



# Kingdom of Morocco

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This essay focuses on the political, economic, and cultural history of Morocco. It was written for the participants in Stanford Travel/Study's trip, Kingdom of Morocco, March 16-29, 2018.

I begin with a section on the Roman Empire (509 BCE-476 CE) – how the Romans built their empire, how they created wealth in conquered regions and transferred much of it to Rome, and why the Roman Empire declined and fell. The second section of this essay is concerned with the Berber empires in Morocco (11<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries) – their bases, sources of wealth, decline, and legacies.

I turn next to an analysis of Trans-Saharan trade between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. I examine the structure of Trans-Saharan trade (gold-for-salt), why that trade was strategically important in North and West Africa, and why the trade declined precipitously in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. I conclude with a look at Alawite Morocco (1669-present), discussing how France colonized Morocco (1912-1956), how recent Moroccan kings have preserved political power, and why Morocco is poor. A time line, a bibliography, and a description of sites that I visited in Morocco are appended.

## **The Roman Empire (509 BCE-476 CE)**

**Origins of Rome and the Roman Republic.** The legendary founding of Rome occurred in the mid-8<sup>th</sup> century BCE, when Romulus killed his twin brother, Remus, and established the city of Rome. For several centuries, the Latin-speaking city struggled to survive but gradually expanded by defeating its Etruscan neighbors in central and northern Italy. By the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE, Rome had gained control of the entire Italian peninsula south of the Po River by forming alliances with small Italian kingdoms and by taking over the Greek city-states in southern Italy. The Romans defeated Hannibal of Carthage in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE and gained Sicily, Sardinia, and coastal Iberia.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roman\\_conquest\\_of\\_Italy.PNG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roman_conquest_of_Italy.PNG)

### *The Expansion of the Roman Empire In Italy – 500-218 BCE*

Rome conquered Gaul (modern France) in two parts –  
 Provence in 121 BCE, and central and northern Gaul in 50 BCE

(following Julius Caesar's eight-year campaign). The Roman Empire expanded into Greece in the first century BCE, and Gnaeus Pompey conquered Asia Minor (modern Turkey) and Syria, including Jerusalem, by defeating the Seleucid Hellenes (Macedonians) in 64-62 BCE. Between 62 and 50 BCE, Pompey, Caesar, and Marcus Crassus ruled jointly as the First Triumvirate. Caesar then marched his conquering army back from Gaul, took Rome, and became dictator (49-44 BCE) until he was murdered.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galea\\_\(helmet\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galea_(helmet))

*Militaristic Ethos in Roman Administration –  
Decorated Roman Officer's Helmet (Galea)*

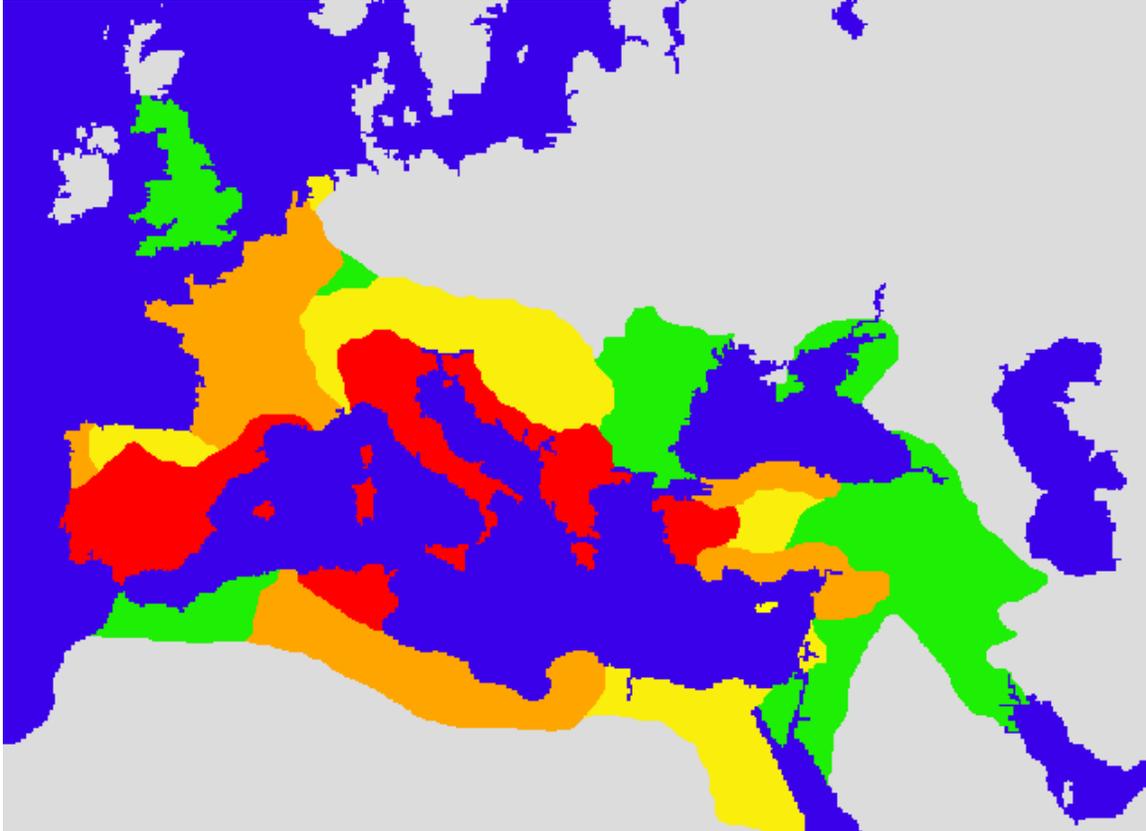
Octavian (Caesar's adopted son), Mark Antony, and Aemilius Lepidus ruled jointly and divided the empire under the Second Triumvirate (44-31 BCE). While Octavian took firm control in the west, Antony dallied with Cleopatra (the pharaoh of Egypt) in the east. The formation of the Mediterranean heart of the Roman Empire was completed in 31-30 BCE, when Octavian defeated Cleopatra and Antony at the Battle of Actium and captured Egypt from the Ptolemaic Hellenes. In 27 BCE, Octavian formed the Roman Principate, changed his name to Augustus, and declared himself the first Roman emperor.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cleopatra\\_Tetradrachm\\_Antiochia.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cleopatra_Tetradrachm_Antiochia.jpg)>

*Cleopatra and Mark Antony, Two Sides of the Same Coin –  
Silver Tetradrachm Struck At the Antioch Mint, 36 BCE*

**Expansion and Consolidation under Imperial Rome.** The expansion of the Roman Empire continued apace under Emperor Augustus (ruled 27 BCE-14 CE). His strategy was to expand the empire to its natural frontiers – rivers in the north and east, the Atlantic Ocean to the west, and the Sahara Desert in the south. To reach the Danube River in the northeast, Augustus ordered his army to conquer the northern Balkan tribes. To fill in a salient running from the Rhine River to the Alps, the Romans suppressed the Alpine tribes. In the east, the empire already extended to the Euphrates River, and Augustus chose not to fight the Parthian (Persian) Empire across that boundary.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roman\\_Empire.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roman_Empire.png)>

*The Roman Empire under Augustus, 14 CE (Red, Tan, and Yellow)*

Augustus then advised his successors to defend the Roman Empire at its natural frontiers and not to extend the empire further. But Claudius (ruled 41-54), seeking prestige, conquered Britain in 43, although Rome reaped no net economic benefit. Trajan (ruled 98-117) annexed Dacia (modern Romania), across the Danube, in 106 and Armenia and northern Mesopotamia (modern Iraq) in 114.

But his war with Parthia was fruitless, and the Euphrates River continued to be Rome's eastern border in the Levant.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Roman\\_Empire\\_Trajan\\_117AD.png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Roman_Empire_Trajan_117AD.png)

### *The Roman Empire At Its Peak, 117 CE*

Hadrian (ruled 117-138) consolidated the Roman Empire with defensive fortifications to fill gaps in the natural frontiers. Across northern Britain, he built Hadrian's Wall, a 75-mile-long, stone barrier. To provide a defensive barrier between the Rhine and Danube Rivers, Hadrian constructed a 350-mile-long, timber palisade across the German frontier.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hadrian%27s\\_wall\\_at\\_Greenhead\\_Lough.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hadrian%27s_wall_at_Greenhead_Lough.jpg)>

### *Hadrian's Wall At Greenhead Lough, Northern England*

During the *pax Romana* in the 1<sup>st</sup>-mid-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries, political stability – and the effective suppression of land-based thievery and maritime piracy – encouraged the development of agriculture and trade. Migrations of Italian ex-soldier-settlers to northern Africa, Iberia, and Gaul eased population pressures in Italy and spurred agricultural expansion in the western provinces. Agricultural taxation funded monument building in Rome – fora and palaces to

glorify emperors and colosseum and baths to mollify plebians. The most significant and long-lasting of these monuments was the Roman Colosseum, opened by Emperor Titus in 80.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at*  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roma06\(js\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roma06(js).jpg)>

*Bread and Circuses in the Roman Empire –  
The Colosseum (Flavian Amphitheater), 80 CE*

**Sources of Wealth – Agriculture.** Agriculture – producing cereals, olives, grapes, and animal products – was the main source of wealth in the Roman Empire. Most farms were small, and even the larger farms consisted of many fragmented plots. Much of the

agricultural land in the Roman Empire was farmed by private owner-operators – mostly smallholders but including some larger farmers. Tenant farmers provided labor on the aristocratic large estates and on the vast imperial land-holdings, confiscated when Rome annexed new provinces.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at*  
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:M%C3%A4hmaschine.jpg>>

*Harvesting in Roman Agriculture –  
Bas Relief On Wall in Buzanoy, Belgium*

The market for rural labor functioned well, as evidenced by the common use of employment contracts for free workers. Some

slave estates existed, but they were largely confined to central and southern Italy, Sicily, and Tripolitania (modern northwestern Libya) and never provided a dominant share of agricultural production in most of the Roman Empire. Agricultural profitability arose from intensification (greater labor use and shorter fallow periods) and specialization (the introduction of cash crops and better crop combinations). The Romans did not expand agriculture much by introducing improved agricultural technologies or new crops.

Most agricultural expansion occurred in the newly developed west (and in Egypt), not in the previously settled east. Wheat was grown in northern Africa, Egypt, northern Gaul, and southern Britain, olives were produced in Iberia and northern Africa, and vineyards were planted in southern Gaul and Iberia. The colonization of the western provinces with former Roman soldiers transferred manpower, skills, and capital to newly opened lands.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Western\\_Roman\\_Empire\\_395\\_Tribes.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Western_Roman_Empire_395_Tribes.png)

## *Agricultural Wealth – Concentrated in the Western Roman Empire*

Public investments in irrigation and transportation encouraged greater agricultural production. Agricultural taxation consisted of land taxes (*tributum soli*) and head taxes (*tributum capitis*) that were paid in kind or in cash and amounted to one-tenth to one-fifth of the value of farm production. Those taxes transferred most agricultural surpluses from smallholders and

tenants and left many of them in dire poverty. Agriculture thus produced vast wealth for Rome's aristocracy but not for many of the empire's farmers.

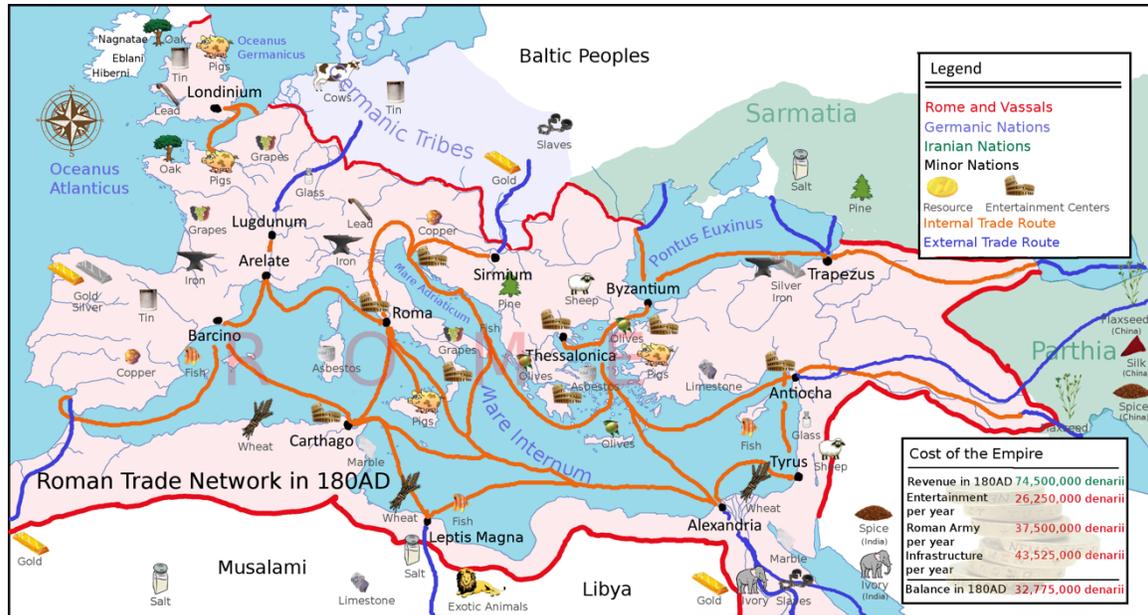


Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ancient\\_Rome\\_\(cropped\).JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ancient_Rome_(cropped).JPG)>

*Upper Class Roman Citizens –  
Portrayed By Albert Kretschmer, Royal Court Theatre, Berlin*

**Sources of Wealth – Foreign Trade.** The gains from foreign trade were only a minor source of wealth in the Roman Empire. The high costs of land trade reduced traded volumes, especially in bulk commodities like grain and timber, and led to

trade by sea where possible. The Roman Empire is renowned for its roads, but it was less costly to ship wheat to Rome by sea from Egypt than by land from southern Italy. Rome levied a 25 percent tariff (*tetarte*) on imports into the empire. The collection of trade taxes was strongly enforced, and tariff revenues went into imperial coffers. Rome encouraged private participation in trading, financing, processing, and provisioning and protecting trade caravans. Roman governments rarely intervened militarily to promote or control foreign trade. Decisions to expand and defend the empire did not depend on foreign trade. Imperial policy promoted the key port cities, including Ostia (the port for Rome), Alexandria (Egypt), Antioch (Syria), and Carthage (North Africa).

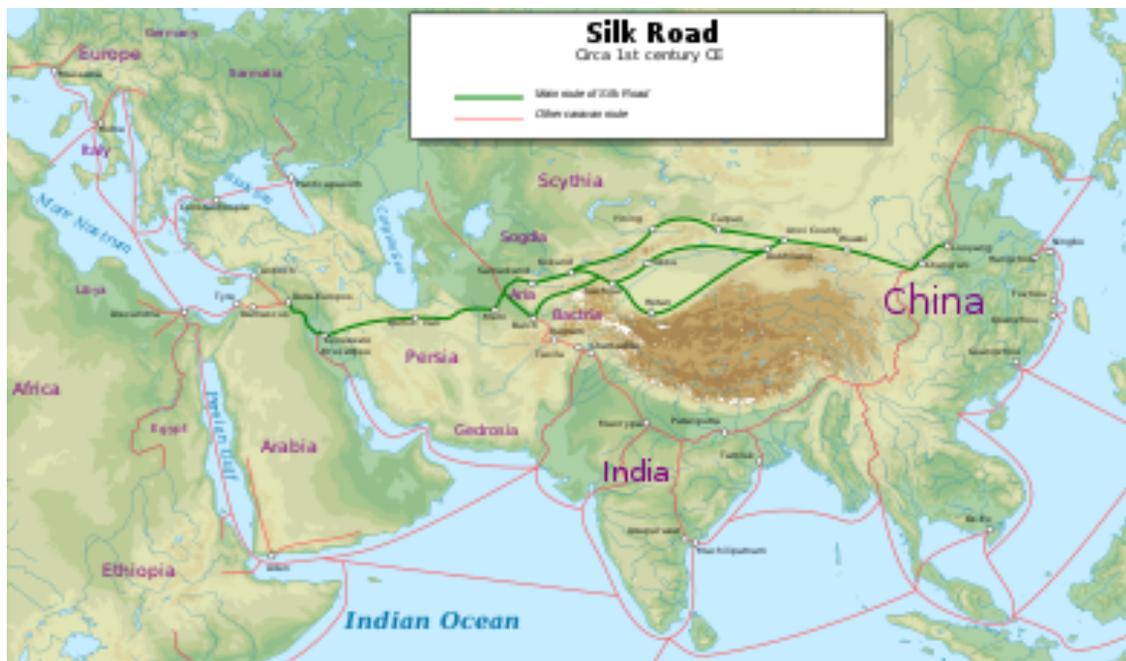


Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Europe\\_180ad\\_roman\\_trade\\_map.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Europe_180ad_roman_trade_map.png)

### *Roman Trade Routes and Ports, 180 CE*

Rome imported five “essential luxuries,” mostly consumed by the aristocracy. Pepper (along with ginger, cloves, and cinnamon) came to Rome by sea and land on the Spice Route from India and the East Indies. Silk (plus ginger, porcelain, and cinnamon) moved along the Silk Road from China, mostly by land to Antioch. Ivory (plus gold and slaves) was transported on the Trans-Saharan Route on dromedary camels introduced from Arabia by the Romans. Frankincense and myrrh moved on the Incense Road from South Arabia via Petra (in modern Jordan) and

Alexandria to Rome to provide religious and funerary incense and ingredients for perfumes and medicines. Amber (along with timber and fish) went on the Amber Route from the German Baltic across the Alps to Rome. To pay for those luxuries, Rome exported gold, silver, wine, glassware, pottery and textiles. Foreign trade thus sated the rich but provided limited wealth for Rome.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Silk\\_Road\\_in\\_the\\_I\\_century\\_AD\\_-\\_en.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Silk_Road_in_the_I_century_AD_-_en.svg)

*The Silk Road –  
Linking the Roman and Han Chinese Empires, 1<sup>st</sup> c. BCE-3<sup>rd</sup> c. CE*

**Sources of Wealth – Foreign Conquest.** The Roman Empire grew between the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE and the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE until the Mediterranean Sea became a Roman lake. Initially, Rome expanded to defeat its foreign enemies and control its natural frontiers. Rome later settled former soldiers in provincial colonies to develop an agricultural tax base. Julius Caesar founded 30 settler colonies in new Roman provinces and Augustus added 75 more.

