

# Trans-saharan trade

[Parts of the World](#), [Africa](#)



Trans-Saharan Trade Eric J. Robledo History111 Heather Thornton August 12, 2012 Trans-Saharan Trade During the eighth century until the late sixteenth century, one trade route captivated everyone involved from the Mediterranean to the Africa's. The route, which not only attracted traders, did much more than just trade. This route not only was an economical boost for everyone, but it also connected the West African people with the Mediterranean people as well. By opening up a new world for both people to trade for goods that brought them riches, it was the African goods such as Ivory and gold that sought many people to start trading on these routes. The Trans-Saharan Trade was a very important trade route that ran across the Sahara between the Mediterranean countries and West Africa. In early Trans-Saharan trade, small trade routes around the Nile Valley were being utilized throughout the millennia, while travels across the Sahara prior to the domestication of the camel were difficult. Camels were preferred method of travel due to the fact that they could travel without food or water for weeks. When camels were introduced to the trade aspect, the trades were conducted by caravans of camels that were able to carry up to five hundred pounds and as far as twenty-five miles a day and were able to go days without drinking water. The average size was a thousand camels per caravan, but had been as many as twelve thousand. Camels proved more efficient for desert transportation than horses or oxen, and the use of this beast to carry heavy and bulky freight not only brought economic and social change to Africa but also affected the development of world commerce. The survival of a caravan would be precarious and rely on careful coordination. Runners would be sent ahead to oasis so that water could be shipped out to

the caravan when it was still several days away, as the caravans could not carry enough with them to make the full journey. Although the Trans-Saharan-Trade was famous for all the trades of goods, its steady growth had many important effects on West Africa. Many commodities were being seized on the trans-Saharan trade. Goods such as textiles, silks, beads, ceramic, ornamental weapons, and utensils would be traded for gold, ivory, woods, and agriculture products. The main commodity for this trade was gold. Gold was one of the most sought out elements in the trade. This precious metal could be utilized for the making of many goods not just trade itself. Parts of modern day Senegal, Nigeria, and Ghana contained rich veins of gold. It is estimated that by the eleventh century, nine tons were exported to Europe annually. A large percentage of this metal went to Egypt, from there had been carried down the Red Sea and India to pay for spices and silks demanded by Mediterranean commerce. African gold linked to the entire world exclusive the western Hemisphere. The second most valuable export was slaves. There was a high demand for household slaves in Muslim cities of North Africa, southern Europe, and southwestern Asia. The trans-Saharan trade route also offered African slaves for household slaves, mining slaves, and military service for the Muslims. With a high death toll for the life of a slave, the trade route continued to thrive for the ever-constant need of slaves throughout Africa, the Middle, East, and Europe. The stimulation of urban centers in West Africa can also be linked to the importance of the trans-Saharan trade route. Wealthy slave trading families that had gained their wealth through the trans-Saharan trade route began living between Savanna and the Sahara. They were considered the liaisons for the miners

from the south and the northern Muslim merchants. Muslim traders then began living in these cities that were located on the Mediterranean Sea and began sharing Muslim trades and crafts with the population of Africa. It was estimated that the total number of blacks enslaved was more than four million over an 850-year period. One thing that enabled Africa during the Trans-Saharan trade was the religion of Islam. The introduction of Islam to West African society was the most influential consequence of the Trans-Saharan. Militant Almoravids began preaching the Islam to the rulers of Ghana, Mali, Songhai, and Kanem-Bornu. Wanting to protect their kingdoms as well as admiring Muslim administration techniques, they accepted Islamic conversion. Converting to the Islamic culture, Africans began learning new and sophisticated ways of building up their country. Manufacturing bricks for buildings such as Mosque and royal places enabled them to correspond with Muslim architects, theologians, and other intellectuals, who advised them on statecraft and religion. The expansion of Islam from the Red Sea onto the Horn of Africa represented the third direction of Islamic growth. Utilizing these ports on the Red Sea, maritime trade carried the Prophet's teachings to East Africa and the Indian Ocean. Overall, Islamic religion and traditions played a major role in preserving Africa as whom they are today. Islam began thriving through Africa through the trans-Sahara trade route and through the combination of Muslims living in the cities of Africa. They figured out how to improvise on what separated them as cultures and made it one. In conclusion, the trans-Saharan Trade route connected East and West Africa. This allowed for increased economic development and the spread of Islam and other practices to the African nation. This bridging of cultures

unified the continent and established a new continent with a thriving market and potential for growth. Bibliography Boddy-Evans, Alistair. " Trade Across the Sahara." About. com Guide. The New York Times Company. 2012.

<http://africanhistory.about.com/od/kingdoms/ss/SaharaTradeRoutes.htm> (accessed August 05, 2012). McKay, John P. A History of World Societies. 8th. Vol. I: To 1715. New York, New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 2009.

----- [ 1 ]. McKay, John P. A History of World Societies. 8th. Vol. I: To 1715. New York, New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 2009. (pg 235) [ 2 ]. Ibid (pg 235) [ 3 ]. Ibid (pg 235) [ 4 ]. <http://africanhistory.about.com> [ 5 ]. McKay, John P. A History of World Societies. 8th. Vol. I: To 1715. New York, New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 2009. (pg 236) [ 6 ]. Ibid (pg 236) [ 7 ]. Ibid (pg 236) [ 8 ]. Ibid (pg 236) [ 9 ]. McKay, John P. A History of World Societies. 8th. Vol. I: To 1715. New York, New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 2009. (pg 237) [ 10 ]. Ibid (pg 238) [ 11 ]. Ibid (pg 238) [ 12 ]. Ibid (pg 238)