

# FROM ANCIENT GHANA TO PRESENT DAY MAURITANIA : Modern Day Slavery

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Encarta Encyclopedia, Microsoft Corporation

## Facts about Empire of Ghana

- Located in Southeastern region of present-day Mauritania and Western Mali
- True name is Wagadugu. Ghana was the name of one of its Kings
- Its capital was Kumbi Saleh
- Existed from the 9<sup>th</sup> to 11th Century
- It was succeeded by the Mali empire when it came apart



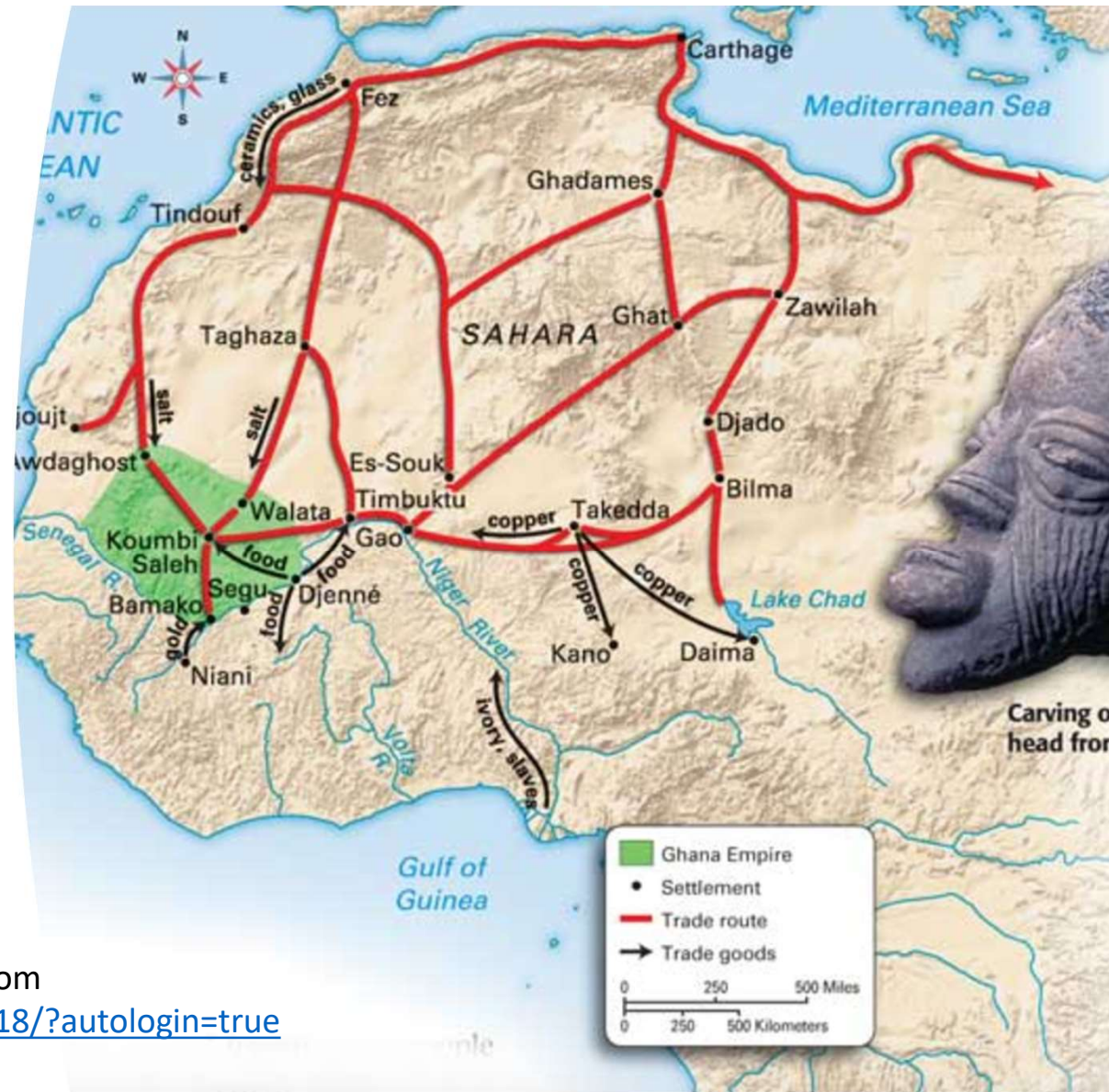
THE EMPIRE'S CAPITAL  
KOUMBI SALEH ON  
THE RIM OF THE  
SAHARA DESSERT

Jahenkeso (n.d) The empire's capital Koumbi Saleh n the rim of the Sahara desert. Retrieved from <https://janakesho1.wordpress.com/2016/01/23/old-ghana-empire-wagadou/>

# Economy of Ancient Ghana

- Trade was a major factor of growth in the Empire