Political stability brought by the *Pax Romana* led to economic prosperity in the provinces but only modest population growth, because most of the new wealth was transferred to Rome. Throughout the empire, provincial cities collected taxes, maintained law and order, and recruited soldiers for Rome. The city governments also paid, fed, clothed, and housed Roman legionnaires and provided them with transportation and equipment. The cities further maintained public buildings, baths, and aqueducts and put on religious festivals.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hadrian%27s\\_villa\\_near\\_Tivoli\\_366.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hadrian%27s_villa_near_Tivoli_366.JPG)>

*Emperor Hadrian's Villa On 200 Acres Near Tivoli –  
The Rich Benefited Most from Roman Conquest*

Imperial Rome followed three different models in governing, developing, and taxing its new territories. Each of the three models was tailored to the special political and economic conditions of the conquered regions. In the eastern Mediterranean, Rome sought to pacify the areas formerly ruled by Seleucid Hellenes, including the Levant. Consequently, they preserved the advanced Greek culture, ruled indirectly through existing local governments, and taxed enough to pay provincial expenses

(including Roman troops) and to provide modest transfers to Rome. Roman occupation had little cultural impact in the Levant. Greek remained the language of government, the elite, and the cities, and Syriac (a Semitic language related to Aramaic) and other local languages were spoken in the countryside.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at*  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roman\\_Theatre\\_in\\_Bosra.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roman_Theatre_in_Bosra.jpg)>

### *Rome Pacified the Greek East – Roman Theater In Bosra, Syria*

In the western Mediterranean and northern Africa (except Egypt), Rome's strategy was to settle Roman ex-soldiers, introduce Roman culture and direct Roman rule, invest in irrigation to

expand agriculture, and tax agriculture heavily to provide food and revenues for Rome and peninsular Italy. Roman governors in the western provinces developed an urban elite and introduced Roman culture, notably imperial ideology based on the capitoline triad of Roman gods – Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at*  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pont\\_du\\_Gard\\_BLS.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pont_du_Gard_BLS.jpg)>

*Rome Developed and Taxed the West –  
Pont du Gard, Roman Aqueduct Near Nimes, Provence, France*

In Egypt, Rome preserved the Egyptian culture, ruled the province as an imperial reserve, introduced improved water wheels and threshers to enhance agricultural productivity, and taxed Nile agriculture highly to transfer food to Rome. The Roman officials in Egypt were primarily interested in transferring resources and

wheat to Rome, and they made little attempt to influence Egyptian culture other than to persecute Coptic Christianity.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Trajan\\_on\\_the\\_Roman\\_Mammisi\\_at\\_Dendera,\\_Egypt.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Trajan_on_the_Roman_Mammisi_at_Dendera,_Egypt.jpg)>

*Rome Invested In and Heavily Taxed Egypt – Emperor Trajan Making Offerings To Egyptian Gods, Dendera Temple, Egypt*

Within the Roman Empire, the locus of economic productivity and power shifted twice – from the Greek-speaking east to Italy (in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE) and from Italy to the

expanding western provinces (during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE). Near the end of the Roman era, the Iberian peninsula was one of the empire's most prosperous regions, producing wine, olive oil, and minerals (gold, silver, and copper).

Political power also shifted away from Rome and peninsular Italy as the empire matured. The Roman Senate became dominated by senators from the provinces. In the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century, several emperors were natives of Roman provinces – Septimius Severus (ruled 193-211) and Caracalla (ruled 211-217) were from Leptis Magna in Tripolitania (modern Libya), and Marcus Aurelius (Elagabalus) (ruled 218-222) and Alexander Severus (ruled 222-225) were from Syria.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Septimius\\_Severus\\_Glyptothek\\_Munich\\_357.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Septimius_Severus_Glyptothek_Munich_357.jpg)>

*Septimius Severus (ruled 193-211), Native of Leptis Magna in Tripolitania (Libya) – Rome Encouraged Ethnic Minorities*

**Why the Roman Empire Declined and Fell.** The Roman Empire began to decline in the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century, divided in half in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century, and the western part, centered in Rome, splintered and fell in the 5<sup>th</sup> century (476). The eastern half, centered in Constantinople, became the Byzantine Empire and succumbed to Turkish invaders in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century (1453).

Why did the Roman Empire divide and fall? Edward Gibbon, the 18<sup>th</sup> century British historian, argued that the loss of individual liberty eroded the Romans' will to resist invasion and that the *pax Romana* led to military indiscipline. These morale influences can be reinterpreted as parts of a larger process of internal decay and foreign invasion.

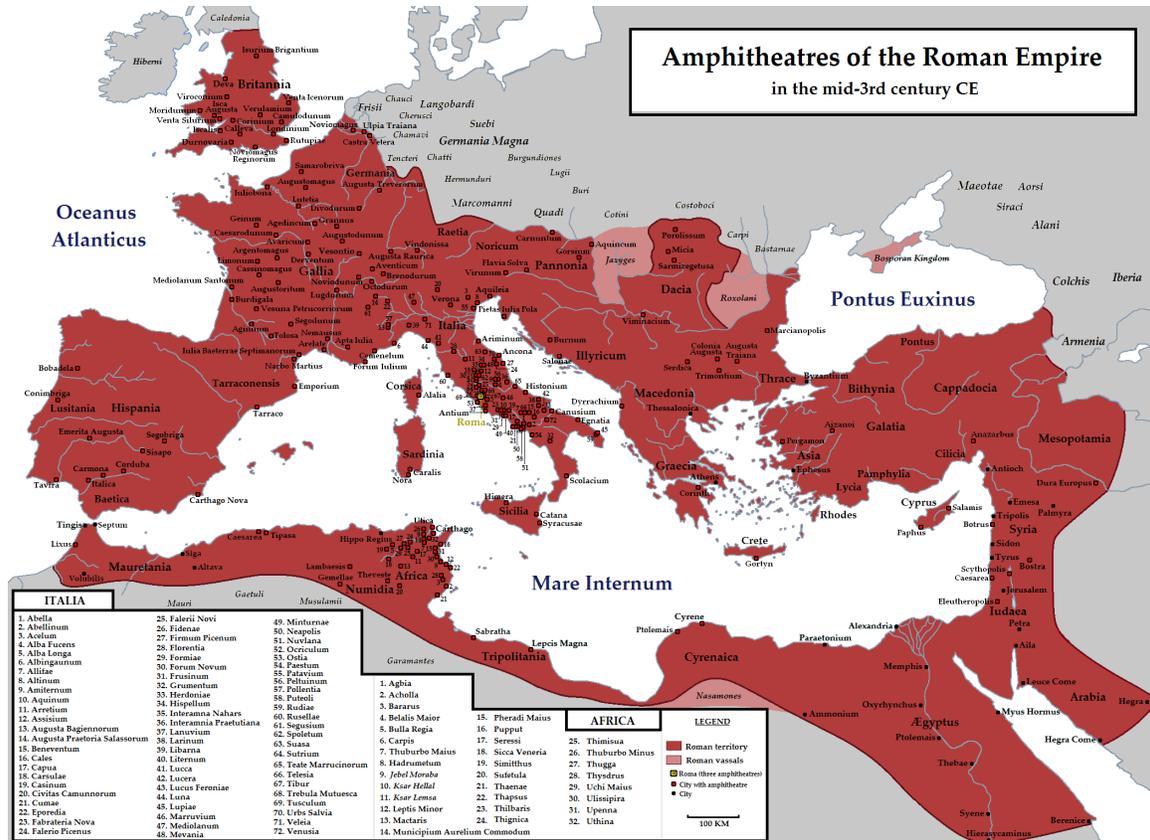
Internal decay resulted from extravagant aristocratic spending and the over-taxing of provincial agriculture. Poor farmers and urban plebeians resented the rising income inequality. Provincial residents opposed Roman taxation. Economic disparities created social unrest. Beginning in the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century, chronic instability of government and repeated foreign invasions undercut the political stability and security that had been the main benefits of Roman rule for the oppressed poor.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:British\\_Museum\\_Thetford\\_Hoard\\_Rings.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:British_Museum_Thetford_Hoard_Rings.jpg)>

*Gold Jewelry from the Thetford Hoard –  
The Privilege of Ruling in the Roman Empire*

At the same time, religious dissension spread and Roman officials increased the persecution of Christians, exacerbating social tensions. Tight central political control might have staved off those growing pressures. But Rome instead experienced political instability. Provincial military commanders vied for central leadership and caused imperial succession crises.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Amphi-Rome.PNG>

## 230 Amphitheatres of the Roman Empire, mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century CE – Constructed Mostly With Agricultural Taxes, Creating Instability

Political instability was coupled with a loss of military strength, especially in the Roman west. The Roman Empire lost two-thirds of its eastern field army in the disastrous Battle of Hadrianople (modern Edirne, in the European portion of Turkey) in 378, when the invading Goths annihilated the outnumbered and ill-disciplined Roman troops. Rome never recovered from the

consequent shortage of military manpower. Its myopic leaders refused to reign in Roman extravagances – food doles, monuments, public games, and rich diets – and transfer funds to the military. To keep their landed estates operating, western aristocrats substituted cash for troops, exacerbating military manpower shortages.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pompeii\\_family\\_feast\\_painting\\_Naples.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pompeii_family_feast_painting_Naples.jpg)>

*An Elite Roman Family's Meal, Pompeii, 1<sup>st</sup> century CE –  
Tax Breaks for the Rich Led to Political Instability*

Rome thus became ripe for foreign invasion. Fierce Barbarian invaders from central and northern Europe – Vandals, Huns, Anglo-Saxons, Visigoths, Franks, and Ostrogoths – took advantage of Roman military weakness, inflicted large losses on Roman armies, and dismembered the Roman Empire. During the ensuing Dark Ages and Medieval Period, Europe largely abandoned Roman technology, education, law, and long-distance trade. It took over 1200 years before any parts of Europe achieved standards of living comparable to those enjoyed by the Romans when the empire was thriving.

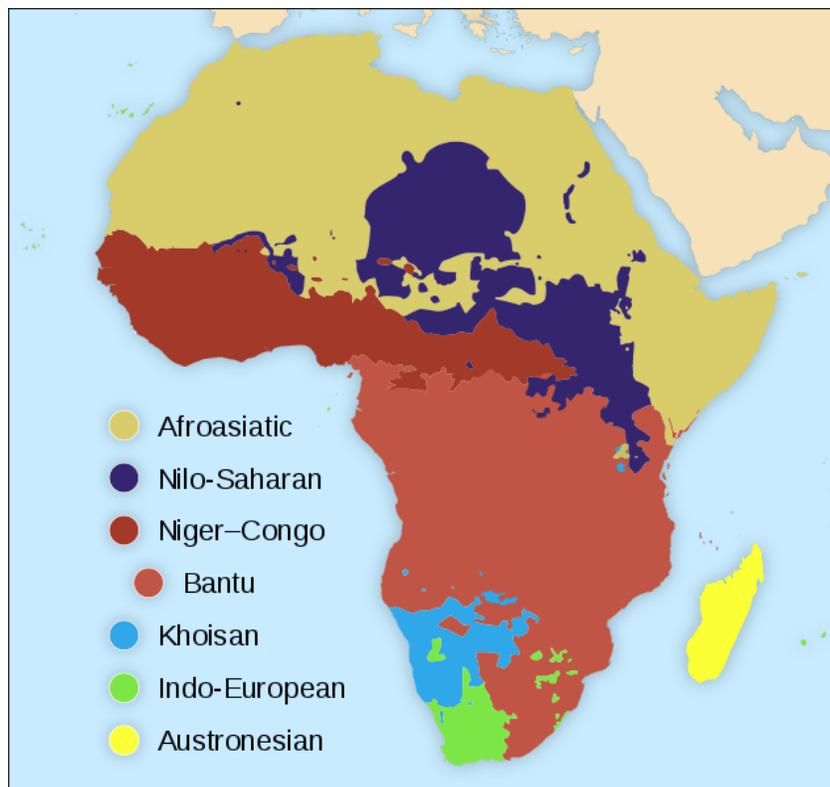


Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Europe\\_and\\_the\\_Near\\_East\\_at\\_476\\_AD.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Europe_and_the_Near_East_at_476_AD.png)>

*Western Europe and the Byzantine (Eastern Roman) Empire –  
After the Fall of the Western Roman Empire, 476*

## The Berber Empires of Morocco (11<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries)

**The Peoples of Morocco.** Contemporary historians, anthropologists, and linguists often group the early peoples of Africa into six categories – Afroasiatic, Nilo-Saharan, Black African, Khoisan, Indo-European, and Austronesian. Morocco, located in the northwest corner of Africa, was populated by Afroasiatic speakers, the first of those groups.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Map\\_of\\_African\\_language\\_families.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_African_language_families.svg)>

*Peoples of Africa Today – Afroasian, Nilo-Saharan, Black African (Niger-Congo), Khoisan, Indo-European, and Austronesian*

The Afroasian peoples lived in Africa north of and within the Sahara Desert and in northeastern Africa. That group included the Berbers of North Africa, the Tuaregs of the Sahara region (including southern Morocco), the Egyptians, and the Cushites and Semites who inhabited Ethiopia. The Nilo-Saharanans lived originally in the upper Nile River Valley (in contemporary Sudan), and by 1000 BCE they had spread westward across the Sudanic region south of the Sahara Desert to occupy the savanna grasslands as far west as contemporary Mali.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Khaira\\_arby\\_2012.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Khaira_arby_2012.jpg)>*

*Malian Singer Khaira Arby (1959-2018), The Nightingale of Timbuktu – She Had a Tuareg Father (Asiatic-speaking) and a Songhai Mother (Nilo-Saharan-speaking)*

The Black Africans – the speakers of the Niger-Congo family of languages – inhabited only West Africa, prior to the Bantu expansion across the central and southern parts of the continent that began about three millennia ago. The Khoisan – including the San, once termed Bushmen, and the Khoikhoi, formerly called Hottentots – populated the grasslands of central, eastern, and southern Africa and thus occupied the most territory in Africa 3,000 years ago. The Indo-Europeans are represented by the European white settlers who reside mainly in South Africa and Kenya. The Austronesian-speakers are the Malagasy people who emigrated to Madagascar from Indonesia thirteen centuries ago.

The early people living in Morocco were Afroasian speakers, who were later termed Berbers by the Romans (from the Latin, *barbarus*, those speaking a language other than Latin or Greek). The Berber peoples lived in a wide range of northern and western Africa – in modern Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia and elsewhere in the western and central Saharan Desert. The Romans called the Berbers of Morocco, Mauri, or Moors. Of the sub-groups of

Berbers, most Zenata and Masmuda were sedentary farmers in the plains and hills whereas most Sanhaja and Tuareg were nomadic pastoralists in arid areas.

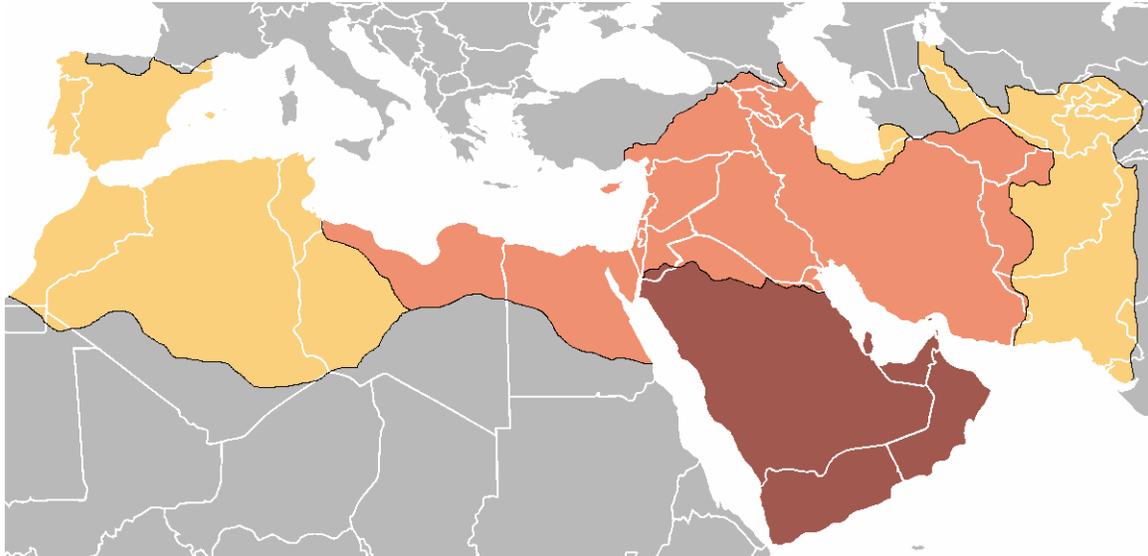


Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:COLLECTIE\\_TROPENMUSEUM\\_Dansgroep\\_uit\\_de\\_westelijke\\_Sahara\\_tijdens\\_het\\_Nationaal\\_Folkore\\_Festival\\_te\\_Marrakech\\_T\\_Mnr\\_20017655.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:COLLECTIE_TROPENMUSEUM_Dansgroep_uit_de_westelijke_Sahara_tijdens_het_Nationaal_Folkore_Festival_te_Marrakech_T_Mnr_20017655.jpg)>

*Sanhaja Berber Women – Folklore festival, Marrakech, Morocco*

In the late 7<sup>th</sup> century, the Islamic jihad of the Bedouin Arabs spread across Morocco. Most Berbers, many formerly Christian, converted to Islam, and some Berber groups became Arabized by

adopting the Arab language and customs. Berber and Arab leaders and troops led the Islamic takeover of Andalusia (southern Spain and Portugal) in the early 8<sup>th</sup> century.

