

## HISTORY 3<sup>RD</sup> TERM JSS 2 SCHEME OF WORK

### 2024/2025 ACADEMIC SESSION

WEEK	TOPIC
1.	Songhai Empire: Location and socio-political structure
2.	The rule of the Za Dynasty in Songhai Empire
3.	Sonni Ali the Great (1464-1492) and the rise of Songhai Empire
4.	Assessment of Sonni Ali and the ascension of Askia Mohammed 1 (1493-1528)
5.	Askia Mohammed Toure's Achievements in Songhai Empire
6.	Askia Mohammed Toure's Achievements in Songhai Empire continued
7.	<b>MID-TERM BREAK</b>
8.	Songhai Empire after Askia Mohammed the Great
9.	The Decline/fall of Songhai Empire
10.	The Moroccan attack and conquest; reasons and result of the fall of Songhai Empire
11.	Revision
12.	Examination
13.	Examination continued/End of term activities

#### JSS 2 HISTORY NOTE THIRD TERM

##### **SONGHAI EMPIRE**

Songhai Empire was a state that dominated Western Sudan in the early 15th and to the late 16th century, Songhai was one of the largest African empires in history. It became most popular after the fall of Mali Empire. At its peak, it extended to over 1000 miles from the current modern day country of Niger to the Atlantic Ocean.

##### **LOCATION OF SONGHAI EMPIRE**

The empire was located in western Africa south of the Sahara Desert and along the Niger River in Dendi area. The capital city of the Songhai was the city of Gao which was located in modern –day Mali on the banks of River Niger.

##### **SONGHAI GROUPS AND THEIR OCCUPATIONS**

The Songhai people were made up of three distinct groups who were differentiated by their occupation.

These groups are:

**Da:** The Da were sedentary farmers who mostly live within their villages and communities. They don't like moving about to other locations, but prefer to be left within their villages.

**The Gow or Gambiri:** This set of people were hunters. Their main occupation was hunting and they were skilled hunters.

**The Sorko:** The Sorko were skilled fishermen as well as canoe-men.

These three groups of people interacted closely. And about the 7th century, the Sorko fishermen ruled over **Da** and **Gow**. They established an effective government along the riverine state with capital at Gungia which is also known as kukia. They were said to be a fierce river beast who imposed an oppressive rule on the Songhai people due to their great mobility around River Niger.

The rule of the Sorko was brought to an end by an invasion by warrior bands who were suspected to be the dark-skinned Zaghawa nomads from the Lake Chad.

### **STRUCTURE OF GOVERNMENT OF THE SONGHAI EMPIRE**

The Songhai empire was divided into urban districts containing at least thirty-five (35) cities, which were blended into sub-urban districts and peripheral territories. The Songhai vassals were largely autonomous or independent but were required to pay taxes and contribute soldiers to military expeditions.

The city of Gao was the administrative capital of the Songhai empire, while the cities of Timbuktu and Djenne were economic and cultural centres led by semi-autonomous or semi-independent governments.

The emperor appointed governors to lead the urban districts. The central government observed a patrilineal dynastic system (that is through the male line of succession), in which the ruler served as head of state, head of government and commander of the armed forces. The emperor had the final authority to make law and decree, appoint government leaders, and create treaties (agreements) with foreign states.

The emperor was assisted by council of ministers by leading the nation's executive offices. The ministries were divided into departments including treasury, military, domestic affairs, religion, and agriculture.

### **THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM**

Each region had a court system with appointed **cadi** (judges) who administered a blend of Islamic and tribal law. The sovereign had the power to appoint and dismiss members of the judiciary.

### **THE RULE OF THE ZA DYNASTY IN SONGHAI EMPIRE**

- The invaders who defeated the Sorko inter-married with the indigeneous negro population.
- They were completely absorbed into Songhai society as they gradually took on much of the physical appearance, language and customs of their subjects.
- After Za Aliemen, no Za of particular note reigned until Za Kossi, who was the fifteenth came to the throne.
- In 1010, Za Kossi was converted to Islam and also encouraged the ruling class to accept the religion.
- Za Kossi appointed Muslim officials to assist in the government of Songhai.

