



KING

TUNKA MANIN

The Ghana Empire was established in 300 AD in western Africa and covered the region of modern-day Mali, southern Mauritania and the area between the Niger and Senegal Rivers. The empire gradually expanded its territory in western Africa by taking over smaller neighboring states eventually controlling over 650,000 square kilometers. Over a relatively short period of time the empire increased in power and eventually took complete control over the trans-saharan trade routes and by 1050 AD Ghana was strong enough to assume control of the Islamic Berber city of Audaghost in modern-day Mauritania. Tunka Manin a west African from the royal bloodline of Ghana and was born in 1010 AD. By 1063 AD he became the ruler and king of the Ghana Empire. Like his predecessor before him named King Bassi, the new King Tunka Manin retained the local west African religions while a majority of the empire during the time of his reign followed the religion of Islam. Tunka Manin regulated trade in and around the empire very precisely and levied a tax of one gold dinar (Islamic medieval gold coin) on every donkey load of salt coming into the kingdom and two gold dinars on salt being exported out. Ghana at this time was also known as the 'Land of Gold'.

The Arab explorer Al Bakri from Al-Andalus (southern Spain) who visited the Empire of Ghana during the reign of King Tunka Manin provides the following description:

“THIS TUNKA MANIN IS POWERFUL, RULES AN ENORMOUS KINGDOM, AND POSSESSES GREAT AUTHORITY. THE KING SITS IN AUDIENCE OR TO HEAR GRIEVANCES AGAINST OFFICIALS IN A DOMED PAVILLION AROUND WHICH STAND TEN HORSES COVERED WITH GOLD-EMBROIDED MATERIALS. BEHIND THE KING STAND TEN HORSES COVERED WITH GOLD-EMBROIDERED MATERIALS”.

King Tunka Manin also controlled a large military over of 200,000 soldiers with more than a fifth of the force being archers. He is well known for defending the kingdom from rival African kingdoms but allowed nations such as the Almoravids (African Berbers) from northern Africa to visit and even intermarry. King Tunka Manin is remembered in African history as a strong military leader and a lover of justice.