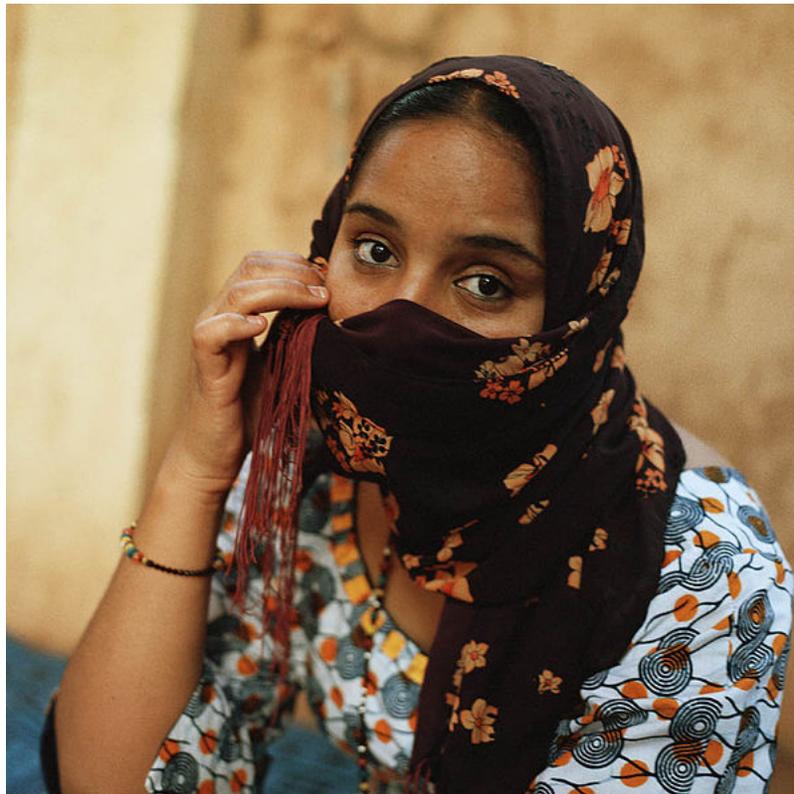


Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
< <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Age-of-caliphs.png> >

*The Muslim Arab Diaspora, 622-632 (Dark Red), 632-661 (Light Red), 661-750 (Yellow) – Most Berbers, Except the Tuaregs, Converted Rapidly To Islam*

The best known and most numerous of the Afroasian-speaking peoples in the Sahara region are the blue-veiled Tuaregs, a Berber group whose name in Arabic means the Abandoned of God but who refer to themselves as the Kel Tagelmoust (The People of the Veil). The Tuaregs are nomadic camel herders and

raiders who have controlled much of the western Sahara Desert for centuries. The Tuaregs were reluctant and slow converters to Islam, although most eventually did so at least nominally. But they refused to adopt Arab culture.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at*  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Twareg\\_woman\\_from\\_Mali,\\_2007.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Twareg_woman_from_Mali,_2007.jpg)>

*Afroasian-speaking Tuareg Woman – Northern Mali*

**The Almoravid Empire (1062-1142).** In the mid-11th century, a prince of the Sanhaja, a Berber-speaking nomadic group akin to the Tuareg, brought a religious scholar, Abdullah ibn

Yasin, to Sijilmasa, a trade center at the edge of the Sahara Desert in southern Morocco. The Sanhajas were camel breeders and traders. That scholar, or *faqih*, initiated a puritanical, revivalist, and militant Islamic religious movement. The Almoravids (meaning people of the fortified monastery) first subjugated neighboring peoples in the kingdom of Ghana to impose their strict form of Islam. They captured the important entrepôt of Awdaghost from Ghana in 1055 and thereafter controlled both ends of the western trans-Saharan trade route.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ghana\\_empire\\_map.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ghana_empire_map.png)>

*The Kingdom of Ghana At Its Greatest Territorial Extent, c. 1000*

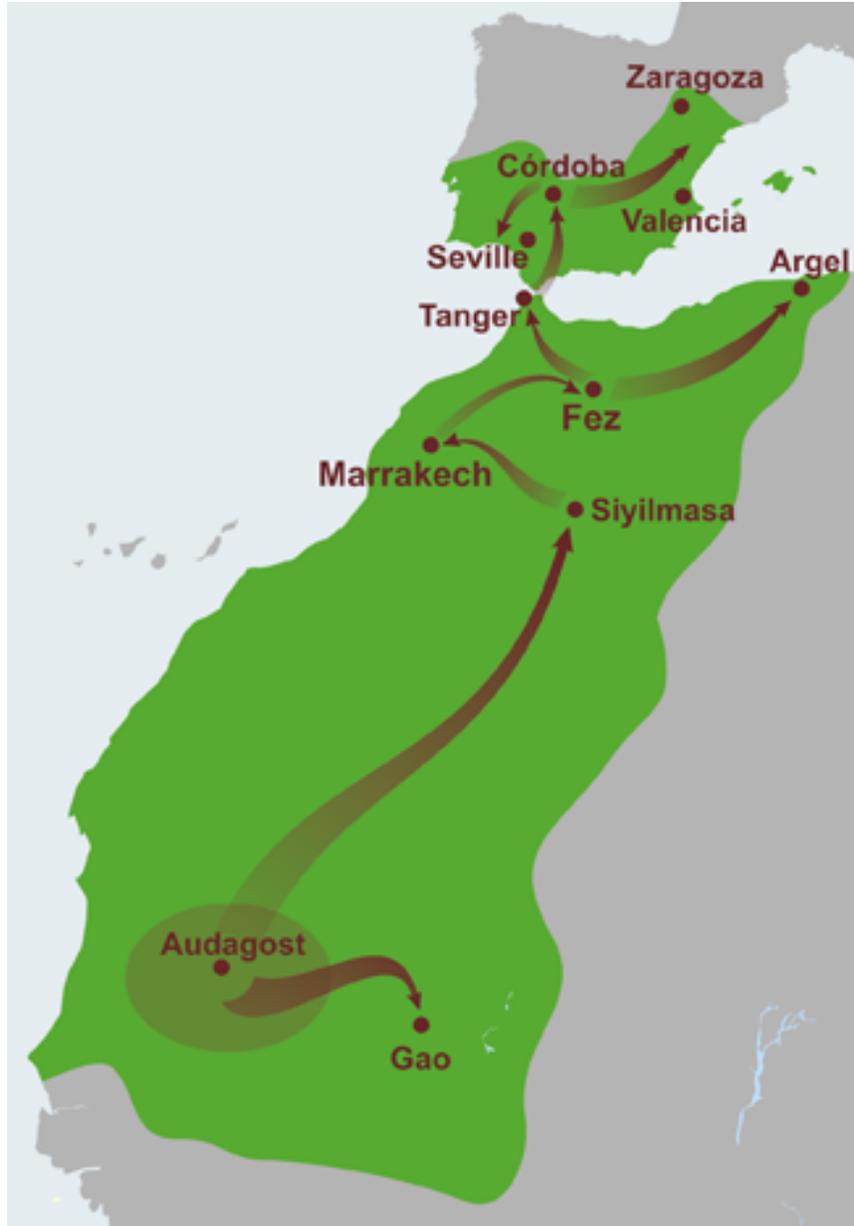
In 1061, leadership of the movement passed to Yusuf ibn Tashfin who proved to be a pious, courageous, and capable leader during his nearly half century of rule. He founded Marrakech as the Almoravid capital in 1062, conquered Fez in 1069, and constructed impressive and lasting religious monuments in both cities. The new Almoravid Empire then included Ghana in the south and Morocco in the north and controlled the major trade route across the Sahara Desert.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Yusuf\\_Ben\\_Tasfin\\_dinar\\_22562.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Yusuf_Ben_Tasfin_dinar_22562.jpg)>

*Gold Dinar Coin Issued By Yusuf ibn Tashfin (Ruled 1061-1106) –  
Expansionist Almoravid Leader*

After reunifying Morocco, Yusuf expanded the Almoravid Empire eastward across modern Algeria by 1082. The Almoravids spread northward as well, in response to an impending Christian re-conquest of Iberia, and following a series of impressive military successes, they controlled Islamic Spain and Portugal by 1103. The Sanhaja descendants of camel-breeders were astounded by the wealth of Andalusia and the booty that they appropriated there.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Almoravid\\_Empire.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Almoravid_Empire.png)>

*The Almoravid Empire At Its Greatest Territorial Extent, c. 1140*

Following Yusuf's death in 1107 at age 90, the Almoravids were no longer able to govern well. The movement lost its religious zeal, and its leaders became corrupt and decadent. After

less than a century of Almoravid power, in 1147 the Almohads, a new Islamic revivalist group, ended Almoravid rule and created a new Moroccan empire – one that included a large swath of the Sahara Desert but excluded the region south of the Sahara that had formerly housed the kingdom of Ghana.

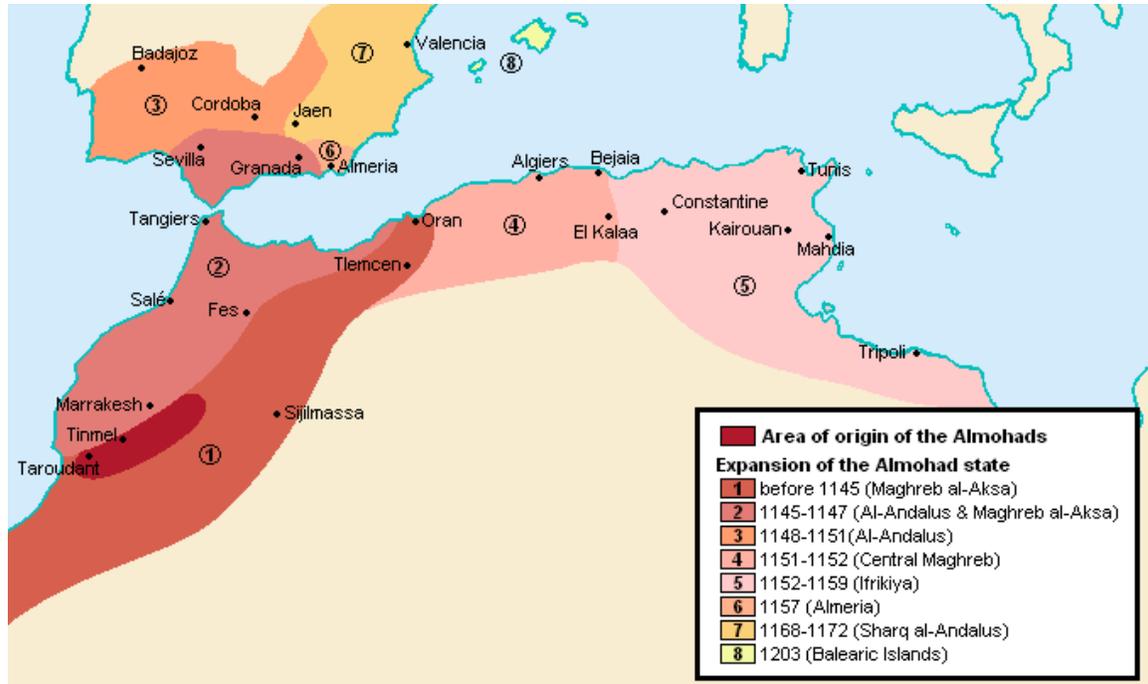


*Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Djemaa\\_el\\_Fna.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Djemaa_el_Fna.jpg)>*

*Jemaa el-Fnaa, Main Square In Modern Marrakech, Morocco –  
Former Almoravid Capital (1062-1147)*

**The Almohad Empire (1147-1269).** The Almohad (“monotheistic”) movement began in a monastery to renew Islamic zeal. Muhammad ibn Tumart, a Masmuda Berber and learned

theologian, started the reform movement about 1125 in Morocco's Atlas Mountains. In 1130, ibn Tumart died and was succeeded by Abd al-Mumim, a capable Zenata leader who forged an alliance between the sedentary Zenata and Masmuda Berbers in opposition to the nomadic Sanhajas who led the Almoravids. The Almohads won the civil war in 1147 and henceforth an Almohad Caliph ruled Morocco from Marrakech. The Almohads recovered Spain, taking Algeciras in 1145, Seville and Malaga in 1146, and Cordova and the remainder of Andalusia by 1150. The new empire expanded the former Almoravid frontier eastward to Tunis and Tripoli and administered its territories with a professional civil service largely recruited from the educated classes of Muslim Spain and Portugal.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
 <[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Almohad\\_Expansion.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Almohad_Expansion.png)>

*Expansion of the Almohad Empire, 1152-1203 –  
 Northward Into Iberia, Eastward Through Tunisia*

The Almohads excelled in architecture, building the spectacular, tall minaret towers of Kutubiyya in Marrakech and the Giralda in Seville and the great mosque of Cordoba, notable for its straight pillars and horseshoe arch.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at*  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marrakesh,\\_Morocco\\_\(8999234830\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marrakesh,_Morocco_(8999234830).jpg)>

*Kutubiyya Tower (Minaret), Marrakech –  
Constructed by the Almohad Leader, Abd al-Mumim, in 1147*

Under Almohad rule, Andalusia reached its peak of scientific and medical creativity and Muslim scholars wrote university texts that were used for centuries thereafter throughout Europe. But the Almohad rulers failed to cultivate the allegiance of the tribes they subjugated, resulting in internal weaknesses that left the empire ill-equipped to face military threats from Arab Bedouins to the east

and Spanish and Portuguese Christians to the north. In 1212, a decisive Christian victory at Las Navas de Tolosa, west of Toledo, initiated the disintegration of the Almohad Empire. The rulers splintered into tribal factions and faced succession disputes. In 1269, the Merinid Empire took over Marrakech to mark the end of the Almohad dynasty.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Battle\\_of\\_las\\_navas\\_de\\_tolosa.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Battle_of_las_navas_de_tolosa.jpg)>*

*Spanish Christian Kingdoms Defeated Almohad Morocco  
In the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa –  
19<sup>th</sup>-century Painting By Francisco de Paula Van Halen*

Thereafter, the Merinids, like the Almohads, focused on North Africa (Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia) and made no effort to regain the areas formerly controlled by the Almoravids in the southern Sahara and the West African Sudan.

**The Merinid Empire (1269-1465).** The Beni Merin were Berbers from northeast Morocco. Their successful effort to replace the discredited Almohads was not based on religious reform, and so the name of their dynasty, Merinid, is derived from their tribal name. The founder of the Merinid dynasty was Abu Yahya, a charismatic leader, religiously pious Muslim, and strong military commander. The Merinids, immediately after taking power in 1269, moved the capital of Morocco from Marrakech to Fez. They built New Fez as an administrative center, invested heavily in restoring Old Fez, and constructed the grand teaching mosque of Qarawiyyin in Fez.