- Ghana bought gold in exchange for salt from the Bambuk miners to their South and this gold was sold to Muslim traders in exchange for clothing, salt and other imports from Arab merchants
- They thrived on Gold trade
- The region was a zone for growing cereal crops

Pinterest (n.d) African Geography History. Retrieved from <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/645844402786312818/?autologin=true>



# The fall of the Empire

- They lost their domination over the gold trade due to the deterioration of their environment
- By the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the land had worn out and could not support the growth of cereal crops and settlement.
- People started moving out in small groups into favorable locations
- As they moved to other locations, settled throughout west Africa and stimulated the development of trade

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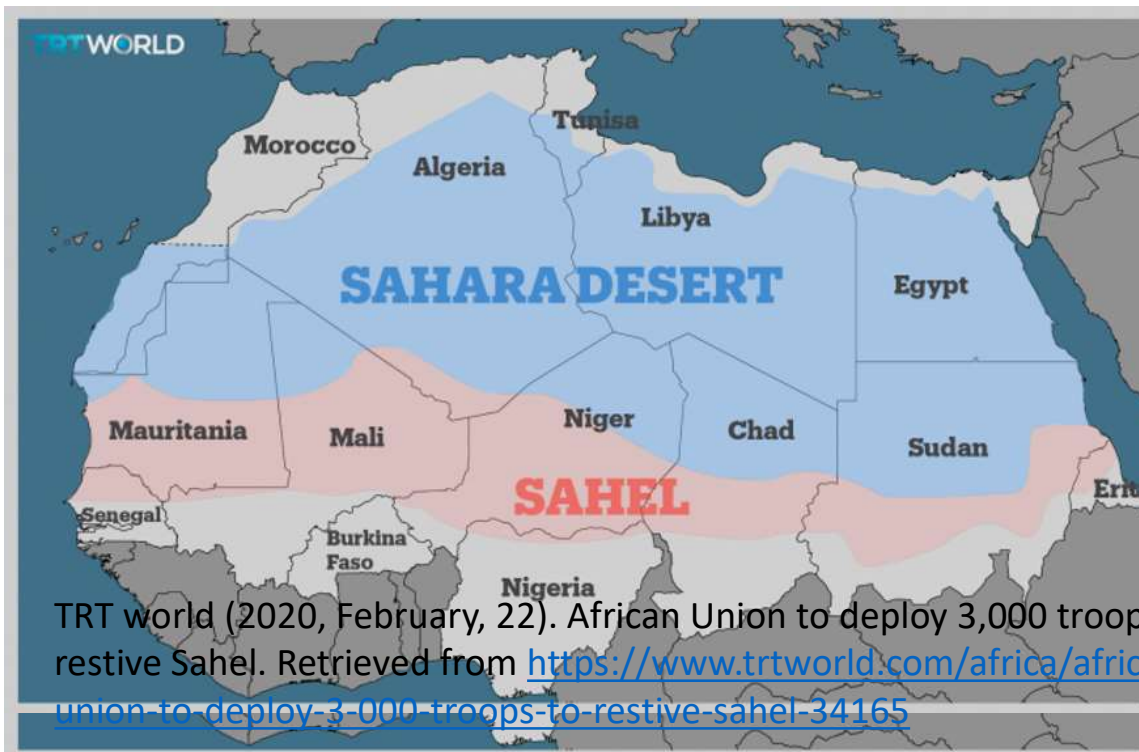
# Mauritania