- He later moved the capital northwards from Kukia to Gao, which at the time, had become a notable commercial centre linking the caravan routes of the Sudan with North Africa.
- Moving of the capital was with the intention to take advantage of the strategic commercial position of Gao so that much wealth can be generated to support the expansion of the empire and promote Islamic religion.
- Gao gradually became the foremost trading centre in Western Sudan attracting merchants from Morocco and Tunis.
- As the result of the rising prosperity, by the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Songhai kingdom was already attracting the attention of the expanding Mali empire.
- By 1325, Mali empire under Mansa Musa's imperialistic drive, Gao was conquered.
- The Songhai empire did not just allow their kingdom to be attacked as they continued to resent their loss of independence.
- In 1335, Ali Kolen and Sulayman Nar escaped from their hostages and ran back to Gao. Ali Kolen was proclaimed the king over the Goans after dislodging the Mali forces garrisoned in Gao.
- He took up the title of "Sonni" which means Liberator, the Za dynasty came to an end with Sonni came to being.
- Gao did not however regain its full independence from Mali until when Sonni Ali The Great started ruling.

### **SONNI ALI THE GREAT (1464-1492)**

Sonni Ali's ascension to the throne of Gao kingdom was very significant as it was said to mark the great transformation of that small kingdom into the largest empire that existed in the Western Sudan before the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As a result of his contributions to the wonderful growth and rise of the Songhai empire, Sonni Ali became known as '**Sonni Ali Ber**' which means **Sonni Ali the Great**. The following were the areas in which he distinguishes himself as the true founder of the Songhai empire just like what Sundiata did for Mali empire.

1. Military build-up
2. Expansion of the Songhai Empire
3. Government of the empire

**Military build-up:** On assumption of office, Sonni Ali quickly recognised the need for strong military force with which he carry out his plans. Thus he established a formidable regular army with a strong cavalry force which was mounted on horses he bought from North Africa. He created a powerful wing of naval force using canoes to transport soldiers.

**Expansion of the Songhai Empire:** Sonni Ali began the expansion of the empire with the aid of his well-established military might which he used for a series of military conquests. Firstly, he ensured the firm security of his newly independent state by crushing the enemies of the kingdom such as the Tuaregs, the Fulanis and Mali.

**Government of the empire:** Another sphere in which Sonni Ali contributed to the rise and growth of the Songhai empire was in laying a standard system of Government and so, he took the administration of the vast empire he created by his conquests to enviable heights.

### **THE FACTORS FOR THE RISE OF SONGHAI EMPIRE**

- a. Geographical factors
- b. Commercial Factors
- c. Political factors
- d. Religious factors
- e. Strong army

**a. Geographical factors:** The location of Songhai empire which is situated in the savannah region and fertile area of the Niger basin resulted in the production of abundant food crops, cattle and fish. Also, it aided the easy movement of troops for any military operation. This greatly led to the growth and rise of the Songhai empire.

**b. Commercial Factors:** Songhai empire's backbone was trade. The trade in salt, gold, ivory and slaves, in what it is referred to as 'Trans-Saharan trade'. The famous salt mines at Taghaza were one of many. Gao was the primary salt trading centre for its environs. That was the source of its wealth.

**c. Political factors:** Under political factors we have the following:

**The fall of Mali empire:** With the fall of Mali empire, Songhai empire took advantage of the weakened Mali empire to extend control over more territory.

**Great leaders:** Songhai empire was privileged to have great leaders who helped the empire to grow. One man, whose name is Sonni Ali, was mostly responsible for the growth of Songhai. We also have Askia Mohammed the Great, who worked as hard as Sonni Ali and consolidated on his achievements.

**Enthusiasm shown by the people in the Songhai Empire:** Another political factor that assisted in the rise of the Songhai empire was the enthusiasm shown by its people. The cooperation between the leader and the led made the small kingdom to grow to a great empire.

**d. Influence of Islam:** The Islamic religion played important political role in the rise of Songhai empire and imperial greatness. Sonni Ali rose to the rescue of Timbuktu a Muslim city which was under the wicked rule of the pagan Tuareg at the time. So Islam unites the heterogeneous society in the empire.

**e. Strong army:** With a strong army the Songhai empire controlled part of Mali and Senegal and all tribes were united in one nation. The Songhai extended the military revolution of their former leaders by integrating water navy into military operations. This contributed to the rise of the empire.

### **ASSESSMENT OF SONNI ALI**

#### **Reasons**

It is important to critically examine the activities of Sonni Ali. This is to ascertaining whether he did well as a leader or not. Some scholars and Muslim clerics did a critique of him and at the end, you will be able to judge by yourself who he truly was.

## **Those who do the assessment**

Muslim chroniclers were those who supplied a lot of informations about the empires of the Western Sudan and their rulers on which records and accounts of the rulers were derived. It is on good record that Sonni Ali did not embrace Islamic religion and did not also allow the **muslim scholars** and **clerics** to influence the way he ruled the empire of Songhai.