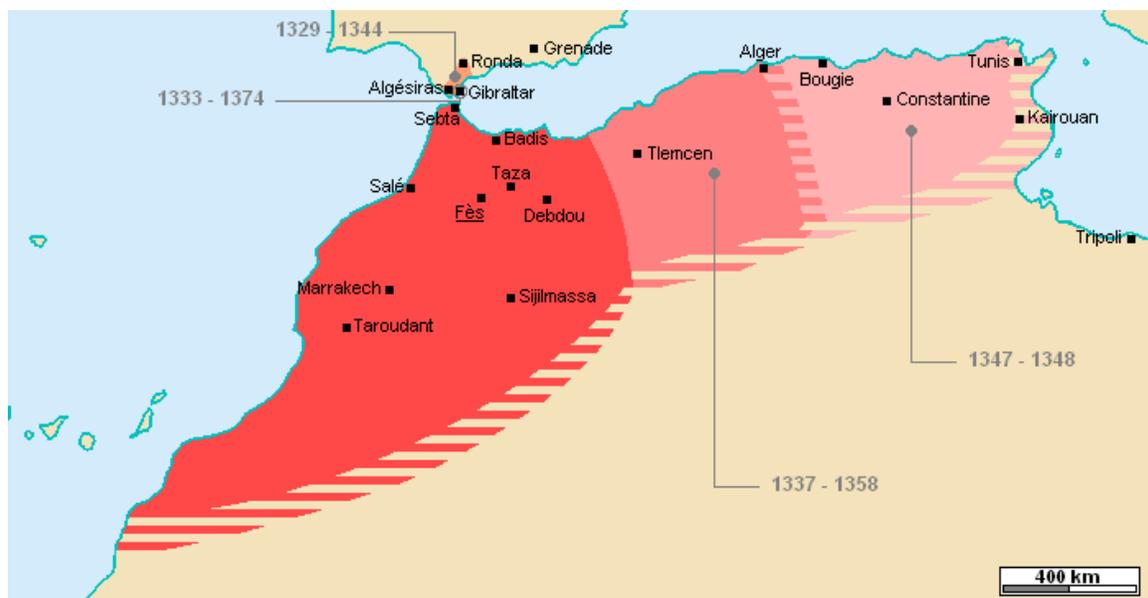


Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:University\\_of\\_Al\\_Qaraouiyine.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:University_of_Al_Qaraouiyine.jpg)>

*Former Merinid Mosque (Now the University) of Qarawiyyin, Fez*

During the first century of their rule, the Merinids attempted, unsuccessfully, to reclaim Islamic areas that had been parts of the Almoravid or Almohad Empires. Their last attempt to regain a foothold in Andalusia was thwarted when the Spanish Christians defeated the Moroccan invaders at the Battle of Tarifa in 1340. Thereafter the Merinids maintained control of Gibraltar until 1411, but the dynasty could not benefit from Andalusian wealth as its

predecessors had done. The Merinid leaders also had designs on reconquering the eastern Maghrib, and they briefly reclaimed Tunis in 1348 before losing it again to the Hafsid dynasty. Furthermore, the Merinids were unable to regain control of former Moroccan areas in and near the Sahara Desert.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Empire\\_m%C3%A9rinide\\_-\\_XIVe.PNG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Empire_m%C3%A9rinide_-_XIVe.PNG)>

### *The Merinid Empire, After the Loss of Spain and Portugal – 1269-1465*

The Merinids were vulnerable because, unlike their predecessors, they lacked religious legitimacy and were not buttressed by strong Berber tribal alliances. They tried to offset

those weaknesses by creating a civil service and a regular army of mercenaries. But in 1465, the Beni Watta Berbers finally defeated the Merinids. The Wattasid dynasty then ruled truncated Morocco for a century.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marinid\\_Tombs\\_in\\_April\\_2016\\_1.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marinid_Tombs_in_April_2016_1.jpg)>*

*Merinid Tombs – North of Old Fez, Former Merinid Capital*

**Agricultural Wealth in the Berber Empires.** Agriculture was the primary source of wealth in the Berber Empires. The traditional patterns of agriculture differed according to rainfall. In the arid zones in and around the Sahara Desert, agriculture was

based on herding camels (for milk, meat, hides, and transport) and growing dates in oases. In the areas of higher rainfall, the main crops were barley, wheat, and olives whereas sheep, goats, and cattle were raised for milk, meat, hides, and wool.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons, available at*  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Barley\\_crop.\\_Atlantic\\_coastal\\_plain\\_village,\\_Morocco\\_\(23903313218\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Barley_crop._Atlantic_coastal_plain_village,_Morocco_(23903313218).jpg)>

### *Barley Field – Atlantic Coastal Plain, Morocco*

Farming and herding were especially important in fertile Andalusia. During the rule of the Visigoths prior to the Muslim invasion, Spanish agriculture had been reduced to a basic

production system of wheat, meat, and wine. An agricultural revolution based on scientific methods accompanied the arrival of the Muslim Arabs and Berbers, leading in the 11<sup>th</sup> century to what became known as the Andalusí Agronomic School. Those agricultural scientists introduced new crops (hard (durum) wheat, sorghum, rice, sugar cane, several citrus fruits, bananas and plantains, coconut palms, watermelon, spinach, artichokes, taro, eggplant, and mangoes), improved cultivation of existing crops such as cabbage, intensified cropping rotations and the use of farm labor, and developed sophisticated irrigation systems.

Modern writers refer to this package of agricultural innovations as the “Medieval Green Revolution” because it led to significant increases in agricultural productivity. From this large increase in agricultural output and income came a steady expansion of food supplies, agricultural trade, population, urbanization, and the standard of living. Since land-taxes were assessed on the basis of productivity throughout the Berber

Empires, the agricultural improvements contributed to imperial Berber coffers as well as to farmer or herder family incomes.

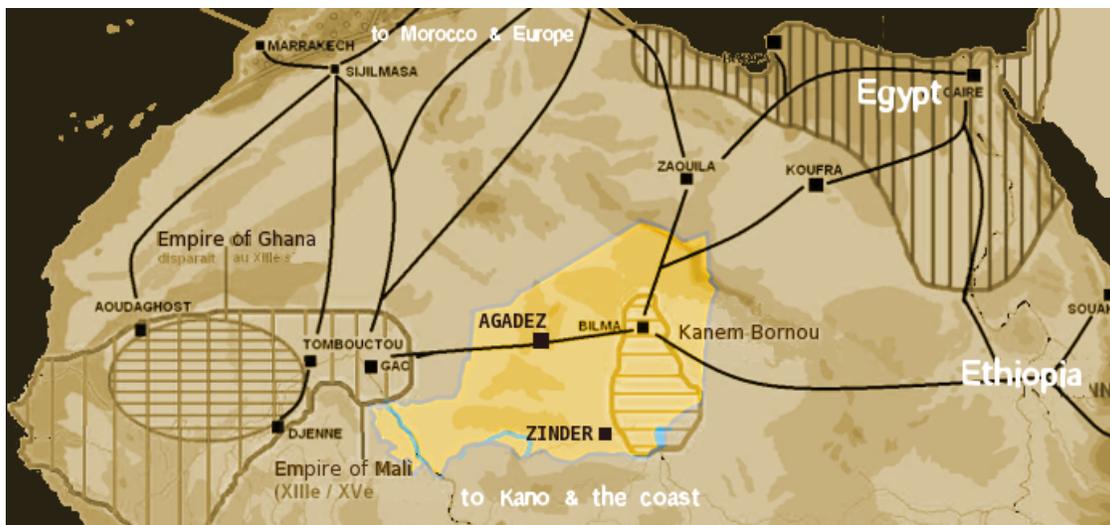


Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The\\_Albolafia\\_Water\\_Mill\\_\(10823918983\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Albolafia_Water_Mill_(10823918983).jpg)>

*The Islamic Medieval Green Revolution, 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries –  
Albolafia Water Wheel and Roman Bridge, Cordoba, Spain*

**Wealth from Foreign Trade in the Berber Empires.** The Berber empires occupied strategic positions on two major trade systems – the northern end of trans-Saharan trade routes and the western end of Mediterranean trade routes. The importance of trans-Saharan trade arose from complementary demands north and

south of the Sahara. The Berbers and Arabs in the Maghrib (north) sought gold from West African gold fields, and African peoples in the western Sudan (south) prized salt from mines in the Sahara. The Moroccans brought cloth, cowrie shells, and dates, and the West Africans bartered kola nuts, other forest products, and slaves. Moroccan towns at the northern end of that trade route benefited from access to the Arab world by Mediterranean sea-routes.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Niger\\_saharan\\_medieval\\_trade\\_routes.PNG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Niger_saharan_medieval_trade_routes.PNG)>

### *Trans-Saharan Trade Routes, c. 14<sup>th</sup> century – Moroccan Merchants Traded Saharan Salt for West African Gold*

Trade between Iberia and North Africa flourished, exchanging Spanish olive oil, dried figs, and salt from the

Balearics for the Maghrib's dates, almonds, hazelnuts, honey, salted tuna, rice, and wine. Spices, silks, and other luxuries came from Arab centers in Egypt and the Middle East, while Iberian manufacturing centers supplied high quality iron and brass as well as various mineral ores. Iberia also provided a rich array of artisanal goods, such as leather and wool goods, fine sashes, carpets, glass, pottery, and jewelry.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Oliven\\_V1.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Oliven_V1.jpg)>

*Olive Oil – Major Export from Southern Spain, Eight Centuries Ago and Today*

The Berber empires did not seek to control or monopolize Mediterranean or trans-Saharan trade but prospered from taxes

levied on vigorous merchant activity. To generate wealth for Morocco and to transfer that wealth to the state, Almoravid, Almohad, and Merinid rulers imposed a strict system of taxes on imports and exports of commodities moving through the Moroccan empire. In the absence of convincing data, economic historians guess that agriculture provided most wealth for the Moroccan people but the rulers relied heavily on taxes on foreign trade.

### **Wealth from Foreign Conquest in the Berber Empires.**

Taxes imposed by conquering Berber Muslim forces were generally light. In Muslim Spain and Portugal, citizens were subject only to a poll-tax, levied on non-Muslims (Christians and Jews) graduated by status, and a tax on cultivable land based on the productivity of the soil, paid by all land-owners. With the exception of Christian church lands, following conquest properties were generally left to their original owners. The lands of former owners who had fled to northern (Christian) Iberia also were taken over by the conquerors. The few confiscated lands were distributed to soldiers to settle as farmers, so as to expand the

revenue base of agricultural lands. Over time, taxation increased, but in the 12<sup>th</sup> century the Almoravids reduced taxation in conquered territories in Morocco and in Andalusia. However, the riches of vanquished ruling classes were confiscated as tribute and distributed as spoil to conquering forces.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mosque\\_of\\_Cordoba.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mosque_of_Cordoba.jpg)>

*Interior of the Great Mosque at Cordoba, Constructed Prior To  
the Moroccan Invasion of Spain –  
Illustrates Muslim Spanish Wealth and Creativity*

Tribute collection was centered on trading towns, including termini of the trans-Saharan trade routes and the maritime ports on the Mediterranean Sea. Foreign conquest provided an important source of wealth for the Almoravid and Almohad empires. Most

of that wealth derived from agricultural and trade taxes in Andalusia, and some came from similar taxes in the central and eastern Maghrib (modern Algeria and Tunisia). Both the Almoravids and the Almohads also appropriated much booty from their invasions of southern Iberia. Merinid wealth declined significantly from the loss of Andalusia.

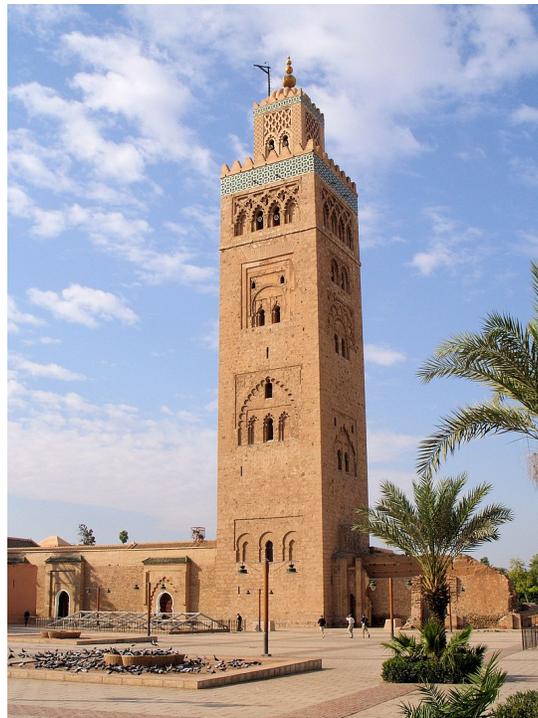


Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Almohad1200.png>

*The Moroccan Almohads Versus the Five Iberian Christian Kingdoms, c. 1200 – Portugal, Leon, Castile, Navarre, and Aragon*

**Legacy of the Berber Empires.** There are many examples of enduring influences from the spread of Islamic and Arabic

culture to Morocco and of Berber and Arab Islamic culture to Iberia and western Africa. The Islamic rulers of the Berber Empires and Moorish Spain left a rich legacy because they were generous patrons of education, science, and the arts. Under their patronage, creative Muslim architects developed a unique style of Moorish design and built monumental religious centers containing exquisite mosques, minarets, and madrasas (Islamic schools).



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marokko0112\\_\(retouched\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marokko0112_(retouched).jpg)

*The Almohad's Kutubiyya Minaret, Marrakech*

Perhaps the most profound impact came from the introduction of scientific discoveries and methods, since the Arabs were far more advanced in many fields than the European and North African Christian peoples they conquered. Islamic and Jewish scholars in the Moroccan empires, especially in Muslim Spain, made significant advances and discoveries in mathematics, medicine, physics, chemistry, botany, astronomy, geography, history, philosophy, and jurisprudence. Muslim mathematicians, for example, wrote the first texts on algebra and trigonometry and were the first to solve quadratic and cubic equations.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Al-andalus\\_229.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Al-andalus_229.png)>

*A Muslim and A Jew Playing Chess –  
Almohad Cordoba, 13th century*

Agricultural advances probably had the greatest economic and social impact, because productivity growth in agriculture increased food supplies, permitted population growth and urbanization, and generated much of the wealth in the Berber empires. Principles of agricultural science, developed in the great centers of learning in the eastern Muslim world, were applied in Andalusia to studies of soil structure, moisture, and temperature, different rotation cycles, crop improvements, and hydrological advances that revolutionized Iberian agriculture and became known later as the “Medieval Green Revolution.”



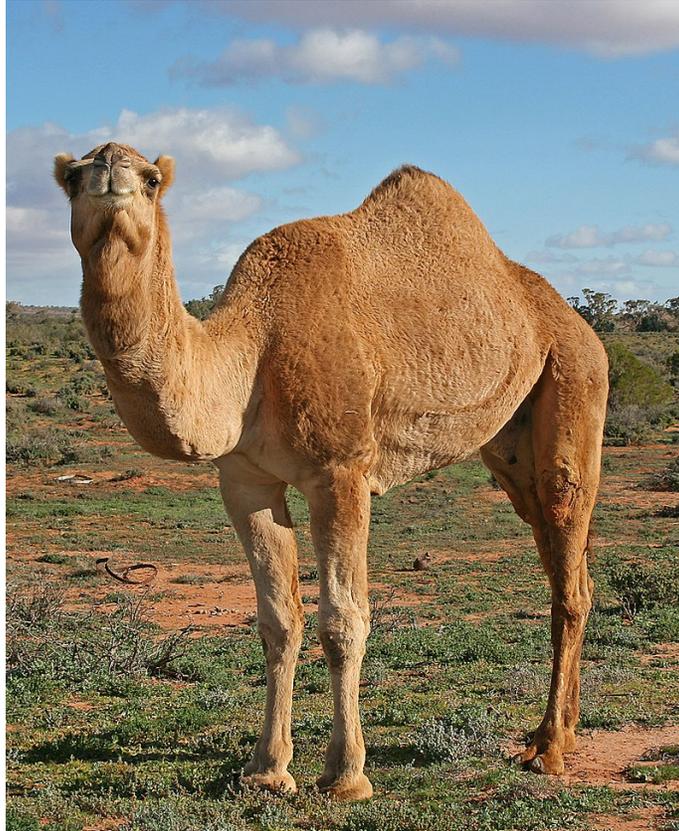
Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pavillon\\_Menarag%C3%A4rten.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pavillon_Menarag%C3%A4rten.jpg)>

*Almoravid Water Storage System, Marrakech*

## **Gold and Salt in Trans-Saharan Trade (10<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries)**

**Importance of Trans-Saharan Trade.** Four historical phases mark the more than two millennia of trans-Saharan trade, the primary source of wealth for both Mali and Songhai. The earliest evidence of trans-Saharan commerce dates to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE when Carthaginians (Phoenicians from Carthage in modern Tunisia) engaged in a small amount of horse-drawn, wheeled trade with West Africans. That first phase was of minor importance, and trade did not increase much in the period of Roman rule in North Africa (2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE-5<sup>th</sup> century CE). The Romans introduced the dromedary (one-humped) camel into the Sahara Desert from Arabia in the 4<sup>th</sup> century and greatly improved the prospects for trans-Saharan trade.

During the second phase of trans-Saharan trade, between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries, the desert caravans were camel-based and no longer used wheeled vehicles. Although commerce increased in that period, its value was moderate, reflecting the lack of large states on both ends of the trade routes.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:07.\\_Camel\\_Profile\\_near\\_Silverton,\\_NSW,\\_07.07.2007.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:07._Camel_Profile_near_Silverton,_NSW,_07.07.2007.jpg)>

### *Dromedary Camel – Caravan Beast of Burden*

The third phase, between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, was the highpoint of trans-Saharan commerce, and powerful trade-based kingdoms or empires arose on both sides of the Sahara Desert. Thereafter, in the final phase, during the 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the major trade routes shifted from land to sea. Trans-Saharan trade –

still camel-based – declined steadily before ending in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

At the peak of trans-Saharan commerce, perhaps 70,000 camels in six major caravans annually crossed the Sahara Desert. Trans-Saharan trade then formed the basis of the Berber empires in North Africa and the Sudanic kingdoms in West Africa. Berber and Arab merchants imported gold – along with slaves, kola nuts, ivory, ebony, and leather – from West Africa and re-exported much of those commodities to Europe. West African merchants imported salt and dates from the Sahara, textiles, ironware, and other manufactures from Europe or North Africa, and spices and cowrie shells from Asia – all brought across the Sahara on camel caravans by Berber or Arab traders. Some of those goods then were re-exported to forest peoples in West Africa. Intermediary trade thus was the key for large state-building on both sides of the Sahara Desert.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Caravan\\_in\\_the\\_desert.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Caravan_in_the_desert.jpg)>*

*Camel Caravan in the Sahara Desert, Morocco –  
70,000 Camels Crossed Annually at the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Peak*

**Location of Trade Routes.** The locations of the trans-Saharan trade routes depended on the availability of water in oases, the distance between oases, and the location of salt and copper deposits. The introduction in the 4<sup>th</sup> century of camels and dates revolutionized long-distance trade across the Sahara Desert. A significant desert oasis had to provide several needs for camel caravans. The most important were water and food for humans and camels. Dromedary camels could go without water for four

days and cover about 25 miles per day, fully-loaded, during that period. Trade routes thus had to have oases located no further than 100 miles from each other. Dates grew well in oases and provided food for humans and trade goods for imported grains. Camels required grazing grounds in oases.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hoggar8.jpg>>*

*Saharan Oasis – Ahaggar Mountains, Southern Algeria*

Oases also had to offer caravanserai services – lodging, provisioning, and banking – for merchants and camel drivers.

Some oases, such as Sijilmasa in southern Morocco and Walata in western Mali, developed into urban centers, evolving from watering holes into important trade and craft centers. Oases in the Sahara also were crucial to the spread of Islam. Every oasis had a mosque and religious teachers (who moved south with the traders).