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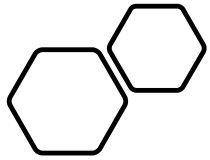
- Located in Northwestern Africa
- The capital is Nouakchott
- Population is mixed “Arab-berber” and “black Africans”
- It is largely a desert country
- It was colonized by France
- Its official language is Arabic, but French is also widely spoken.
- Islam is the official religion and 99.1% are Muslims



# Economy of Mauritania



- Sahel Region – livestock raising, agriculture, crafts and petty trading
- Sahara region – developing export economy from iron ore and copper
- Since the severe drought in the 1970s, the country depends on imported food to feed its citizens
- Mineral wealth includes iron ores, copper and gypsum
- It is one of Africa’s newest oil producers



# Issues in Contemporary Mauritania



SLAVERY



POLITICAL  
INSTABILITY



INTERNATIONAL  
AID



CLIMATE  
CHANGE



GLOBALIZATION.



## Slavery in Mauritania

- The persistence of slavery is a sensitive issue.
- Slavery was abolished by the French during the colonial era, but it has persisted
- In 1981, it was the last country in the world to make slavery illegal
- In 2007, it was criminalized.

# Slavery in Mauritania

- In 2018, a report from “*The Guardian*” showed that slavery is ongoing in Mauritania. (Kousmate, 2018)
- Colorism / racism – dark skinned citizens are slaves of light skinned citizens.
- Local rights groups estimate that up to 20% of the population are enslaved, with one in two Haratines forced to work on farms or in homes with no possibility of freedom, education or pay. (Kousmate, 2018)

## Personal Accounts from freed slaves

- Fatimatou and her daughter Mbarka, , were slaves to a family in the Aleg region, roughly 250km from the capital, Nouakchott. “They called me ‘Fatma the servant’: I looked after the cattle, prepared food, and fetched water from the well,” “I lost two babies to this family because they prevented me from taking care of my own children. I was forced to work when I had just given birth.”
- Fatimatou was freed with her children in the early **1990s** by the organization SOS Slaves. Today, she lives with her family in one of Nouakchott’s working-class neighborhoods.(Kousmate 2018)

**Kousmate, S. (2018, June 8). The unspoken truth about slavery in Mauritania. The Guardian. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/jun/08/the-unspeakable-truth-about-slavery-in-mauritania>**



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## Personal accounts from freed slaves

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- Mabrouka, 20, was a child when she was taken from her mother, also a slave, to serve with a family in the south-western Rosso area.
- Around the age of 11, when she was cooking for her masters, she was badly burned on her left arm. She still suffers from the pain.
- Mabrouka was 14 when she was freed in **2011**, but was never able to go to school. She got married at the age of 16 and now the mother of 2 children (Kousmate 2018)



**Kousmate, S. (2018, June 8). The unspoken truth about slavery in Mauritania. The Guardian. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/jun/08/the-unspeakable-truth-about-slavery-in-mauritania>**

# Conclusion

- Slavery truly exists in Mauritania where Afro Mauritians are slaves to their Arab Berber masters.
- Efforts of international organizations to end this inhumane act has proven futile due to the government's denial of this existing problem.
- Members of the *Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement (IRA)* hope to get rid of the majority Arab Berber government in the next national election. Maybe by having majority Haratines in government, they will be able to completely eradicate this act of modern day slavery.

# REFERENCES

Kousmate, S. (2018, June 8). The unspoken truth about slavery in Mauritania. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/jun/08/the-unspeakable-truth-about-slavery-in-mauritania>