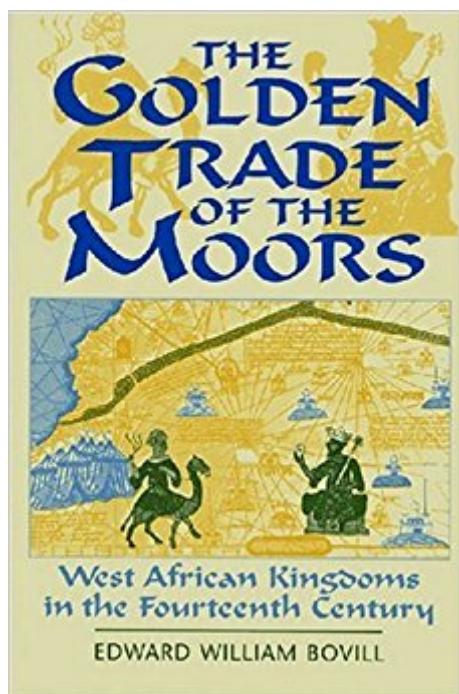


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# The Golden Trade Of The Moors: West African Kingdoms In The Fourteenth Century



## **Synopsis**

An account of the golden trade of the Moors, and a source book on Saharan trade routes, caravan organization and Sudanese history. The author covers anthropology and economic geography as well as history, as he examines and explores the hot little towns, sharp traders and the brutal rulers. He seeks to encourage and inspire a generation of scholars to discover more about parts of Africa still surprisingly little known to the outside world.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"An utterly entralling, scholarly study . . . very blunt about all the hot little towns, sharp traders and the brutal rulers who figure in this book-but Bovill's truths turn out to be splendidly romantic. -- *The New Yorker*"Bovill is a gifted teller of tales . . . it is a delightfully written and well-organized account of a vast and neglected field of history . . . a unique source book on Saharan trade routes, caravan organization and Sudanese history. . . . Mr. Bovill not only reveals a firm grasp of history but of anthropology and economic geography." -- *New York Times*"Bovill writes, as a historian, of the Sahara's golden age, threading his way clearly and with learning through a maze of Berber and Sudanese dynasties. . . ." -- *Spectator*

About Edward William Bovill: The late Edward William Bovill was a historian and author of numerous books. About Robert O. Collins: Robert O. Collins, professor of history at the University of California, Santa Barbara, is the author of *Shadow in the Grass: Britain in the Southern Sudan, 1919-1956* and *The Waters of the Nile: Hydropolitics and the Jonglei Canal, 1900-1988*, as well as 24 other books.

the book was in a good state, as described by the seller

Another book from my African CIV class that was "looking" to be boring and ended up being enthralled by it... it is not common that you get a textbook you lose yourself in.

Bovill's **THE GOLDEN TRADE OF THE MOORS** provides a broad description of the history of North & West Africa from the Tell, the high plateau and the Sahara to the Sahel, and from the Sudan to the bottom of North Africa's hump. Bovill, relying on written history (and some archaeology), traces the history of northern Africa from pre-Carthaginian times to the beginning of the 20th Century. We are introduced to Carthaginian interests in black slaves and Roman trade (and warfare) with the Garamantes, Vandals, Byzantium's involvement in the region and the subsequent Arab conquest and spread of Islam, the rise of Ghana and Mali, the Sanhaja Berber's Islamic puritan dynasty (Almoravids) which spread its control across Northwest Africa and into Muslim Spain before being overthrown by the Almohads (another puritan sect), the Almoravid invasion of Ghana, the rise of Timbuktu, the rise of the Songhai Empire, the (Moroccan) Al-Mansur's rise to power and wealth and the invasion of the Sudan (especially of the Songhai Empire), the increasing independence of the the Berber governors of the Sudan and the growing independence of the Arma (mulattoes), the rise of the Kanem and Bornu and of the Hausa states, the Fulani religious and slave wars and their ultimate demise as the Europeans began to extend their control over the region. Northern Africa, as Bovill tells us, is occupied by both light-skinned and dark-skinned people. The former include the late-coming Arabs and the ancient residents - the Berbers. The Berbers can be sub-divided into the Western tribes of the Botr (including the Zenata who formed the important Marinid dynasty of Morocco), the Branes (including the very powerful Sanhaja peoples), the numerous and widely spread Tuaregs of the central Sahara and a few other tribes. Of these, the first two are westernmost and are generally called Moors (thereby distinguishing them from the more independent Tuaregs and the Moriscos who returned from Spain during and after the Spanish reconquest of al-Andalus). The Tebu, Fezzanese and Haratin and Zaghawas make up the majority of the people of the Sahara who were dark-skinned. Further South, various dark-skinned people from the Wolofs of Senegambia, the Soninke (of ancient Ghana) the Mandingo (of ancient Mali) to the Songhai populated the region. Bovill also introduces us to the famous historian and legalist, Ibn Khaldun and various European and Muslim travelers through the region: Ibn Battuta, Leo Africanus (al-Hassan ibn Muhammad al-Wazzani) and Mungo Park. The mutual importance of the Berbers and Europeans in trade matters is also discussed. The Europeans needed gold (to trade in the East) and slaves