During the 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries, the main trade routes ran along the western side of the Sahara – from Awdaghost or Walata in Ghana (at the southern edge of the Sahara) to Taghaza (the center for salt mining) and on to Sijilmasa (in Morocco, at the northern edge of the Sahara) and the Mediterranean coast (usually Tangier via Fez). As more goldfields were developed further east, new trade routes were opened, and the Sudanic empires shifted eastward. (See map below.)

For Mali (13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries), the main route ran from Timbuktu via Taghaza and Sijilmasa to the coast. Further to the east, the key trans-Saharan route for Songhai (15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries) went from Gao via Takedda (which produced copper), Ghat, and Ghadames to Tunis or Tripoli.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at  
 <[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Trans-Saharan\\_routes\\_early.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Trans-Saharan_routes_early.svg)>

*Location of Trans-Saharan Trade Routes and Sources of Gold in West Africa (Bambuk, Bouré, Lobi, and Ashanti) – c. 1500*

**Gold in West Africa.** West African gold was an elusive commodity. For centuries, empire-builders and traders in both

North Africa and West Africa desired to control the sources of gold, but they never were successful in achieving that goal. The gold was believed to originate from a mysterious land called Wangara, but no such land existed. Instead, the gold in West Africa came from four main production areas – Bambuk, on the upper Senegal River (in modern Senegal), Bure, on the upper Niger River (in modern Mali), Lobi, on the upper Volta River (in modern Burkina Faso), and Akan, the Ashanti region in what once was called the Gold Coast (in modern Ghana).



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Trans-Saharan\\_routes\\_early.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Trans-Saharan_routes_early.svg)

*Principal Sources of Gold in West Africa, 13<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries –  
Bambuk, Boure, Lobi, and Ashanti (From Left To Right)*

The gold occurred in placer deposits. Forest peoples living in stateless societies – not under the direct control of the Sudanic kingdoms – carried out the production of the alluvial gold by hand and jealously guarded access to their valuable natural resource.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Guinea\\_Siguiro\\_miner\\_woman.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Guinea_Siguiro_miner_woman.jpg)>

### *Panning For Gold in Guinea – Near Site of Boure Gold Deposits*

The gold-producing peoples took great pains to guard their independence. They carried out their trading activities at considerable arms' length. The local producers often engaged in “silent trade” – a form of barter without personal contact – to keep

traders away from their gold sources. Traders wishing to obtain gold would beat a drum, place piles of trade goods on a designated riverbank, and depart. The gold producers then would place amounts of gold next to each pile of trade goods, beat a drum, and depart. The traders would return. If satisfied, they would take the gold and leave. If not, they would leave and hope that the producers would return and add more gold to the bargain.

Gold output in West Africa expanded steadily throughout the main period of trans-Saharan trade (9<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries). Annual production of gold is estimated to have peaked at nine tons in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. At least two-thirds of that gold was exported out of West Africa. West Africa then provided much of the gold supply in North Africa and Europe.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pectoral,\\_Ghana,\\_Asante\\_\(Ashanti\),\\_early\\_20th\\_century\\_AD,\\_gold\\_-\\_Ethnological\\_Museum,\\_Berlin\\_-\\_DSC02269.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pectoral,_Ghana,_Asante_(Ashanti),_early_20th_century_AD,_gold_-_Ethnological_Museum,_Berlin_-_DSC02269.JPG)>

*Ashanti Gold Pectoral, Early 20<sup>th</sup> century –  
Ethnological Museum, Berlin*

The Europeans and North Africans desired West African gold to make coins for currency (along with silver coins) and to pay for luxury imports, such as silk from China and spices from Southeast Asia and India. Because craft industries at that time were more highly developed in China and India than in Europe, the European kingdoms needed specie – gold or silver – to pay for their desired luxury imports from the Orient.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Spice\\_Market,\\_Marrakech\\_\(2242330035\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Spice_Market,_Marrakech_(2242330035).jpg)>

*Spices from South India, Market In Marrakech, Morocco –  
Traded for West African Gold*

**Salt in the Sahara Desert.** Salt was the critical commodity moving southward on the trans-Saharan trade routes. From the 10<sup>th</sup> through the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, Taghaza was far and away the leading producer of salt in the western Sahara region. Earlier, Idjil, located to the west of Taghaza, had produced salt that was traded to the Kingdom of Ghana. When the Songhai army invaded Taghaza in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, its inhabitants fled and so the takeover

proved futile. Songhai then opened a new salt-mining area in Taodeni, 100 miles further south and thus closer to Timbuktu. Taodeni has produced salt to the present day. A separate salt-producing region further east was the basis of trans-Saharan trade to the Central Sudan. Bilma, sited north of Lake Chad in the central Sahara region, was the leading salt producer for the Kanem-Bornu Empire.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Salt\\_selling\\_Mopti\\_Mali.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Salt_selling_Mopti_Mali.jpg)>

*Salt Slabs and Packages, Market in Mopti, Mali –  
Produced in Taghaza and Transported by Camels to West Africa*

Salt production in Taghaza took place under extreme conditions. Ibn Battuta, the well-traveled Berber-Arab adventurer and writer, visited Taghaza during his extensive travels to West Africa in the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century and described how the salt was produced. The Massufa (Berber) desert tribe ran the operation with slave laborers. The slaves had a miserable existence and lived on dates (imported from Sijilmasa), camel meat (brought on the hoof by transient caravans), and millet (imported from the Western Sudan). Enormous slabs of rock salt were available in Taghaza. The slave laborers dug the huge salt slabs from the ground. They were so heavy – each salt slab weighed about 200 pounds – that a camel could carry only two slabs at a time. The town of Taghaza was extraordinarily bleak. There was intense heat, there were no trees, and the homes and mosque were constructed from salt slabs and covered with camel-skin roofs.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mopti\\_sel.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mopti_sel.jpg)>*

*Salt Slabs from Taodeni in the Sahara –  
Alongside the Niger Rive, Mopti, Mali*

Arab or Berber merchants brought the salt from the miserable production areas in the Sahara to the flourishing entrepôt cities, such as Timbuktu and Gao, at the southern edge of the Sahara Desert. Merchants from the Sudanic kingdoms then fulfilled the intermediary function of moving salt from the entrepôt cities to the gold-producing regions.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at*  
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bilma-Salzkarawane1.jpg>>

### *Salt Caravan With Tuareg Camel Caravan Drivers*

The salt was worth its weight in gold when it reached West Africa. Consumers desired salt to season food, preserve meat, and fulfill human nutritional needs. Salt was produced by evaporation in maritime regions in West Africa, but the trade in marine salt was mostly local. Marine salt supplies were not sufficient to meet the demand for salt in the interior. West Africans living at a distance from the coast thus relied on desert salt.

**Strategic Importance of the Sahel.** The Sudanic kingdoms were all located in the Sahel (coast, in Arabic), the southern fringe

of the desert. None of the Sudanic states produced gold or salt, the two main staples of the north-south trade. The Sudanic kingdoms profited from the trade rather than the production of salt and gold.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Village\\_Telly\\_in\\_Mali.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Village_Telly_in_Mali.jpg)>

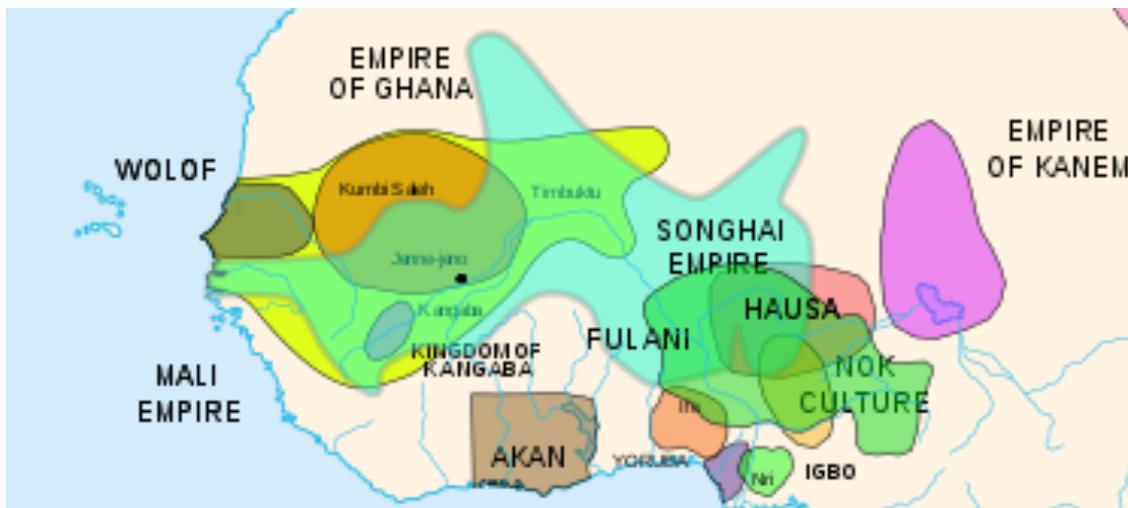
*Telly, Mali, Village in the Sahel –  
The “Shore” of the Sahara Desert*

The Sahelian entrepôts – first Awdaghost, then Walata, later Timbuktu and Gao – used their strategic locations to control trans-Saharan commerce. Upon reaching the Sahel, trans-Saharan traders would be in urgent need of provisioning and at the mercy of whoever controlled the area. Sudanic states prevented the North

African merchants from having access to the gold-producing areas in West Africa, and the Sudanic merchants gained a monopoly over the distribution of Saharan salt within West Africa. Trading cities at the desert's edge thus became the focus of trading activity, much like ports along ocean shores. Monopoly of trade required control over a wide span of territory along the desert's edge. The trans-Saharan trade thus stimulated the creation of large Sudanic kingdoms, which expanded east-west along the Sahel and Niger River to control trade. When those kingdoms attempted to spread north or south to control production, they were unsuccessful.

**Trade Profits in Sudanic Kingdoms.** The creation of the four Sudanic kingdoms – Ghana, Mali, Songhai, and Kanem-Bornu – was integrally linked to trans-Saharan trade. Little that moved in trans-Saharan trade was produced within the main cities of the kingdoms. Trade of transshipped goods produced wealth, and trade taxes transferred some of that wealth to the ruling classes. Rulers levied substantial taxes (often one-fifth of the goods traded) on both foreign and local merchants. In return for

the tax revenues, the rulers provided security, provisions, and route maintenance to the merchants. The small number of trans-Saharan trade routes limited smuggling, making trade taxes easy to collect. The key to successful taxation of trans-Saharan trade was the control of Sahelian towns where exchange took place.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:African-civilizations-map-pre-colonial.svg>

### *Principal Kingdoms in West Africa – 10<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries*

North African merchants, Berbers and Arabs, ran most of the camel caravans across the Sahara Desert. The exchange of Saharan salt and other North African goods for gold and other West African goods took place in the Sahelian entrepôts, such as Timbuktu. The principal taxes were levied at that point of

exchange. North African merchants then took gold back north across the Sahara. Sudanic traders distributed the salt and northern goods in the savanna and forest regions of West Africa and purchased gold along with slaves, kola nuts, and ebony to re-sell later to trans-Saharan merchants. The Sudanic kingdoms did not create state monopolies to carry out trade and instead encouraged private enterprise. The bases of trade evolved over time – from barter, to commodity currencies (principally salt), to cowrie shells from India, and eventually to gold – first gold dust (*tibar*, measured in *mithqals*, about 4.5 grams) and later gold coins (*dinars*).



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Yusuf\\_Ben\\_Tasfin\\_dinar\\_22562.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Yusuf_Ben_Tasfin_dinar_22562.jpg)>

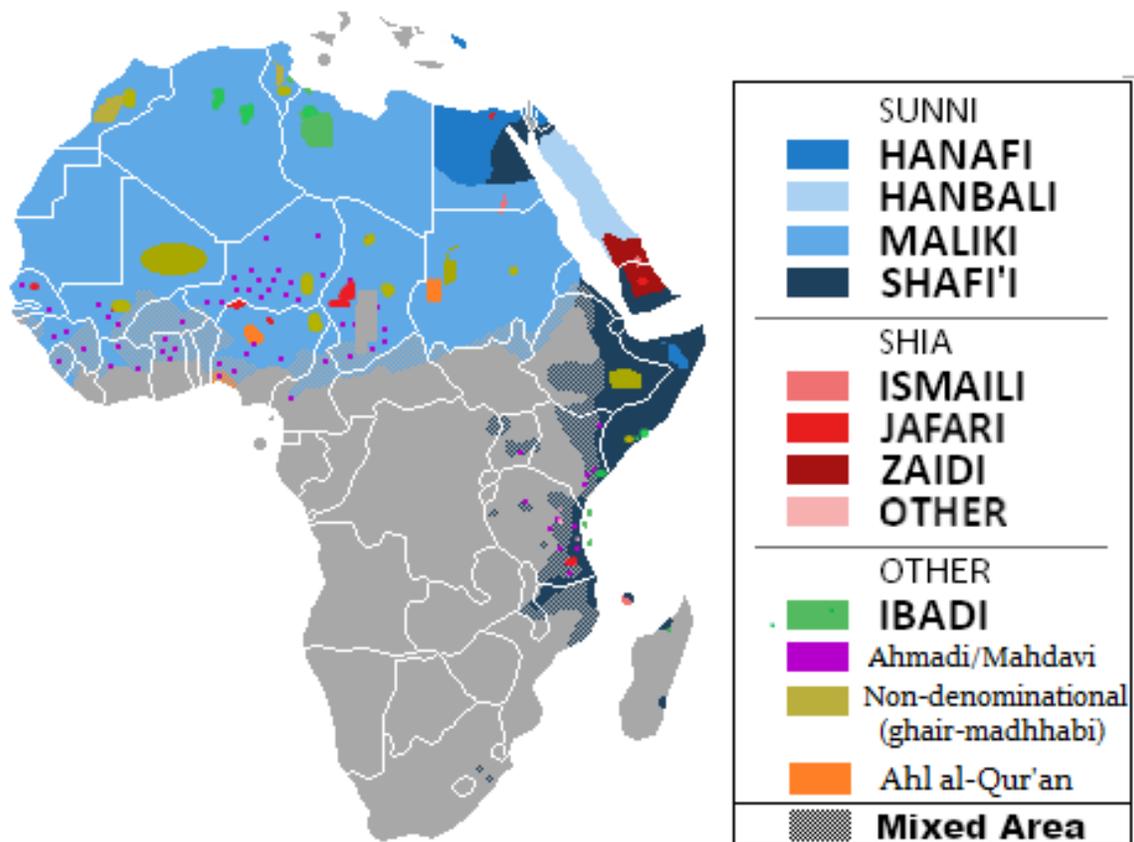
*Almoravid Gold Dinar, Used In Trans-Saharan Trade –  
Minted Under Yusuf ibn Tashfin In Aghmat, Morocco, 11<sup>th</sup> century*

## **Trans-Saharan Trade and the Southward Spread of**

**Islam.** Trans-Saharan trade was instrumental in the spread of Islam south of the Sahara. The conversion of Sudanic leaders and peoples to Islam was a long and gradual process that began in the 10<sup>th</sup> century and is still occurring. Islam spread to West Africa through trade and merchants, in much the same way that it moved to Southeast Asia, rather than through missionary efforts of *ulama* religious leaders or military *jihads* of political conquest. When the Islamic Almoravids conquered Ghana in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, they attempted to convert the animist leaders to Islam, but they had limited success. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the Malian emperors adopted Islam as the court religion, facilitating the spread of the new faith, and they also sponsored important centers of Islamic learning at Timbuktu and Djenné.

Because North Africans rarely went beyond the desert frontier, the introduction of Islam further south was largely attributable to Sudanic efforts. Islamic culture reinforced the process of empire building. Islamic governmental institutions, the

adoption of a universal set of laws, and diminished religious roles of local village leaders facilitated imperial control over large areas with heterogeneous peoples.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Self-reported\\_muslim\\_affinity\\_in\\_africa.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Self-reported_muslim_affinity_in_africa.png)

*The Spread of Islam in Africa –  
Along Trans-Saharan Trade Routes into West Africa*

Islamic administration permitted easier collection of taxes, brought better-trained civil servants, and gradually eliminated

religious dissidents. Merchants embraced Islam because it facilitated commerce. The new religion allowed widespread contacts with visiting Islamic traders, introduced Arabic as the *lingua franca* (language of trade), and provided a bond among business people that ensured enforcement of credit arrangements. The spread of Islam thus was the most significant enduring influence in the West African Sudan of trans-Saharan trade.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at  
<[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Modern\\_prayer\\_mat.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Modern_prayer_mat.jpg)>

*Islamic Prayer Rug, Depicting the Kaaba in Mecca*

**Decline and Fall of the Songhai Kingdom.** The Kingdom of Songhai reached the peak of its power in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Decline set in after religious controversies and fratricidal struggles precipitated succession disputes, palace revolutions, and civil wars. That internal erosion undercut the kingdom's military strength and made it difficult to control dissident subject peoples in remote provinces who detested paying tribute to the Songhai overlords. Concurrently, increasing amounts of the West African gold were sent south to the coast to be exported by the newly-arrived Portuguese, who had established coastal forts to divert the gold trade. Loss of the monopoly over the gold trade put additional economic pressures on the fraying Songhai Kingdom, because it undercut the state's primary source of wealth.