**The perspectives of assessment:** Little wonder then that some of them described him as “a tyrant, evil and oppressive”; another saw him as “a great oppressor and destroyer of towns with a hard and unjust heart”. As stated above, all these inglorious pictures of Sonni Ali was because of his hostility to the muslim scholars, especially those of Timbuktu. He himself was indifferent to Islam. This made the Muslim scholars to antagonise him and his leadership style heavily.

## **THE ASCENSION OF ASKIA MOHAMMED 1 (1493-1528)**

Mohammed Toure Ibn Abubakar, who later became known as Askia Mohammed Toure the Great, seized the throne by leading a serious revolt against the son and immediate successor of Sonni Ali, Sonni Da’a, in 1493. He was therefore a usurper because he took over the kingship when he was not of the royal family. However, he was the most celebrated and brilliant of the rulers of Songhai History. The Songhai Empire attained its golden age during the 35 years of his reign.

## **ASKIA PROBLEMS OF ASCENSION**

It was quite clear that some of the Songhai people and especially the royal family were not happy with Askia for seizing power. The way he forced himself to the throne generated some problems which included the following:

- a. Acceptability
- b. Elements of potential revolt and civil war
- c. Consolidation of Sonni Ali’s conquest.

## **MEASURES ASKIA MOHAMMED TOOK TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEMS**

Having realised all of these, Askia took immediate steps to find solutions to them so that he could have a smooth sail. The measures he took to resolve them permanently were:

- a. To erase impression that he is a usurper and to make himself acceptable as a sincere ruler. He sought and won the undivided loyalty of the muslim llamas.
- b. To show his strong devotion to Islam and to further established the legitimacy of his rule, he went on an ostentatious pilgrimage to Mecca in 1495-1497, where he was appointed the caliph (Kalif) of western Sudan by the exalted Sherif (Sharif) of Mecca.
- c. Again to ward off all potential sources of opposition and ensured that the Askia dynasty did not fear any revolt against them, he killed or barnished all the survivors of the Sonni Ali lineage.
- d. Equally, Askia did much to conciliate the non-Muslim rural Songhai people.
- e. He did not forcefully impose Islam on the people and by his policy of toleration, he won the support of the non-Muslims in the Empire.

## ASKIA MOHAMMED TOURE'S ACHIEVEMENTS

The contributions of Askia Mohammed Toure towards the development, eventual growth and fame of the Songhai Empire transcends all spheres of life as they were many and varied.

- a. Expansion of the Empire
- b. Government of the empire
- c. Justice
- d. Military strength
- e. Religion and Culture
- f. Education
- g. The Economy

**Expansion of the Empire:** Askia Mohammed Toure did a lot in the area of territorial expansion of the Songhai empire. His many military campaigns were also to effectively protect the empire's frontiers. He used his well trained and equipped army to conquer cities and territories from all fronts. Thus in 1498, the Mossi of Yatenga was attacked and their military weakened and devastated during Askia Mohammed, Westwards Bagana was captured in 1499 even as far as Tekrur with the capture of Galan. The influence of Askia was felt down the Senegal valley to the coast. After his return to Gao in 1513, he set off eastwards and subdued the Hausa states of Kano, Katsina, Zaria and Gobir he plundered the cities. However, only Kano put up resistance because of mighty walls constructed behind it. Next Askia's army turned northwards where the commercial centre of Agades was captured and colonised. He also took the Tuareg towns of Takedda and Taghaza which were famous for mining of copper and salt respectively.

**Government of the empire:** Askia's other area of attention was how to administer the vast empire effectively and successfully. He brought his administrative genius to bear on the well laid out system of government. Like Sonni Ali, he ran a central and provincial system of government, with little modifications.

At the centre in Gao, he created a central administration in which he was assisted by a council of ministers with each minister in charge of a department of state. Notable were:

- a. Finance and taxation officer known as Fare Mundy
- b. Justice minister (Asari Mundy)
- c. Chief immigration officer (Korey Farma)
- d. Defence minister (Balama)
- e. Chief naval officer (Hi koy)
- f. Forestry officer (Sao-Farma)
- g. Minister in charge of Rivers, lakes and fisheries (Kori-Farma)

These ministers assisted the king at the metropolitan city of Gao which was also the capital city.

At the regional level of administration, Askia Mohammed introduced a system which made him to divide the whole empire into four sub-kingdoms or regions which were:

Kurnina, Bala, Bangu and Dendi. Each was under the administration of a regional governor known as Koi who was usually from the Askia's family.

