

# Askia the Great

c.(?)–1538



**WHY HE MADE HISTORY** Askia was ruler of the Songhai Empire. He encouraged the spread of Islam in his native Africa.



*As you read the biography below, think about how Askia's faith helped him rule his empire.*

Also known as Muhammad Ture, Askia the Great was most likely born in present-day Senegal. His name was changed when he **assumed** the role of emperor, and began a new dynasty for his empire.

Askia the Great was considered Sonni Ali's best general. In 1493, he overthrew Sonni Ali's son, a man named Bakori Da'a. It was at this time that Askia the Great gained power.

With this new ruler, a new dynasty was formed. Askia the Great seized large territories from the Mali empire, making the Songhai empire of western Africa large and powerful. Askia the Great also conquered the Hausa states and **converted** the Saharan Berber towns into colonies for his empire. The Songhai Empire included these regions conquered by Askia and also a large portion of western Africa.

Despite his many contributions to western Africa and his empire, Askia the Great is often best known for his faith. He was a convert to Islam, though he was accepting of **pagans**. As many Islamic believers did, Askia made the **pilgrimage** to Mecca. It was there that he met many important men of his time, including al-Maghili, a famous Muslim teacher. Askia the Great is known for spreading the Islamic faith in West Africa. He also modeled many of his laws after Islamic laws.



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## VOCABULARY

**assumed** accepted**converted** changed**pagans** people who do not follow one of the world's main religions**pilgrimage** journey to a sacred place

**Askia the Great, *continued***

Biography

Askia the Great was overthrown by his own son Askia Musa in 1528 and died ten years later. His tomb remains in present-day Mali, where it is still visited by many people.

**WHAT DID YOU LEARN?**

1. How did Askia the Great change Songhai during his reign?

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2. **Analyze** Why did Askia the Great use Islamic laws as a model for his own empire's laws?

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**ACTIVITY**

3. Imagine you are a historian studying the history of Songhai. On a separate sheet of paper, write a short encyclopedia article about the life of Askia the Great.