by Florian de Ocampo Cronica General published in 1553. The name of the invading general is given as Tarraco [cf. Taharqo]. He is not only identified as head of the Ethiopian [i.e. Kushite] army. The reference is more specific. It says he was later to become King of Egypt. The name, the period, the historical fact of his generalship and his later kinship in Egypt ... all attest to the validity of this reference."



Moreover, there is considerable evidence that the newly founded North African city of Carthage was part of his sphere of influence. Thus, his imperial activities give substance to his boast of being the "Emperor of the World". Of this great man, Professor Rawlinson wrote the following: "The reign of Tirhakah (Tehrak) [sic] during this period appears to have been glorious. He was regarded by Judea as its protector, and exercised a certain influence over all Syria as far as Taurus, Amanus, and the Euphrates. In Africa, he brought into subjection the native tribes of the north coast, carrying his arms, according to some, as far as the Pillars of Hercules. He is exhibited at Medinet-Abou in the dress of a warrior, smiting with a mace ten captive foreign princes. He erected monuments in the Egyptian style at Thebes, Memphis, and Napata. Of all the Ethiopian [i.e. Kushite] sovereigns of Egypt he was undoubtedly the greatest."

One authority described him as "a great builder approaching the scale of Rameses II". According to Vivian Davies and Renée Friedman, two modern authorities: "Taharqo was a great builder, erecting temples, shrines and statues throughout the Nile Valley, and turning Gebel Barkal into an architectural showpiece, its central temple a southern version of Karnak in Thebes, though on a smaller scale. High up on the great pinnacle he had an inscription recording his dominance carved in hieroglyphs and sheathed in gold - to be visible far and wide, no doubt a spectacular sight as it glistened in the sun."

48. Yusuf ibn Tashfin of the Almoravides (ruled c.1061-1106)

Founder of the Almoravid Dynasty that ruled in Africa and Spain

Sometime in the latter half of 1082 AD hundreds of Moors and Arabs streamed into Africa, fleeing the campaigns of the Christians. In the following year, Al-Mutammed, the governor of Seville, joined them. Visiting Yusuf, he begged him to assist the Muslims in Spain against the Christian onslaught. Yusuf responded. He raised an army that was said to have included every ethnic group in the western Sahara desert and sent them across the sea into Spain. Armed with Indian swords and mounted on camels, the African army faced the Christians at Zalakah in 1086. They triumphed and pushed the Christians out of southern Spain.



In time Yusuf's forces seized Seville and dethroned its Islamic rulers. Apparently they had become "sunk in pleasure and sloth". The Almoravid Empire had a court in Africa centred in Marrakech and a court in Spain centred in Seville. This, according to Lady Lugard, "established once more a supreme sultan upon the throne of Andalusia". Furthermore, Yusuf's conquest and "the dynasty which he founded must be regarded as an African conquest and an African dynasty". Incidentally, there is a "traditional" image of Yusuf that appears on the Catalan Atlas, a famous Spanish map of a slightly later period. Not only is he clearly depicted as a Negro but he is portrayed as darker in complexion than Mansa Musa, incongruously drawn on the same map. The territory ruled by the Almoravides in Africa and Spain was extensive. Under their sway were the lands of Senegal, Morocco, Algeria and Spain. It was a larger area than that of Western Europe. Thirteen kings acknowledged the overlordship of Yusuf.

In Africa Yusuf had great monuments built. Three great mosques date from his time, the mosque of Tlemcen, the mosque of Nedroma, and the mosque of Algiers. He also built an imposing stone fortress in Marrakech when other buildings at the time were of clay. Natascha Kubisch notes that: "[He] founded the city of Marrakech in 1062 and laid out the great palm grove, but then handed over the further developments of the city to his son. Marrakech remained the capital of the empire under the Almohads and is one of the four royal cities of Morocco, alongside Rabat, Fez and Meknes. It is still a fascinating city today because of its African character and its surviving medieval buildings."

50. Prophetess Kimpa Vita of Kongo (lived 1682-1706)

Kongolese founder of Black Liberation Theology

Towards the end of the seventeenth century AD, both the combined states of Ndongo and Matamba, and also Kongo, fell victim to European predator activities where 'executions, treachery, robbery, and violence became the order of the day.' Even under these trying circumstances, a great woman emerged. Kimpa Vita also called Dona Beatriz continued the resistance against the Portuguese slave traders. She was a Kongolese aristocrat born in 1682. By 1704 she began to get national recognition as a prophetess. Though a Christian, she led an interpretation of Christian doctrine that her opponents called the Antonian Heresy. This theology created a national religion in Kongo that owed little to the Church of Rome. Vita preached that (1) Kongo was the Holy Land described in the Bible; (2) The Kongolese capital, Mbanza Kongo, is the real site of Bethlehem; (3) Christ and all the other saints were Black; (4) Heaven was for Africans only; and (5) The White church was the anti-Christ. Thus, she called on Africans not to listen to White missionaries. Her political programme was to find the new king of Kongo who would lead the next golden age of Kongo civilisation. Unfortunately, it was not to be. She was eventually captured and executed by the Portuguese in 1706.



WHEN WE RULLED

***When We Ruled* is by far the best general work on the ancient and medieval history of Black people there has ever been.**

This landmark publication, which is superbly illustrated with high quality photographs, maps and drawings, provides an extraordinary and cutting-edge synthesis of the archaeological data, the documentary evidence, and the historical linguistic research. It recounts the fascinating story of the origin and development of indigenous civilisations across the vast panorama of the African continent.