In 1578, the Sultan of Morocco, Mulai Ahmad al-Mansur, decisively defeated the Portuguese at the battle of Alcazar and drove them out of Morocco. Flush with the pride of victory and in need of revenue, the sultan decided to attempt to take control of the trans-Saharan trade and to occupy the West African goldfields. In

1584, a large Moroccan army perished in the Sahara Desert en route to attack Songhai. But in 1587, a Moroccan force occupied Taghaza, the main source of salt in western Saharan trade.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at*

<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%CE%9A%CE%B5%CE%BD%CF%84%CF%81%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE\\_%CE%B1%CF%85%CE%BB%CE%AE\\_%CE%95%CE%BB\\_%CE%9C%CF%80%CE%B1%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%AF\\_1127.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%CE%9A%CE%B5%CE%BD%CF%84%CF%81%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE_%CE%B1%CF%85%CE%BB%CE%AE_%CE%95%CE%BB_%CE%9C%CF%80%CE%B1%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%AF_1127.jpg)>

*El Badi Palace, Marrakesh – Constructed By Moroccan Sultan Mulai Ahmad al-Mansur in 1578 After His Victory Over Portugal*

Four years later, Sultan al-Mansur mounted a large force to cross 1,500 miles of the Sahara Desert and conquer the Songhai Kingdom. The leader of the Moroccan force was Judar, a palace eunuch and close confidant of the sultan. The trans-Saharan expedition was massive – 4,000 troops (half infantry and half light-

cavalry), 1,000 camel drivers, 8,000 camels, and 1,000 pack-horses. The sultan anticipated that his 2,000 firearms (arquebuses) and six large cannons would overwhelm the Songhai army and offset the Moroccans' numerical disadvantage in warfare. The incredible Moroccan invasion across the Sahara took the Songhai leaders completely by surprise. Judar's disciplined mercenaries, with advanced weaponry, easily defeated the uncoordinated Songhai army, using bows and spears, at the Battle of Tondibi, north of Gao, in 1591.

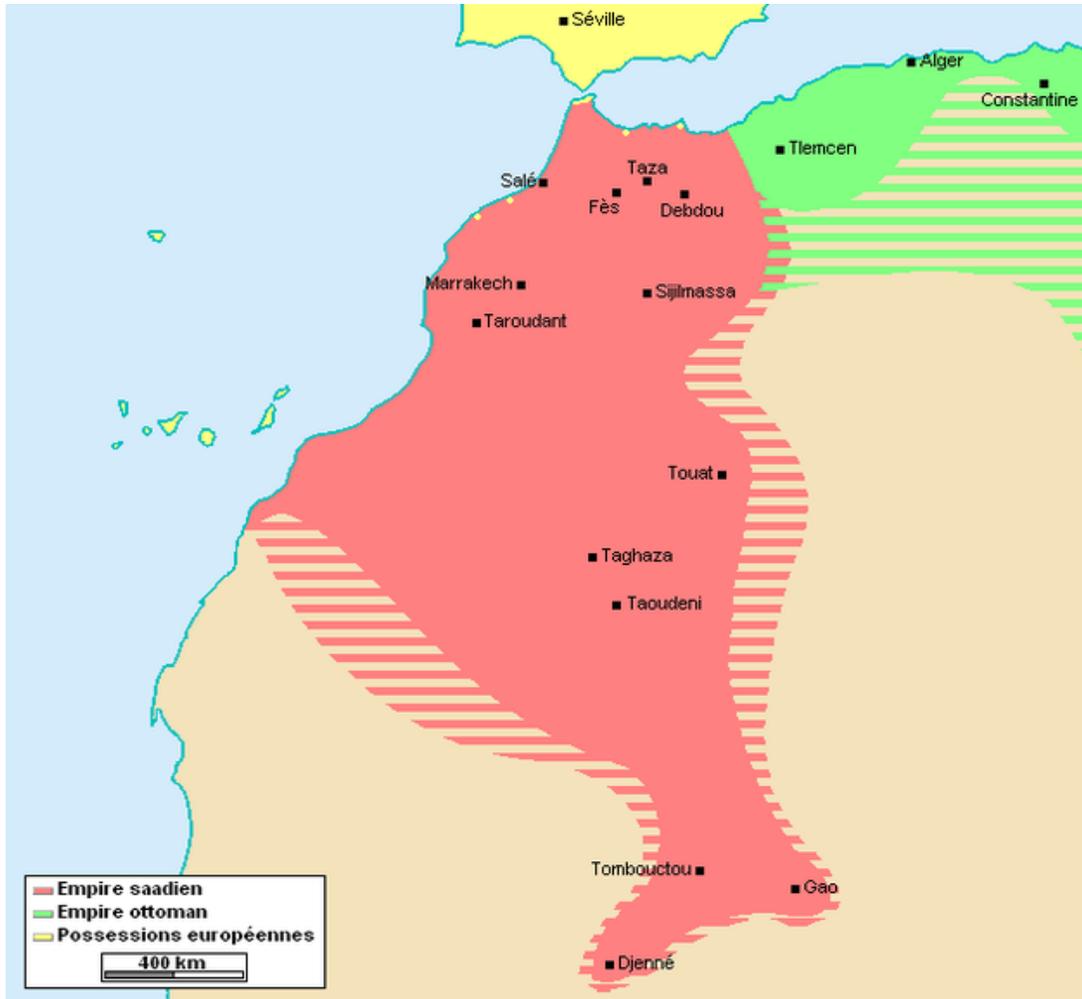


*Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at*  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gao\\_Mali\\_2006.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gao_Mali_2006.jpg)>

*Gao, Mali, Former Capital of the Songhai Empire –  
The Battle of Tondibi (1591) Was Fought Just North of Gao*

The Moroccan invaders, which came to be called the Arma from the Arabic word for musketeer, occupied Gao and soon afterward took Timbuktu – the two key trading entrepôts in Songhai. The Arma, however, quickly discovered that they could win the war but could not govern the conquered people.

The Moroccans successfully looted the cities and transferred much wealth to the sultan. But they had difficulty governing even the areas surrounding the three major cities of Timbuktu, Gao, and Djenné. Warlike peoples who formerly had been subjected to Songhai rule – Tuaregs, Fulanis, and Bambaras – raided farming areas and cities. The Moroccans could neither re-create the Songhai Kingdom nor take control of the gold-producing regions. Their commanders became destructive warlords in the three main cities and were virtually independent of guidance from Morocco. The glory days of the Kingdoms of Mali and Songhai were over. The once-powerful western Sudan became a weakened scene of chronic warfare and rapacious raiding.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
 <[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Maroc\\_-\\_fin\\_XVIe\\_si%C3%A8cle.PNG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Maroc_-_fin_XVIe_si%C3%A8cle.PNG)>

*Former Songhai Heartland (Timbuktu, Gao, and Djenné) Under Moroccan Rule, 1591-1833 – Succession Disputes Undercut the Songhai Kingdom*

**Decline of the Trans-Saharan Trade.** Beginning in the 1590s, the trans-Saharan trade went into a three-century decline. The eventual demise of the two-millennia-old trade route was brought about by the confluence of four events – the Moroccan

invasion of the Sudan, the shift of gold exports to European maritime trade, the rise of the Atlantic slave trade, and the decline of the Ottoman Empire in North Africa. Those four events combined to create instability and decrease trade in both regions connected by the trans-Saharan trade routes.

The proximate cause of the decline of trans-Saharan trade was Morocco's invasion of Songhai in 1591. The Moroccan force brought down the Songhai Kingdom, but it could control only the key trading cities – Gao, Timbuktu, and Djenné. The Moroccan incursion precipitated a long period of political instability that precluded the creation of new Western Sudanic kingdoms and weakened the security of trans-Saharan trade.

The death knell for camel caravans across the Sahara was the rise of European sea-based trade, which diverted West African gold to the coast. In the 1440s, Portuguese innovators developed the caravel ship. The caravel was an ingenious combination of Mediterranean (three masts), Arab (lateen sails), and northern European (wide hull) design, and it could tack easily into the wind

despite carrying more than fifty tons. Improvements in navigation led to a northwest route via the Azores Islands where sailing ships could use westerly winds to return to Portugal.

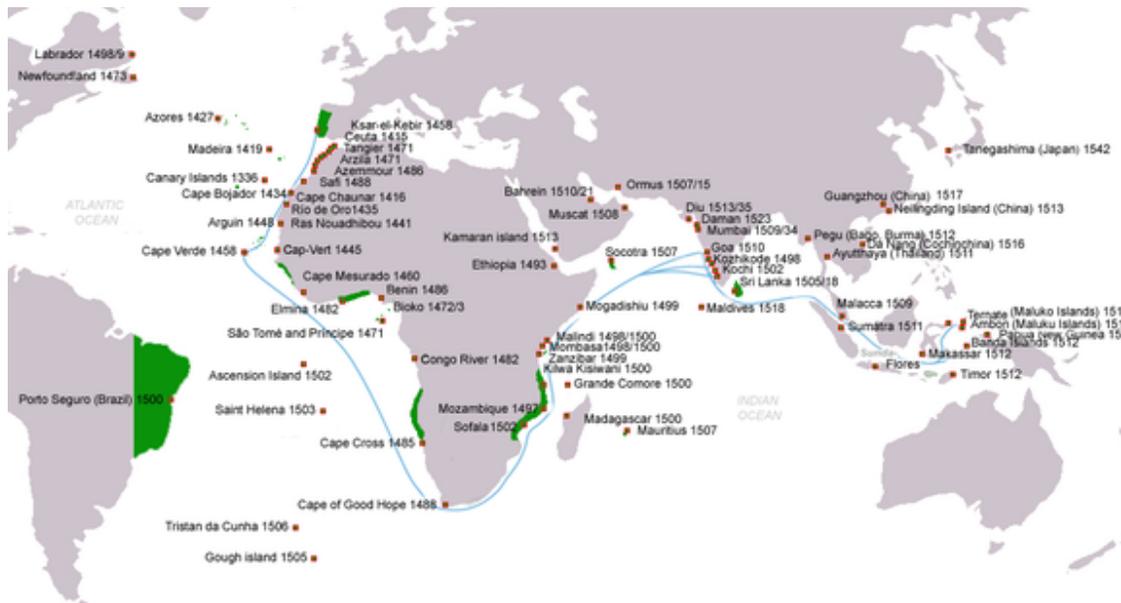


Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Portuguese\\_Caravel.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Portuguese_Caravel.jpg)>

*Portuguese Caravel Ship, 15<sup>th</sup>-century Innovation –  
Led to the European Age of Exploration and Imperialism*

After the invention of the caravel ship and the discovery of the Azores return route to Portugal, the Portuguese expanded into West Africa. From the 1470s until the 1630s, Portugal pioneered the export of Akan gold from Elmina on the Gold Coast (modern Ghana). Thereafter, the Dutch, English, and French replaced the

Portuguese in exporting West African gold. That shift of gold to the coast undercut the staple of the trans-Saharan trade and the economic basis of the Sudanic kingdoms.

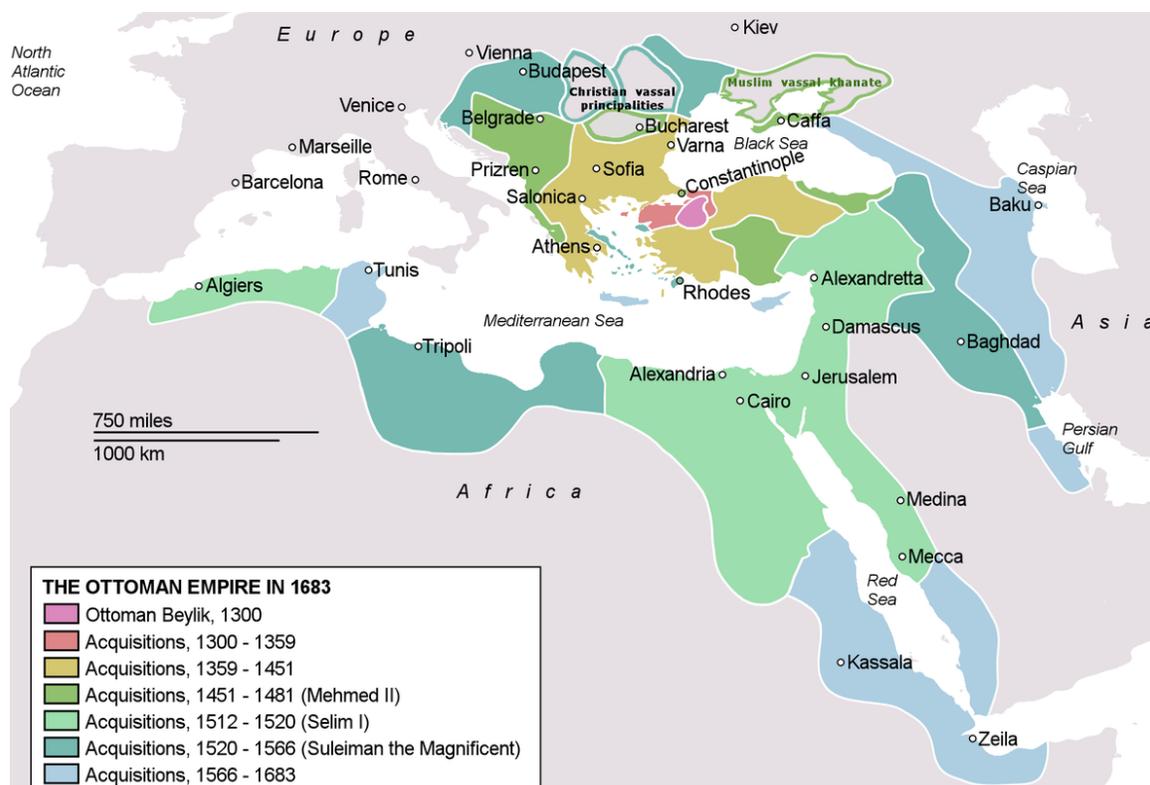


Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Portuguese\\_discoveries\\_and\\_explorationsV2\\_en.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Portuguese_discoveries_and_explorationsV2_en.png)

*Portuguese Exploration and Settlement (Green), 1415-1543 – Shifted the Gold Trade from the Sahara Desert to the Atlantic*

From the 16<sup>th</sup> through the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the nefarious European slave trade created instability throughout Africa, especially in Western Africa. The western Sudan region fell into political disarray for three centuries until the uninvited imposition of French and British colonial control. In the Mediterranean

region, the rise of strong Christian European kingdoms gradually eclipsed the Islamic power in North Africa of Morocco and the Ottoman Empire, leading to instability and piracy on the Barbary Coast – the northern terminus of the trans-Saharan route. The once-fabled trans-Saharan trade quietly disappeared at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when its gold and salt were replaced by peanut exports that moved by colonial railroads to coastal ports.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Atlas\\_of\\_the\\_Ottoman\\_Empire](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Atlas_of_the_Ottoman_Empire)

*The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1923 – Lost Control of North Africa to European Imperialists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century*

## **Alawite Morocco (1631-present)**

**Saadian and Alawite Dynasties (1465-1912).** The Saadian dynasty successfully fended off European and Ottoman Turkish incursions and maintained Moroccan independence. In 1578, the Saadians destroyed an invading Portuguese army, killed King Sebastian, and ransomed Portuguese officers.

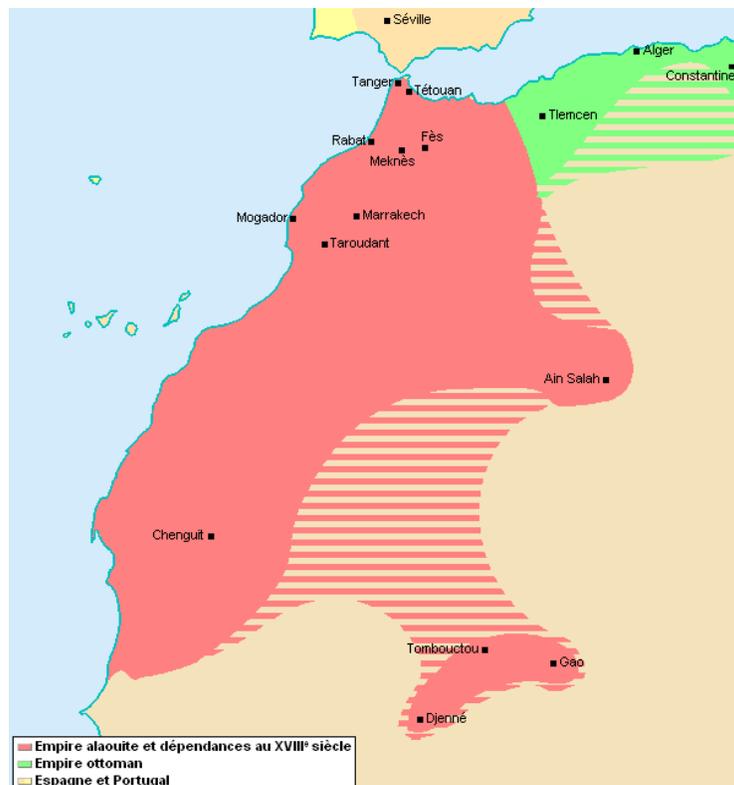


*Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at*  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Don\\_Sebastian\\_de\\_Portugal.JPG?](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Don_Sebastian_de_Portugal.JPG?)

