Early Life and Ascension: Mansa Musa, whose full name was Musa Keita I, came to power in 1312 after his predecessor, Abu-Bakr II, for whom he served as deputy, went missing on a voyage he took by sea to find the edge of the Atlantic Ocean. Musa was appointed as deputy of the king before he proclaimed himself as the new king.

Wealth Beyond Measure: Musa's wealth was so vast that it is said to be incomprehensible. He is often referred to as the richest man in history. The wealth of the Mali Empire came from the production of gold and salt, which were highly valued commodities, especially gold, of which the Mali Empire was the largest producer in the world at the time.

Historic Pilgrimage: In 1324, Mansa Musa embarked on a pilgrimage to Mecca that became legendary. His caravan consisted of thousands of soldiers, attendants, subjects, and slaves, as well as about a hundred camels each carrying 300 pounds of gold. His journey through Egypt caused quite a stir due to the amount of gold he spent and distributed, disrupting the local economy.

Impact on Cairo's Economy: The amount of gold Mansa Musa spent in Cairo was so enormous that it devalued the material. The market in gold was so flooded that its value did not recover for years. His wealth left an impression on Cairo, Medina, and Mecca, where he built mosques and established educational institutions.

Construction and Learning: After returning from Mecca, Musa embarked on a large building program, erecting mosques and madrasas in Timbuktu and Gao. He turned Timbuktu into a center of culture and learning that attracted scholars, poets, and artisans from across the Muslim world, particularly after he brought back architects and intellectuals from his pilgrimage.

Scholarly Patronage: Under Mansa Musa, Timbuktu became a center of education and culture, home to the prestigious University of Sankore, which was staffed with jurists, astronomers, and mathematicians. The libraries and universities in Timbuktu became repositories of the world's finest collections of Islamic manuscripts.

Diplomacy and Trade: Musa’s rule is also known for its diplomatic efforts. He established relations with other African nations and the wider Mediterranean world. This network of trade and diplomacy greatly enhanced the status and influence of the Mali Empire during his reign.

Mansa Musa’s Map Influence: Musa's fame extended beyond the African continent and was so influential that he was included on the 1375 Catalan Atlas, one of the most important world maps of Medieval Europe. His depiction on the map carrying a gold nugget symbolizes the importance of Mali and its king in the 14th-century world.

Currency Control: To better manage his empire’s vast wealth, Musa began issuing a currency. Mali had a set system of weights and measures for gold and other goods, which was used in trade, providing stability and trust in Mali’s economy across the vast empire.

Legacy and the Empire's Decline: After Mansa Musa’s death in circa 1337, his successors were unable to keep the empire as strong and centralized as it was during his reign. Over time, the Mali Empire weakened and eventually fell to civil war and external pressures, but Mansa Musa’s legacy as a ruler of immense wealth, devout faith, and cultural sophistication has endured.