

Battle of the Three Kings and Ahmed al-Mansur's Reign

The Battle of the Three Kings, fought on August 4, 1578, near Ksar el-Kebir in Morocco, was a pivotal moment in North African history. The battle saw the defeat of the invading Portuguese army led by King Sebastian against the Saʿdī sultan of Morocco, ʿAbd al-Malik.

Key points of the battle:

- Sebastian's army of 20,000 men faced a Moroccan force of 50,000.
- The battle resulted in the deaths of three kings: Sebastian of Portugal, the deposed Moroccan sultan al-Mutawakkil, and ʿAbd al-Malik.
- The Moroccan victory provided rich booty and elevated Morocco's status in Europe.

Ahmed al-Mansur, ʿAbd al-Malik's brother, became the new sultan following the battle. His reign marked a high point for the Saʿdī dynasty:

1. Centralization: Al-Mansur centralized government administration and reformed the tax system.
2. Diplomacy: He skillfully balanced relations with European powers and the Ottoman Empire to maintain Moroccan independence.
3. Military: Early in his reign, he relied on a mercenary army trained by Ottoman Turks.
4. Economy: He developed agriculture and the sugar industry, and captured Gao and Timbuktu in 1591, gaining control of important gold trade routes.
5. Culture: Al-Mansur's court was known for its splendor, and he encouraged artisan immigration to Morocco.
6. International relations: He established trade with Spain, breaking the British Barbary Company's monopoly.

Ahmed al-Mansur's reign, lasting from 1578 to 1603, saw Morocco reach new heights of power and prosperity, building on the decisive victory at the Battle of the Three Kings.