*Portugal's Foolhardy King Sebastian –  
Died at the Battle of El-Ksar-el-Kabir, 1578*

Ahmad al-Mansur (1578-1603) sent an army across the Sahara Desert, conquered the rich Songhai Kingdom, and transferred its gold to Marrakech. Moulay Ismail (1672-1727)

shifted his capital to Meknes and expanded Alawite Moroccan control through the Western Sahara. Alawite power fluctuated under succeeding sultans, depending on their success in controlling rural tribes, collecting taxes, and collaborating with Muslim religious leaders.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Empire\\_alaouite\\_-\\_XVIIIe\\_s.PNG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Empire_alaouite_-_XVIIIe_s.PNG)>

*The Alawite Kingdom At Its peak – Early 18<sup>th</sup> century, Under Sultan Moulay Ismail (reigned 1672-1727)*

Britain used its strong navy to guarantee Moroccan independence. The British desired to buttress their control of

Gibraltar, protect their main trade route to India, and expand trade with Morocco. Both France and Spain had imperial designs on Morocco. After colonizing Algeria in 1830, France defeated Morocco in the Battle of Isly (1844) to expand the western boundary of Algeria at Morocco's expense. Spain won the Hispano-Moroccan War (1859-1860) with Morocco, reclaimed control of the Western Sahara, and, by imposing a large war indemnity, forced the Moroccans to seek European loans.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MARIANO\\_FORTUNY - La Batalla de Tetu%C3%A1n \(Museo Nacional de Arte de Catalu%C3%B1a, 1862-64. %C3%93leo sobre lienzo, 300 x 972 cm\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MARIANO_FORTUNY_-_La_Batalla_de_Tetu%C3%A1n_(Museo_Nacional_de_Arte_de_Catalu%C3%B1a,_1862-64._%C3%93leo_sobre_lienzo,_300_x_972_cm).jpg)*

*The Battle of Tetuan, Hispano-Moroccan War, 1860 –  
Painting by Mariano Fortuny, c. 1864*

In the Entente Cordiale (1904), Britain gave France a free hand in Morocco in return for France's ceding its historic claims to

Egypt. In a secret pact in 1904, France and Spain agreed in future to divide Morocco. Spain would receive northern Morocco, about 10 percent of the country. In 1911, France gained Germany's consent to French colonization of Morocco by transferring part of French Equatorial Africa to German Cameroon. In the Treaty of Fez (1912), most of Morocco became a French Protectorate and the north fell under Spanish rule.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
 <<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marrocoprotectorate.png>>

*European Colonialism in Morocco, 1914 –  
 French Protectorate (Light Green), Spanish Protectorate (Pink),  
 and Spanish Sahara (Red)*

**French Protectorate (1912-1956).** Hubert Lyautey, the first Résident-Général of the French Protectorate of Morocco (1912-1925), believed it was his social duty to maintain Moroccan

identity. But he played off Berbers against Arabs to divide and rule brutally. The Abd al-Karim rebellion (1921-1926), sited mostly in the Rif Mountains in the Spanish sector, failed after a counter-attack by French and Spanish troops.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mar%C3%A9chal\\_Lyautey\\_1929.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mar%C3%A9chal_Lyautey_1929.jpg)

*Hubert Lyautey, Résident-Général (1912-1925), Empathetic, Brutal, and Effective – Portrait by Philip de Laszio, 1929*

French economic policies focused on infrastructure, mining, and agriculture. The French built a railroad (to Marrakech), roads, ports (Casablanca was the largest), an electricity grid, and dams for irrigation. French miners increased the output of phosphates to 2

million tons by 1930, and Morocco led the world in the production of phosphates. The number of European settlers in Morocco increased from 100,000 in 1922 to 415,000 in 1951. An elite of 5,000 controlled the economy. Manufacturing was restricted to food processing to prevent competition with firms in France.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marrocoprotectorate.png>

*Colonial Morocco and Spanish Sahara, 1945 – French Morocco (Light Green), Spanish Morocco (Pink), Spanish Sahara (Red)*

In 1942, during World War II, the United States led the Casablanca Landings. American leaders supported the Moroccan leaders who formed the Istiqlal (Independence) Party in 1943 and issued an independence manifesto in 1944. Sultan Muhammad V (ruled 1927-1961) shifted his support to the Allies and refused to deport Morocco's 250,000 Jews to Vichy France. After the war, Muhammad V discreetly supported the Istiqlal Party's demand for independence.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at*  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mohammed\\_V\\_\(1953\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mohammed_V_(1953).jpg)>

*Muhammad V (Sultan (1927-1953, 1955-1957), King (1957-1961))  
– Returned from Exile in 1955 to Negotiate Independence*

France engineered demonstrations by its Moroccan allies against the sultan and, in 1953-1955, exiled him to Madagascar. Muhammad V then became the adored symbol of independence. After the Algerian war began in 1954, France decided to focus on maintaining that colony and give Morocco (and Tunisia) their independence. Morocco became fully independent from France (March 1956) and Spain (April 1956).

**Political evolution (1956-present).** King Hassan II (1961-1999) controlled politics in independent Morocco. His rule through the 1980s was authoritarian. He survived two attempted military coups in 1971 and 1972 and then reformed the army. Driss Basri, the Minister of the Interior (1979-1999), harshly jailed opponents. Hassan II retained ultimate power in the multi-party parliamentary system. During the 1990s, Hassan II introduced political reforms – open elections, few political prisoners, and a free press – but he retained tight control.

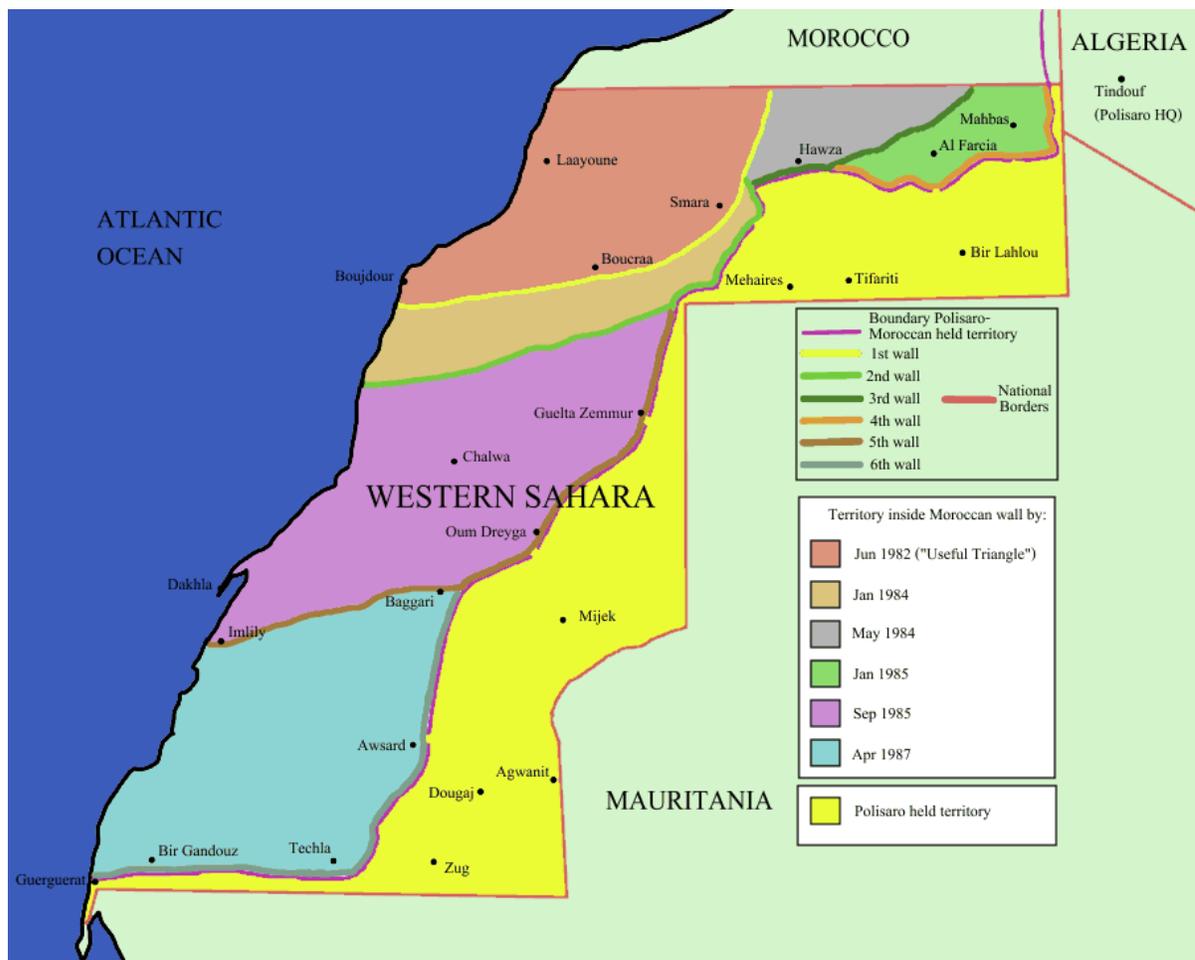


*Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hassan\\_II\\_of\\_Morocco,\\_1983.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hassan_II_of_Morocco,_1983.jpg)>*

*King Hassan II (1961-1999), Wily Preserver of Royal Power –  
Pictured in the United States in 1983*

In the Madrid Accords (1975), Spain ceded the Western Sahara to Morocco and Mauritania. But the Polisario, a group formed by native Sahrawis, claimed independence and began a guerrilla war. Hassan II organized the Green March – 350,000 unarmed Moroccan volunteers marched six miles into Western Sahara to claim sovereignty. Mauritania ceded its claims to the Polisario in 1979. Morocco built a 1,600-mile-long Sand Wall and

introduced settlers. In 1991, the United Nations negotiated a ceasefire. No agreement has been reached on who gets to vote in a promised referendum for independence or Moroccan sovereignty.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Western\\_sahara\\_walls\\_moroccan.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Western_sahara_walls_moroccan.png)

### *Morocco's Sand Wall in Western Sahara – Separates Moroccan- and Polisario-held Areas*

King Muhammad VI (1999-present) named US- and French-trained technocrats as his key advisors and fired Driss Basri. He

promoted infrastructure, foreign investment, Western links, and control of religious extremists.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:King\\_Mohammed\\_VI\\_of\\_Morocco.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:King_Mohammed_VI_of_Morocco.jpg)

*King Muhammad VI (1999-present) –  
Progressive, Western-oriented, and Flexible*

The king responded deftly to the Arab Spring rallies in early 2011. The February 20 Movement, made up of youth and the Westernized middle class, demanded more jobs, better human rights, and a reduction of the king's role in politics. Muhammad VI rushed through a new constitution that limited the king's

political role and guaranteed freedom of expression, equality for women, and Berber language rights. The king also provided food subsidies, a salary hike, and more government jobs.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2011\\_Moroccan\\_protests\\_2.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2011_Moroccan_protests_2.jpg)>*

*Moroccan Arab Spring Rally, February 2011 –  
Led to February 20 Movement and Reforms*

**Economic evolution (1956-present).** French control left an inheritance in 1956 of good infrastructure (ports, roads, railways) and mechanized estates, basic industry, and phosphate mines. But underdevelopment was pervasive. Most of the 1.4 million Moroccan farms were of less than 2 hectares (5 acres). The

illiteracy rate was 90 percent, and the average life span was only 47 years. Morocco's economy declined between 1956 and 1970 and showed uneven improvement in the 1970s and 1980s. In the 1990s, Hassan II opened the economy by privatizing state-owned industry, but most was controlled by 36 families in the king's clientele.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Productions\\_du\\_Maroc.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Productions_du_Maroc.jpg)>

*Agriculture in Morocco – Contributed 11 Percent of GDP in 2019*



In 2019, Morocco's 36.5 million residents earned an average income (adjusted for purchasing power) of \$7,826 – just 12 percent of the level in the United States. The World Bank's estimate of the share of Moroccans with incomes beneath the poverty line in 2013 was 4.8 percent, in contrast to 17 percent in 1998. Life expectancy was 76 years, and infant mortality was 23 per 1000.

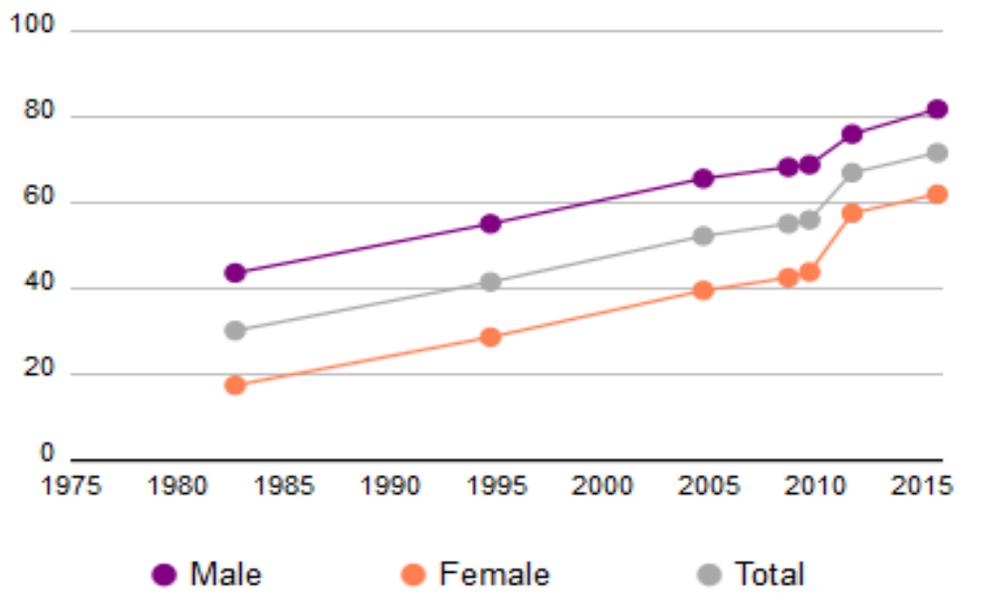


Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Berber\\_woman\\_selling\\_tea.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Berber_woman_selling_tea.jpg)>

*Moroccans Live Longer, But Most Remain Poor –  
Berber Woman Selling Tea*

Morocco's economy faces daunting challenges. The rate of unemployment in 2019 was 9 percent, but the rate among urban

youth was 40 percent. The rate of adult literacy was only 74 percent (65 percent for women and 83 percent for men). In 2019, Morocco ranked only 121<sup>st</sup> of 189 countries in the United Nations' Human Development Index, but an impressive 53<sup>rd</sup> of 190 countries in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index, and a moderate 80<sup>th</sup> of the 198 countries listed in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index. To create productive jobs, the government needs to increase literacy, control corruption, and improve competitiveness.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons, available at*  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:UIS\\_Literacy\\_Rate\\_Morocco\\_population\\_%2B15\\_1980\\_to\\_2015.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:UIS_Literacy_Rate_Morocco_population_%2B15_1980_to_2015.png)

*Adult Literacy Rates in Morocco, 1980-2015*



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MoroccoWesternSaharaOMC\\_closer.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MoroccoWesternSaharaOMC_closer.jpg)

### *Contemporary Morocco, Including Western Sahara*

## **Time Line for Morocco**

c. 4000 BCE	Berber peoples began inhabiting the Maghrib (Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia)
9 <sup>th</sup> century BCE	Phoenicians from Tyre settled Carthage, formed other Mediterranean city-states
509-27 BCE	Roman Republic – Roman Senate elected rulers
3 <sup>rd</sup> century BCE- 3 <sup>rd</sup> century CE	trans-Saharan trade – horse-drawn wheeled carts
262-146 BCE	3 Punic Wars – Rome defeated Carthage
late 3 <sup>rd</sup> century BCE	Romans defeated Hannibal of Carthage – gained control of Sicily, Sardinia, and Iberia
62-50 BCE	First Triumvirate of the Roman Empire – Gnaeus Pompey, Julius Caesar, and Marcus Crassus ruled jointly
49-44 BCE	Julius Caesar – Dictator of Rome – founded 30 settler colonies in new Roman provinces – assassinated in 44 BC
44-31 BCE	Second Triumvirate of the Roman Empire – Octavian, Mark Antony, and Aemilius Lepidus ruled jointly
27 BCE-476 CE	Roman Principate – military prowess decided succession

27 BCE-14 CE	Emperor Augustus ruled Rome – expanded empire to natural frontiers – Rhine, Danube, Euphrates Sahara, Atlantic
98-117	Emperor Trajan ruled – annexed Dacia (modern Romania) and Petra in 106, Armenia and northern Mesopotamia in 114
117-138	Emperor Hadrian ruled – built Hadrian’s Wall in Britain – erected timber palisade between Rhine and Danube Rivers
4 <sup>th</sup> century	Romans introduced dromedary camel into Sahara – from Arabia
307-337	Emperor Constantine ruled – ended Tetrarchy – built a new eastern capital at Constantinople – converted to Christianity
395	Emperor Theodoseus I divided Roman Empire – between Rome and Constantinople
395-1453	Byzantine Empire – eastern Roman Empire – ruled from Constantinople
5 <sup>th</sup> -9 <sup>th</sup> centuries	trans-Saharan trade – camel-based caravans
418-439	Germanic Vandals conquered Gaul, Spain, and Roman Africa – sources of much of Rome’s food supplies
476	Ostrogoths took over Italy and Rome – forced last western Roman emperor, Romulus Augustus, to abdicate

634	Muslim Arabs began Islamic diaspora and jihad
705-710	Berber leaders in the Maghrib submitted to Arab invaders – professed Islam
711-720	Berber/Arab invaders conquered Iberian Peninsula – except northern region
10 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup> centuries	height of trans-Saharan trade – camel-based
10 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> centuries	trans-Saharan trade – Awdaghost (Ghana)-Taghaza (Sahara)-Sijilmasa (Morocco)
11 <sup>th</sup> century	Andalusi Agronomic School in Moorish Spain – Medieval Green Revolution
1055	Almoravids, Sanhaja sect – regained Awdaghost from Ghana
1062-1147	Almoravid Berber Empire – West Africa, Morocco, Spain
1061-1107	Yusuf ibn Tashfin led Almoravids – capable leader – founded Marrakech, 1062
1076	Almoravids captured Kumbi – ended Kingdom of Ghana
1103	Almoravids took Moorish Spain – delayed Christian re-conquest
1145-1150	Almohads captured Moorish Spain – Seville, Malaga, Cordoba

