

Before the arrival of the Portuguese in the mid 15th century, there was no written history of West Africa. The historians were known as Griots who told the story their way. They relied mostly on memory to recite history of families, clans or tribes.

Hannon the Carthaginean had referred to the Gambia while writing about his voyage to West Africa in 470B.C. The river Gambia was known to the Carthaginean sailors in the 5th century B.C.

Islam In The Gambia

The trade across the Sahara was carried out by Arab and Berber merchants from North West Africa. They were Muslims: they introduced their religion and Islamic culture into the places in West Africa where they traded . Muslim Berbers from Mauritania brought Islam to The Gambia and other areas south of Senegal. Many local Rulers and elders were converted and introduced Islamic ideas and laws to their people.

The Portuguese:

The first Europeans to trade with Africans along the Atlantic coastline were from Portugal. They began trading with the people of the Gambia by 1456. They bought cloth, beads, mirrors and liquor to sell. They exchanged these for gold dust, hides, ivory and slaves. They built trading stations along the estuary of the River Gambia and on the banks of the Bintang Creek.

The Latvians: - James Island

A Latvian, Duke of Courland, was interested in the trade along The river Gambia. In 1651 the Duchy gained its first colony in Africa, St. Andrews Island up The Gambia River and established a fort there. The main export goods were ivory, gold, furs, spices. Soon, 1652, another colony was established in Tobago Island, British West Indies. Courland is the

The Gambia belonged to kingdoms which included the kingdoms of Foni, Kombo, Sine-Saloum, Niani, Wulli, and Fulladou. Some people had migrated to that area from various parts of West Africa. They traded with people from other kingdoms in the same region of West Africa. Some of these kingdoms were very important, the most important were Ghana, Sohngai and Mali Empires (between the Atlantic Ocean and the River Niger) Kanem-Bornu and the Hausa States were also important. The Ghana empire was the earliest of these empires. It was the most important empire between 300 and 1000 A.D

Where It All Started - Trade With Europeans By 1500 A.D. , people in the area were also trading with Europeans. The first European to reach the River Gambia was Al Viso de Cadamosto, from Vernice, Italy.

The English: When the English traders heard about the Portuguese trade in Africa they wanted to participate. Their ships came to West Africa to buy gold and spices, but the Portuguese prevented them from coming to The Gambia. The English return to trade in the Gambia hundred years later at the end of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I(1558 - 1603).

The French: The French also built trade links with the West African coast. Sometime, their areas of trade overlapped and this led to conflicts. Fort James was seized as a result of a conflict by the French. The French bought a trading station at Alberada on the North bank of the River next to Jufureh. They signed trading treaties with the chiefs of the district.

southern most province of modern day Latvia.

The English captured the fort in 1661 and the island became known as Fort James or James Island, after James Duke of York. This island is located west of Dog island up the River Gambia. The company used this fort as a trading base, first for gold and ivory then for slaves like Kunta Kinteh portrayed in the movie "ROOTS" on the North bank of the river from Fort James is Jufureh. The governor of James Island forced all foreign (non-English) ships entering the River Gambia to pay taxes on their goods. Ships that tried to evade the taxes were fired upon with cannons.

In 1695, Fort James was taken by the French after a battle with the English sailors. It was returned in 1697 and then captured again in 1702.

The Abolition Of Slave Trade In The Gambia 1807 - 1816. On the 25th March 1807, the Royal Assent was given to a bill which prescribed that from January 1st 1808 all manners of dealing and trading of Slaves in Africa or in their transportation from Africa to any other place was to be utterly abolished, prohibited and declared to be unlawful and enacted penalties for dealing in slaves. The act was promptly enforced by the British Navy as soon as it came into operation. The majority of British slavers found it impossible to escape the vigilance of British cruisers and though a few bold spirits endeavored for a few years to risk the possibility of capture, the increased penalties prescribed by an amending act of 1811 more or less effectively put an end to British speculation and practices in Slave Trade.

The River Gambia had been recognized by the peace of Versailles in 1783 as a British possession and the abolition Act of 1807 therefore made slave traffic on the river illegal and unlawful. At that point, the majority of the British merchants and settlers on the river were concerned it may be said that they accepted the decision from parliament and at once relinquished the traffic but difficulties arose with foreign slavers visiting the river. So long as Great Britain and France were at war, the French. Traffic on the river was precarious due to the risk of capture at high seas, but as late as 1810 a French vessel managed to ship cargo of slaves at Sika near Albreda. The more extensive speculators. In the Traffic were however the Americans, Portuguese and Spanish though the United States Government had passed an Act in 1807 which prohibited the further importation of slaves from abroad, a number of American citizens still continued to carry on the Trade under Spanish colors while such trader always ran the risk of capture by British cruisers near the "River's Mouth". The necessary limited number of ships patrolling the coast was insufficient to establish an

	effective blockade and foreign slavers were often to elude the vigilance of the British and to carry the cargoes safely across the Atlantic.
<p><u>How The Gambia became a British colony</u> The Gambia was part of a large British colony known as the Province of Senegambia with covered present day Senegal and The Gambia. It's capital was St. Louis on the River Senegal. It was the first British colony in Africa. In 1779 the French captured the Senegal part of the region and the British agreed to base their trade around Bathurst and First James instead. In 1821, The Gambia became a Cron Colony attached to the British colony of Sierra Leone. In 1843, the parts of the Gambia ruled by Britain were again seperated from Sierra Leone. The rest of what is now called The Gambia. The Gambia became a British Protectorate in 1888.</p>	

History of the Gambia [nd]. Retrieved 2009, October 5, from <http://resourcepage.gambia.dk/history.htm>.