from Africa while the Berbers needed military and other goods for local and trans-Saharan warfare as well as silk, spices, sugar and the like. Although the book provides a substantial amount of information, it is sometimes a less than complete history. For example, the rise of the Banu Marin (Mernids) and their dynasty in Morocco and Ottoman influence and control east of Morocco are barely mentioned. On the other hand, the discussion of the arrival of the Bedouin tribes and their relation to the lack of habitability of much of the Tell (Africa's Mediterranean coastline) was especially interesting. Well written, easily read and highly informative, this book was well worth reading and should sit on the book shelf, next to Hugh Thomas' *TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE* and Thornton's *AFRICA AND AFRICANS IN THE MAKING OF THE ATLANTIC WORLD*, of any Africanist.

Nowadays everyone is a specialist. If you aren't, the chances of getting a book published are slim. And if you are writing a thesis, better be sure to narrow it down, focus on a small piece of the whole pie. Hey, I've told students that myself so I definitely know what I'm talking about. But looking at the big picture is important---more than that---it's why you build up the small snapshots, so ultimately you'll understand the big one. Only we almost never get to it. I really admire books like this, all the more when they are written by amateur historians who plugged away on their own for years. Bovill's fascinating study of the long history of the trans-Saharan trade brings in Greeks, Carthaginians, and Romans, Tuareg and Berbers, Jews, Muslims, Arabs, and finally the Europeans who first traded with the North Africans despite endless religious wars, then tried to find the source of the gold that came across the desert in such abundance for so many centuries. African empires grew up on this trade, Islamic rulers rose and fell over centuries. We read of Ghana, Mali, Songhai, the Fulani and the Hausa. The Arabs, particularly the Moroccans, had tried to reach the source of the gold for hundreds of years without much success. They even sent an army across the burning sands to attack Timbuktu and Gao (now in northern Mali) in 1590. Piety and scholarship existed in plenty in the lands of the savannas south of the Sahara, but no fabulous cities. Gold passed through the urban centers, making rulers and traders wealthy, but the Mediterranean imagination (both Christian and Muslim) long believed that some kind of El Dorado must lie in Africa. It did not. There were not even centrally-important mines. The gold was gleaned from countless rivers and streams in several widely-scattered areas. When the Europeans, French, German, or British, finally arrived in Timbuktu and other centers, they too felt great disappointment at the rundown nature of their desired goal. Bovill's history includes all this and more. The text is loaded with hundreds of names, mostly unfamiliar to the average reader. There are a number of good maps, however. It may not be

everyone's cup of tea, but THE GOLDEN TRADE OF THE MOORS is well-written, well-organized and still very useful. What I liked most about this book is that it links West Africa, the Sahara, the North African coast and Europe in a long economic history that came to an end with the development of the shipping that put camel caravans out of business forever. This is a book that looks at the big picture and you can't help but admire it.

"Bovill is a gifted teller of tales . . . it is a delightfully written and well-organized account of a vast and neglected field of history . . . a unique source book on Saharan trade routes, caravan organization and Sudanese history. . . . Mr. Bovill not only reveals a firm grasp of history but of anthropology and economic geography."-New York Times"An utterly enthralling, scholarly study . . . very blunt about all the hot little towns, sharp traders and the brutal rulers who figure in this book-but Bovill's truths turn out to be splendidly romantic."-The New Yorker" Bovill writes, as a historian, of the Sahara's golden age, threading his way clearly and with learning througha maze of Berber and Sudanese dynasties. . . ." -Spectator

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