1147-1269	Almohad Berber Empire – Morocco, Spain, Algeria, Tunisia
1212	Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa – decisive Spanish Christian victory over Almohads
1269-1465	Merinid Berber Empire – Beni Merin – Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia (briefly)
1269	Merinids moved capital of Morocco from Marrakech to Fez – built New Fez
13 <sup>th</sup> -14 <sup>th</sup> centuries	trans-Saharan trade – Timbuktu (Mali)-Taghaza (Sahara)-Sijilmasa (Morocco)
1340	Spanish Christian kingdoms defeated Merinids – last Berber attempt to control Spain
15 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup> centuries	trans-Saharan trade – Gao (Songhai)-Takedda (Sahara)-Tunis (Tunisia)
15 <sup>th</sup> -19 <sup>th</sup> centuries	trans-Saharan trade – Bornu (modern Nigeria)-Bilma (Sahara)-Fezzan (Libya)
1465-1549	Beni Watta Berbers defeated Merinids – reunited Morocco
1481	Portugal built fortress at Elmina (Gold Coast) – diverted gold trade – from Sahara to Atlantic
1520-1566	Emperor Suleiman the Magnificent ruled Ottoman Empire – peak of Ottoman territorial control

1578-1603	Ahmad al-Mansur ruled Morocco – defeated Portugal, 1578
1591	Moroccan trans-Saharan invasion of Songhai Kingdom – 4,000 troops – victory
1591-1780	Moroccan rule of Songhai – warlords in three main cities – no control of gold production
16 <sup>th</sup> -19 <sup>th</sup> c.	European Atlantic slave trade – western Sudan region in political disarray
1631-present	Alawite dynasty ruled Morocco
1672-1727	Moulay Ismail ruled Morocco – shifted capital to Meknès – re-conquered Western Sahara
1830	France began colonization of Algeria
1844	Battle of Isly – France defeated Morocco – added Moroccan territory to Algeria
1859-1860	Tetuan War – Spain defeated Morocco – reclaimed control of Western Sahara
1870s	end of Atlantic slave trade – 9.5 million African slaves captured
late 19 <sup>th</sup> c.	trans-Saharan trade ended – after more than two millennia

1884-1885	Berlin Conference – European powers divided Africa, scramble
1904	Entente Cordiale between France and Great Britain – Morocco to France, Egypt to Britain
1904	France-Spain secret agreement – future division of Morocco – northern 10% to Spain
1905	France conquered the Sahara region – defeated Tuaregs, colonized
1911	French-German agreement – Morocco to France, territory in French Congo to German Cameroon
1912	Treaty of Fez – 90 percent of Morocco became a French Protectorate, 10 percent became a Spanish Protectorate
1912-1956	Morocco a Protectorate of France – Alawite sultan reigned, but France had political control
1912-1925	Hubert Lyautey – first French Résident-Général in Morocco
1921-1926	Abd al-Karim rebellion – Rif Mountains – suppressed by Spanish and French forces
1927-1961	Sultan Muhammad V – Alawite leader in Morocco – supported Allies, Istiqlal Party

- 1942 Casablanca Landings – Allied forces began battle to liberate North Africa in World War II
- 1943 Istiqlal (Independence) Party founded – encouraged by Allied forces – independence manifesto, 1944
- 1953-1955 Sultan Muhammad V – exiled to Madagascar by France
- 1956 Moroccan independence – from France (March) and Spain (April)
- 1957 Sultan Muhammad V became King of Morocco
- 1961-1999 King Hassan II ruled independent Morocco – autocratic, 1960s-1980s, reformist, 1990s
- 1971, 1972 failed military coups in Morocco – attempts to depose king and establish a republic
- 1973 Polisario Movement formed – desired independent state in Spanish Western Sahara
- 1975 Madrid Accords – Spain ceded Western Sahara to Morocco and Mauritania – Polisario guerrilla war
- 1975 Green March – 350,000 unarmed Moroccan volunteers marched 6 miles into Western Sahara to claim sovereignty

1979-1999	Driss Basri, Minister of the Interior – harsh treatment of opponents
1990s	King Hassan II introduced political reforms – open elections, free press, fewer political prisoners
1991	UN negotiated ceasefire in Western Sahara – promised election (Moroccan annexation or independent state for Sahrawis) never held
1999-present	King Muhammad VI ruled Morocco – economic reforms, infrastructure, rapid economic growth, political control, Western links
2003	Casablanca bombings – suicide bombers – 40 deaths
2011	Arab Spring protests – February 20 Movement – new constitution (free speech, equality for women, lesser role for king)
2011	Marrakech bombings – 17 deaths, mostly tourists
2011	Parliamentary elections – moderate Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD) won most seats
2012-2017	coalition government – led by Prime Minister Abdelilah Benkirane (PJD)

- 2016 Parliamentary elections – moderate Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD) again won most seats
- 2017 new coalition government – led by Prime Minister Saad-Eddine El Othmani

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## **Sites Visited in Morocco**

### **Kingdom of Morocco**

#### **Stanford Travel/Study Program**

**March 16-29, 2018**

#### **Land-based**

### **Marrakech**

In 2017, 10 million tourists visited Morocco. Most of them spent time in Marrakech, the most popular tourist destination in the country. Contemporary Marrakech is a growing city of 1.6 million residents, and tourism is the driving force of its economy. Well-watered Marrakech was founded in 1062 as the capital of the new Almoravid Berber Empire and a northern caravanserai for the trans-Saharan trade on which the empire was based. The Almoravids established a mint in Marrakech to coin golden dinars from the gold imported from West Africa. The Almohad Berber dynasty took over from the Almoravids in 1147, kept the capital in Marrakech, and ruled much of North Africa plus Moorish Spain until defeated by the Merinid dynasty in 1269. Since that time, Marrakech has remained the center of Berber culture and identity.

The Tiskwim Museum, in the home of Dutch collector Bert Flint, has a marvelous collection of Berber handicrafts. We also enjoyed the Majorelle Garden and its Museum of Berber Culture. In a driving excursion to Aghmat, 18 miles south of Marrakech, we saw the ruins (palace and bath house) of the first Almoravid capital (1057). The icon of Marrakech is the Jemaa El Fna square, an entertainment center, featuring story-tellers, fortune-tellers, and acrobats. Nearby is the spectacular Koutoubya mosque and minaret, built by the Almohads in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Lunch at the Café Argana gave us a good vantage point in central Marrakech. We saw evidence of great wealth in the Bahia Palace of a 19<sup>th</sup>-

century grand vizir (prime minister) and in the Dar El Bacha, the 1930s home of a Berber chieftain and mayor of Marrakech.

## **Essaouira**

Essaouira, formerly called Mogador, is a port on the Atlantic coast. Hanno, a Carthaginian, established the first settlement there in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE. In the Roman era, Juba II, a Berber King and collaborator with Rome, promoted the processing of murex shells to make purple dye (Rome's regal color). Imperial Portugal built the Castelo Real de Mogador and ruled briefly (1506-1510). In the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, Alawite Sultan Muhammad III re-built Essaouira, and it served as Morocco's main Atlantic port through the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Moroccan Jews dominated trade and made up nearly half of the town's population. Today, Essaouira is an attractive town of about 100,000 inhabitants, living in blue-and-white buildings. The town attracts beach-loving tourists, and its Medina (old city) is certified as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

En route from Marrakech to Essaouira, our group photographed goats perched in argan trees to feed on leaves, and we paid a visit to a women's coop that produced argan oil, honey, and cosmetics. In Essaouira, we observed the unique, modernist style of local painters in the Damgaard Gallery. Following a sumptuous seafood lunch, we took a walking tour of the port area (now used only by small ocean-fishing boats) and climbed the intact 18<sup>th</sup>-century ramparts (replete with cannons imported from Spain and Portugal). We stopped for photos of the arch on the ramparts where Orson Welles filmed scenes of his film, *Othello*, in 1956. A haven for counter-culture hippies and druggies in the 1960s, Essaouira now is an appealing destination for tourists seeking a quiet setting, a large white-sand beach, and excellent, fresh Moroccan seafood.

## **Mt. Toubcal National Park and Boumalne Dades**

The High Atlas Mountains span Morocco in an east-west pattern, running from the Atlantic coast in southern Morocco to the Mediterranean coast in Tunisia. Mt. Toubcal, with an elevation of nearly 14,000 feet, is the highest point in North Africa. The Berbers (Imazighen) speak an Afro-Asiatic language related to Ancient Egyptian, Arabic, and Hebrew. They settled Morocco about 6,000 years ago, after their ancestors migrated from the Tigris-Euphrates Valleys through the Sahara region (a verdant grassland between 9000 and 4000 BCE). After inhabiting the plains of Morocco, the Berbers settled the mountains for security and pasture. Boumalne is located south of the High Atlas range in southeastern Morocco – on the “Route of the 1,000 Ksour (granary-refuges)”, overlooking the scenic Dades River Valley.

Our group drove into the High Atlas Mountains south of Marrakech to visit Mt. Toubcal National Park. The scenery, featuring snow-capped Mt. Toubcal and villages clinging to hillsides, was breathtaking. We rode on mules, guided by handlers, up and down steep paths for one-and-one-half hours to have lunch at the Kasbah du Toubcal. On our ride, we gained a great appreciation for the challenges that mountain-dwelling Berbers face. From the 8<sup>th</sup> century to a generation ago, the Berbers (who inhabit the plains near the High Atlas) constructed *ksour* – communal granaries that served as refuges in times of attack. We bussed eastward from Marrakech over the High Atlas range, stopping to see the Ait ben Haddou Kasbah (fortress). En route to Boumalne, we saw hundreds of ksour sited in the river valleys.

### **Erg Chebbi and Tafilalet Oasis**

Erg Chebbi is a remote part of the Sahara Desert in southeastern Morocco, near the border with Algeria, which contains Morocco’s highest sand dunes. On the drive between Boumalne Dades and Erg Chebbi, we made two stops that were for me highlights of our Moroccan adventure. The Tafilalet Oasis, also in southeastern

Morocco and north of Erg Chebbi, was for centuries one of the most important oases in the northern edge of the Sahara. We explored the inner workings of a *khattara* (known to ancient Persians as a *qanat*) that was built in the 9<sup>th</sup> century to move water to the Tafilalet Oasis. A *khattara* is an underground irrigation channel, built at high human cost to move water from aquifers at the base of a mountain range. We proceeded to the Tafilalet and saw the 120,000 date palms planted in that still verdant oasis.

The Tafilalet Oasis provided water and food to Sijilmasa – the key northern terminus of the Trans-Saharan trade route from the early 9<sup>th</sup> century until its fall in 1399. Control of Sijilmasa was critical for the Almoravid, Almohad, and Merinid Berber Empires during the 11<sup>th</sup> through 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Our group toured the deserted site of Sijilmasa. Alas, there is relatively little to see of the once wealthy desert city that had 20,000 permanent residents in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The ruins of large adobe walls and the outlines of a mosque and palace are all that remain visible. After visualizing Sijilmasa's role as an empire-building entrepôt, our group drove a few miles to Erg Chebbi to spend a night in a tent camp in the Sahara. We climbed dunes in the warm afternoon, enjoyed a performance by Gnaoua musicians, but nearly froze at night.

## **Fes**

Fes is Morocco's third largest city, with 1.1 million inhabitants. It consists of three sections, each built at a key point in Moroccan history. Moulay Idriss II, the founder of Morocco's first dynasty, the Idrissids, constructed the Medina (Old Fes) in the late 8<sup>th</sup> century as his capital. The 540-acre Medina, one of the best conserved medieval walled cities in the Arab-Muslim world, became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1981. Merinid leaders claimed control of Morocco in 1269, moved the capital back to Fes (the Almoravids and Almohads had ruled from Marrakech), and established New Fes with a distinctive architectural style (featuring

tilework, plasterwork, and cedar ceilings). After forming a Protectorate in Morocco in 1912, French colonial officials built the French section of Fes, which has expanded since independence.

Our group took a walking tour of Old Fes. The Mausoleum of Moulay Idriss II is a shrine for Morocco's Islamic pilgrims who cannot make the pilgrimage to Mecca. In 859, a wealthy woman, Fatima al-Fihri, founded the oldest continuously functioning university in the Arab world, the University of al-Qarawiyyin. The Nejjarine Museum of Wooden Arts and Crafts is housed in a beautifully restored caravanserai (inn for merchants). The Bou Inania Medersa, a 14<sup>th</sup>-century religious college, has breath-taking wooden walls with elaborate carvings and Arabic calligraphy. We capped our stay in Fes by visiting the American Fondouk, a remarkable charitable organization, founded in 1927, which provides free veterinary services for injured or ill working horses, mules, and donkeys and helps train Moroccan veterinarians.

### **Volubilis and Meknès**

Volubilis was the capital of the Mauretania Tingitania province in the Roman Empire between 44 and 285 CE. Previously, the city had been settled by the Carthaginians in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE and then used by the Berber peoples living in northern Morocco. Roman Emperor Augustus placed Berber King Juba II (25 BCE-23 CE), on the throne of Mauretania Kingdom, and he ruled alongside his wife, Cleopatra Selene, the daughter of Cleopatra and Mark Antony. Volubilis is sited on a hill surrounded by olive orchards, and the city had 42 olive presses to produce oil that was exported to Rome. Our group observed the extensive ruins of a city that once housed 20,000 residents in an area of 100 acres. Two massive homes of Roman owners of large olive orchards contain exquisite, in-situ mosaic tiles on their triclinium floors.

Moulay Ismail (1672-1727), the greatest of the early Alawite sultans, reunited Morocco and constructed Meknès as his capital in a fertile agricultural region. For defensive purposes, he surrounded the town with three circles of ramparts and built an enormous granary to store enough grain to feed 100,000 residents and 12,000 horses for one year in case of a siege. Today, Meknès is a bustling city of 630,000 residents. We began our tour of Meknès with a visit to the nearby Château Roslane winery (which produces 75 percent of Morocco's wine) and enjoyed a sumptuous wine-tasting and luncheon. We marveled at Moulay Ismail's granary, which was heavily damaged by the Lisbon earthquake in 1755. We also saw the impressive Bab al-Mansour Gate, completed in 1732, the link between the Medina and the Imperial City of Meknès.

## **Rabat and Salé**

Rabat (on the Atlantic coast) and Salé (a commuter city across the Bou Regreg River) have a metropolitan population of 1.2 million. The Medina (old city) of Rabat has been a UNESCO World Heritage site since 2013. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Moulay Yacoub of the Almohad dynasty moved his capital to Rabat and built an enormous walled fortress (the Oudaia Kasbah). After Yacoub's death, the Almohads declined, Rabat faded into insignificance, and the Merinid dynasty moved the capital back to Fes. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Barbary pirates formed the Republic of Bou Regreg in Rabat and Salé, which survived for two centuries. After France declared a protectorate in Morocco in 1912, they transferred the capital of Morocco from Fes to Rabat. At independence in 1956, King Muhammad V chose to keep the capital in Rabat.

The Stanford group explored the Oudaia Kasbah, the picturesque, 13<sup>th</sup>-century Almohad fortress on the Atlantic Ocean, and Chellah, the center of Sala (the ancient Carthaginian and Roman port). We also visited the Mausoleum of Alawite Kings Muhammad V (1927-1961) and Hassan II (1961-1999), the Museum of History

and Mediterranean Civilizations (which has a marvelous collection of Roman bronzes from Volubilis and Sala), and the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Arts (which featured an exhibit of the works of Ahmed Cherkaoui (1934-1967), known as Morocco's Picasso). Over lunch, Abdouhay Moudou, the founder of the Center for Cross Cultural Learning, shared his views on contemporary Morocco. In Salé, we visited the 14<sup>th</sup>-century Merinid Medersa, a gem of the Attarine style of architecture.

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**Beyond Timbuktu: North Africa by Air**  
**Zegrahm Expeditions**  
**October 28 – November 17, 2006**  
**Airplane-based**

**Agadir and Southwestern Morocco**

We began our circumnavigation of the Sahara desert region in Agadir, a busy port city with 400,000 residents and long white-sand beaches. The city arose in 1505 when the Berber residents of the region constructed a fortress to defend themselves against Portuguese incursions along Morocco's Atlantic coast. Apart from that five-century-old Casbah (fortress), little remains in Agadir from its earlier history. A disastrous earthquake in 1960 flattened the city and killed 15,000 people. The city has been entirely rebuilt and is now quite modern and attractive. We spent one comfortable night there.

Our group visited southwestern Morocco to contrast the Berber farmers in the valleys of the scenic Anti-Atlas Mountains with the Arabized Berber nomadic pastoralists of the northwestern Sahara Desert. In that fascinating area, we slept for two nights in Berber tent camps, festooned with carpets. We feasted on remarkable meals at the desert camp and enjoyed Berber music and dancing.

During our explorations, we had mint tea at the Tizrgane Casbah, ate a Berber lunch in Tafraoute, shopped for silver jewelry in Tiznit, visited Guelmim (the center for Arabized Berber nomads), sampled some of the 220 types of Moroccan dates, and ate a Spanish-style lunch in Sidi Ifni, a Spanish enclave for four centuries until it was returned to Morocco in 1969. Rural Morocco was delightful.

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**A Cruise on the Mediterranean Sea  
Holland-America Line  
September 29-October 19, 2000  
Ship-based, Aboard the MS Noordam**

**Casablanca, Morocco**

October 16 was our only day in Morocco. Because we had seen Marrakesh on other trips, we opted to stay in Casablanca. During the morning, we escorted a half-day tour of the city, visiting mostly modern creations since there is little of historical interest left in Casablanca. The most impressive modern structure is the world's largest mosque, dedicated to the late king, Hassan II, who died last year. In the afternoon, we walked back into town to find an internet café and check our e-mail messages. We regretted that we did not go to Rabat, because many of those who did felt that day was the highlight of their trip. Morocco is a fascinating blend of traditional Islamic and modern Western influences.

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