

All three of the images below depict European images of Africa from the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance--before the slave trade. Europeans had long been familiar with parts of Africa. The ugly stereotyped images Europeans created of Africans came mainly with the slave trade and imperialism.



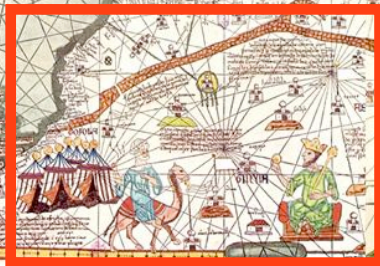
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Above:
Adoration of the Magi, Hans Memling

Left:
St Erasmus & St Maurice Meet

These two saints lived in different centuries. The painting was intended to reflect the importance of the two men.



The Catalan Map of 1375 was done by the foremost European cartographer of that time who happened to be Jewish and Spanish. Here the emperor of Mali, Mansa Musa, sits on a throne while a Berber arrives on a camel to buy gold from him.

Notice how the cartographer chose to depict an African emperor -- dressed as a European king would be dressed, crowned as the European king would be crowned, along with the scepter and an orb of gold and sitting on a throne. In other words, Mansa Musa was portrayed as equal to the mightiest kings of Europe.

(In fact, he was richer and more powerful than European kings of that time.) That being said, the cartographer didn't have everything quite right -- that coat-hanger-looking orange line east to west just north of the Sahara is the cartographer's depiction of the Nile River.

How did the Europeans know who Mansa Musa was?

Spain and many other southern European states bought much of their gold from Mali. At least several tons of gold crossed the Sahara Desert every year. Christopher Columbus went to Elmina, a town that in Portuguese means The Mine. It is still the town's name today, located on the coast of Ghana. Columbus wanted to go directly to the source of the gold and cut out the Berber middlemen, who taxed Europeans heavily for transporting the gold across the Sahara. When Britain later took control of this region, they called their colony, appropriately enough, the Gold Coast.