**Justice:** Another area in which Askia Mohammed contributed to the growth of the empire was in a well organised system of justice based on strict Islamic law. The koranic law or sharia was strictly enforced. He appointed a class of muslim judges called Kadis who presided over the judiciary interpreting the law and dispensing justice in the provinces of the empire. All the judicial officers were under one Chief justice known as Barey-koi who operated at the capital city of Gao and was in charge of the imperial court which was the highest in the Songhai empire.

**Military strength:** Askia Mohammed proved himself as a great tactician. His wise reforms were brought to bear on the military. He abolished the feudal system of recruiting a force made up of unwilling peasants and established a standing army always ready for service.

**Religion and Culture:** Askia Mohammed like Mansa Musa of Mali, was a devout Muslim who practised the Islamic religion with all zeal. He set worthy examples to his subjects as he made sure that Islamic ritual prayers and practices such as fasting and alms-giving were obeyed. His pilgrimage to Mecca was of great significance for the empire because of his appointment as the caliph of the Western Sudan conferred on him, the authority over all the muslims in the region. Culturally, he brought Al-Maghihi to Songhai along other scholars who gave useful advices and introduced a number of reforms which affected the cultural life of his people. Thus the practice of making women to wear veils and keeping them in purdah was introduced for the first time in Western Sudan. He also encouraged the construction of buildings with such architectural design like those found in Mecca and North Africa.

**Education:** In the realm of education, he made his marks as his achievements in this area were tremendous. In fact, one of his greatest contributions to the development of Songhai empire was in Islamic education. He recognised the important role education could play in the life of any nation and its people as well as in properly driving the spread of Islamic religion which he imbibed. He encouraged Islamic learning at all levels by building a large number of Koranic schools in the great city of Timbuktu which alone had 150 of such schools. This made it to be one of the famous centres of Islamic learning as one of the Koranic schools Sankore mosque, metamorphosed into the medieval Sankore university. As a result, scholars and students across the muslim world at the time moved en-masse into Timbuktu to be educated.

**The Economy and Revenue of songhai Smpire:** In the area of economy, Askia Mohammed also left his footprint in the sands of times. He reformed and strengthened the economy of the Empire and gave it an unprecedented forward thrust. He encouraged

- a. Agriculture
- b. Industry and
- c. Trade: -Unified system of weight and measure  
-Establishment of banking and credit system

- Encouraged importation of foreign goods
- Abolition of feudal system of recruiting army
- Re-organizes the trading routes with the aid of his army

### **CONTRIBUTION OF ISLAM TO THE RISE AND GROWTH OF SONGHAI**

Islam was introduced to Songhai at a very early stage of the empire's life. As early as the 11<sup>th</sup> century, Za Kossi one of the king from Za dynasty. Islam was made a state religion thereby Islam contributed in several ways to the rise and growth of the Songhai Empire thus:

- Growth and great expansion
- Ascension of Askia Mohammed Toure and the peak of the empire.
- Rise and growth in administration
- Economic development
- Muslim culture was imbibed
- Islamic/Arabic education
- Changes in dressing, building patterns and mannerism.

### **SONGHAI EMPIRE AFTER ASKIA MOHAMMED THE GREAT**

After the dethronement of Askia Mohammed the Great, the Songhai empire went through a period of crises characterised by succession disputes, independence movements and attacks by external enemies which culminated in its final collapse in 1591 when the Moroccans invaded it. The dynastic rivalries by various claimants to the throne greatly weakened the imperial army and indeed the economy of Songhai empire. The following were the Askia's that ruled and spend short time on the throne:

Askia Musa (1528-1533)

Askia Mohammed 2 (1533-1537)

Askia Ismail (1537-1539)

Askia Ishaq (1539-1549)

Askia Daud (1549-1582)

### **FACTORS THAT LED TO THE DECLINE, FALL AND COLLAPSE OF SONGHAI EMPIRE**

The Songhai empire got to its apex of greatness by about the end of the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Shortly after the desposition of Askia the Great, the wind of total collapse of the third and greatest empire of the western sudan had set in. A number of factors have been adduced for this ugly trend which were both internal and external.