In particular, the author answers the key question in Black history: How much documented history is there beyond the Slave Trade, Mary Seacole, and Malcolm X? In 713 pages that question is answered again and again with a vast array of evidence that explodes the widely held view that Africans were without historical distinctions. In particular, there are ancient and medieval monuments that are still standing all over Africa. In addition, there are Black families and institutions that still possess their medieval manuscripts.

The history of Black people cannot be divorced from the history of peoples on other continents particularly Asia, Europe, and the Americas. Topic areas that have traditionally been ignored, such as Black Women's history, early African science and technology, and the two-way influences between Africa and Europe, are also discussed.

What is remarkable about this work is that for the first time it dares to connect Egypt, and its cultural affinities, with Africa and its chronological timeline within the vast chronology (nearly 90,000 years) of African achievement. It is now untenable for Egyptologists to consider themselves to be experts on Egypt without understanding the African cultural signature embedded within Ancient Egypt and its long history.

Faculty, students and parents interested in a comprehensive, critical and balanced overview of African or Black history will find no better book



So, Monomotapa had a social welfare system. Antonio Bocarro, a Portuguese contemporary, informs us that the Emperor: "shows great charity to the blind and maimed, for these are called the king's poor, and have land and revenues for their subsistence, and when they wish to pass through the kingdoms, wherever they come food and drinks are given to them at the public cost as long as they remain there, and when they leave that place to go to another they are provided with what is necessary for their journey, and a guide, and some one to carry their wallet to the next village. In every place where they come there is the same obligation."

B2. Evidence discovered in 1978 showed that East Africans were making steel for more than 1,500 years: "Assistant Professor of Anthropology Peter Schmidt and Professor of Engineering Donald H. Avery have found as long as 2,000 years ago Africans living on the western shores of Lake Victoria had produced carbon steel in preheated forced draft furnaces, a method that was technologically more sophisticated than any developed in Europe until the mid-nineteenth century."

B3. Ruins of a 300 BC astronomical observatory was found at Namoratunga in Kenya. Africans were mapping the movements of stars such as Triangulum, Aldebaran, Bellatrix, Central Orion, etcetera, as well as the moon, in order to create a lunar calendar of 354 days.

B4. Autopsies and caesarean operations were routinely and effectively carried out by surgeons in pre-colonial Uganda. The surgeons routinely used antiseptics, anaesthetics and cautery iron. Commenting on a Ugandan caesarean operation that appeared in the *Edinburgh Medical Journal* in 1884, one author wrote: "The whole conduct of the operation . . . suggests a skilled long-practiced surgical team at work conducting a well-tryed and familiar operation with smooth efficiency."

B5. Sudan in the mediaeval period had churches, cathedrals, monasteries and castles. Their ruins still exist today.

B6. The mediaeval Nubian Kingdoms kept archives. From the site of Qasr Ibrim legal texts, documents and correspondence were discovered. An archaeologist informs us that: "On the site are preserved thousands of documents in Meroitic, Latin, Greek, Coptic, Old Nubian, Arabic and Turkish."

B7. Glass windows existed in mediaeval Sudan. Archaeologists found evidence of window glass at the Sudanese cities of Old Dongola and Hambukol.

B8. Bling culture existed in the mediaeval Sudan. Archaeologists found an individual buried at the Monastery of the Holy Trinity in the city of Old Dongola. He was clad in an extremely elaborate garb consisting of costly textiles of various fabrics including gold thread. At the city of Soba East, there were individuals buried in fine clothing, including items with golden thread.

92. **The East Coast, from Somalia to Mozambique, has ruins of well over 50 towns and cities. They flourished from the ninth to the sixteenth centuries AD.**

93. **Chinese records of the fifteenth century AD note that Mogadishu had houses of "four or five storeys high".**

94. **Gedi, near the coast of Kenya, is one of the East African ghost towns. Its ruins, dating from the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries, include the city walls, the palace, private houses, the Great Mosque, seven smaller mosques, and three pillar tombs.**

95. **The ruined mosque in the Kenyan city of Gedi had a water purifier made of limestone for recycling water.**

96. **The palace in the Kenyan city of Gedi contains evidence of piped water controlled by taps. In addition it had bathrooms and indoor toilets.**

97. **A visitor in 1331 AD considered the Tanzanian city of Kilwa to be of world class. He wrote that it was the "principal city on the coast the greater part of whose inhabitants are Zanj of very black complexion." Later on he says that: "Kilwa is one of the most beautiful and well-constructed cities in the world. The whole of it is elegantly built."**

98. **Bling culture existed in early Tanzania. A Portuguese chronicler of the sixteenth century wrote that: "[T]hey are finely clad in many rich garments of gold and silk and cotton, and the women as well; also with much gold and silver chains and bracelets, which they wear on their legs and arms, and many jewelled earrings in their ears".**

99. **In 1961 a British archaeologist, found the ruins of Husuni Kubwa, the royal palace of the Tanzanian city of Kilwa. It had over a hundred rooms, including a reception hall, galleries, courtyards, terraces and an octagonal swimming pool.**

100. **In 1414 the Kenyan city of Malindi sent ambassadors to China carrying a gift that created a sensation at the Imperial Court. It was, of course, a giraffe.**