#### **INTERNAL FACTORS**

- Political
- Economic
- Social/Religious

#### **-Political factors:**

i. **The largeness of the empire:** At the peak of the Songhai empire, it encompassed the northern part of modern-day Nigeria. The largeness of the empire made the emperors (Askia's) not to be able to control the empire.



ii.**Incompetent leaders:** Almost all the leaders that followed in the wake of Askia Mohammed the Great's ouster were grossly incompetent. All but, Askia Daud whose 33 year-long reign brought back a bit of Songhai's fading glory.

iii.**Leadership tussle and quarrels:** After 1528, that is after the death of Askia the Great there were series of coups that led to instability of the empire and numerous dynastic quarrels saw several leaders entered and exited in such quick succession that it did not allow the Empire make any meaningful growth

iv.**Civil wars/Rebellions:** There were civil wars and rebellions which had disastrous consequences for Songhai empire. As a matter of fact, as at the time of the Moroccan invasion (1591) Songhai was faced with several civil war within the empire .

**-Economic factor:** There was a decline in the economic growth of the empire .This was as a result of the great insecurity that the empire was faced with at that time.

**-Social/Religious factor:** Religion was also a factor that contributed to the fall of the empire. The enforcement of Islam as a state religion created serious conflicts between the Muslims and non-Muslims. It was in the face of this religious disunity that the Moroccan invaders took over the empire without much opposition .

### **EXTERNAL FACTORS**

**Moroccans invasion:** The immediate cause of the fall was the Moroccan invasion of 1591 known as the battle of tondibi( the ground where the battle was fought was at tondibi, that how the name was derived). The expenditure was led by Ahmed Al Mansoor. The glorious prestige of the Songhai empire was lost after the battle. Several reasons have been given for the Moroccan's invasion and conquest of the empire.

- Moroccan rulers have been envious of the rich resources of Songhai Empire
- Morocco wanted to take control of the trans-Saharan gold trade and seizure of salt mine

### **REASONS WHY THE MOROCCAN CONQUEST WAS EASY**

- Political situation full of succession disputes
- Religious situation full of serious religious disagreement
- Fallout of the anarchy rocking the central administration and the army
- Refusal of other vassal states to send their levies
- Moroccan possession of superior military weapons and generalship

### **WHY THE MOROCCAN CONQUEST WAS NOT TOTAL**

In spite of the superior military might of the Moroccans against the Songhai army, the invasion was not completely executed due to a number of factors which are:

- a. Lack of Moroccan familiarity with Songhai terrain, besides the presence of insect borne diseases that have fatal blow on their army.
- b. Difficulty by Moroccans forces to replace their supplies in terms of reinforcements in men and equipment.
- c. Politically, the Moroccans did not also fully achieve their desire. Because it was the cities of Gao, Timbuktu and Jenne that they really occupied.

- d. Economic factor, the Moroccans did not have complete success due to erroneous belief that as soon as they arrived Songhai, the gold wealth will be taken over.
- e. From the social aspect, the people of Songhai triumphed over the Moroccans. By the close of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Moroccans had been culturally assimilated by the Songhai people through inter-marriage with them.

## **RESULTS OF THE FALL OF SONGHAI EMPIRE**

The fall of the Songhai Empire had many dire consequences not only for its people but also for the whole of Western Sudan. The result of the fall from the Moroccan conquest was felt in all spheres of life, transcending:

- a. Political
- b. Economic and
- c. Social

**Political sphere:** -The defeat of Songhai army led to great instability in government as the administration of the Askias was brought down. Thus, the central authority could no longer exercise effective control of the empire. - Many rebellions by various tribes who were under the empire. –Moroccan invaders occupied and settled in the Western part of the empire thereby establishing their government.

**Economic Effects:** This was enormous. -There was great decline in agriculture because of general insecurity and it led to famine.

-The mission of the Moors was to gather much wealth from the people they conquered. So Songhai gold, slaves and livestock were drained to Morocco for over 30 years. –The Trans-Saharan trade suffered a big blow from which it never fully recovered.

**Social Life:** The conquest of Songhai also affected its social life. –The endemic war deeply affected its population due to killings and uncontrollable pillage and export of slaves and Negroes soldiers to Morocco. –Timbuktu was drained of its scholars and wealthy middle class citizens who were taken in chains like slaves to Morocco. Culturally, the Moroccan soldiers who married the Songhai women produced a distinct social group of people in the Sudan known as the **Arma**. –Islamic religion suffered a great setback as Songhai fell to Morocco, although they were a Muslim people.

At this point, it should be mentioned that the fall of Songhai as the result of Moroccan conquest had some positive effects.

- First was the emergence of pagan states of Segu and Kaarta.
- Secondly, the decline in Trans-Saharan trade turned the direction of Sudanese trade to the coast. Majorly slave trade.
- Lastly, the fall of Songhai through conquest also left behind impact on the Sudanese culture found in their dressing, food, pottery and architectural taste of the people of middle Niger even till today.