

AFRICA REVIEW

AN UP-TO-DATE GEOGRAPHICAL, HISTORICAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SUMMARY OF THE AFRICAN COUNTRIES

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THE GAMBIA

1. Official name: Republic of The Gambia

2. Geography:

2.1. Situation: The Gambia is a riverine enclave in Senegal, on the west coast of Africa, between 14°2'W and 17°30'W, 13°N and 13°40'N.

2.2. Total area: 11 295 km².

2.3. Natural regions: The Gambia is dominated by the Gambia river and its tributaries, which are incised into a low plateau, varying in height from 25 to 50 m. Downstream of Mac Carthy island the river emerges into an estuarine track, fringed by dense mangrove swamps. In the middle section there are high banks, well incised by the river.

2.4. Climate: the seasonality of the climatic regime is very important. Rainfall comes between June and October, the amount decreases from the southwest to the north. Bursts of dry northeasterly sand laden Saharan air (Harmattan wind), from November until April, provoke lower humidity as well as temperature.

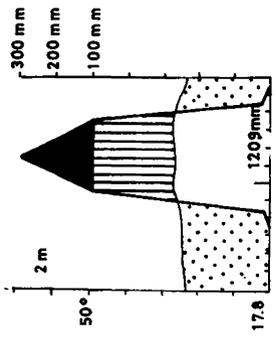
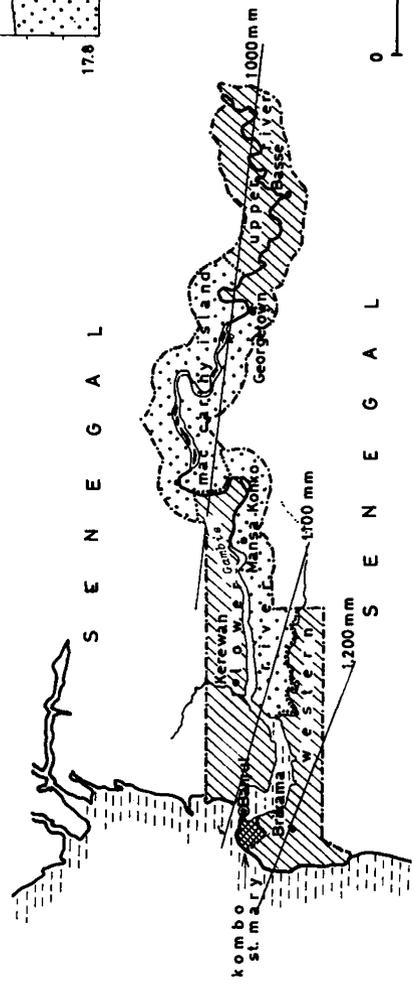
3. Population:

3.1. Total population: 858.000 (1990), urban population: 22%.

16°

THE GAMBIA

POPULATION DENSITY, DISTRICTS, RAINFALL



persons per km²

- 20 - 40
- 40 - 60
- 513

..... district boundaries



13°

16°

3.2. Population density: 76 per km².

3.3. Population growth rate: 3,1% (1970-1986).

3.4. Capital: BANJUL, 44.188 inh. (1983).

3.5. Languages: English (official), French, Fulani, Mandinge, Soninke, Wolof, Serer, Dyola.

3.6. Religion: Islam 85%, remaining 15% split between christianity and traditional beliefs.

4. History:

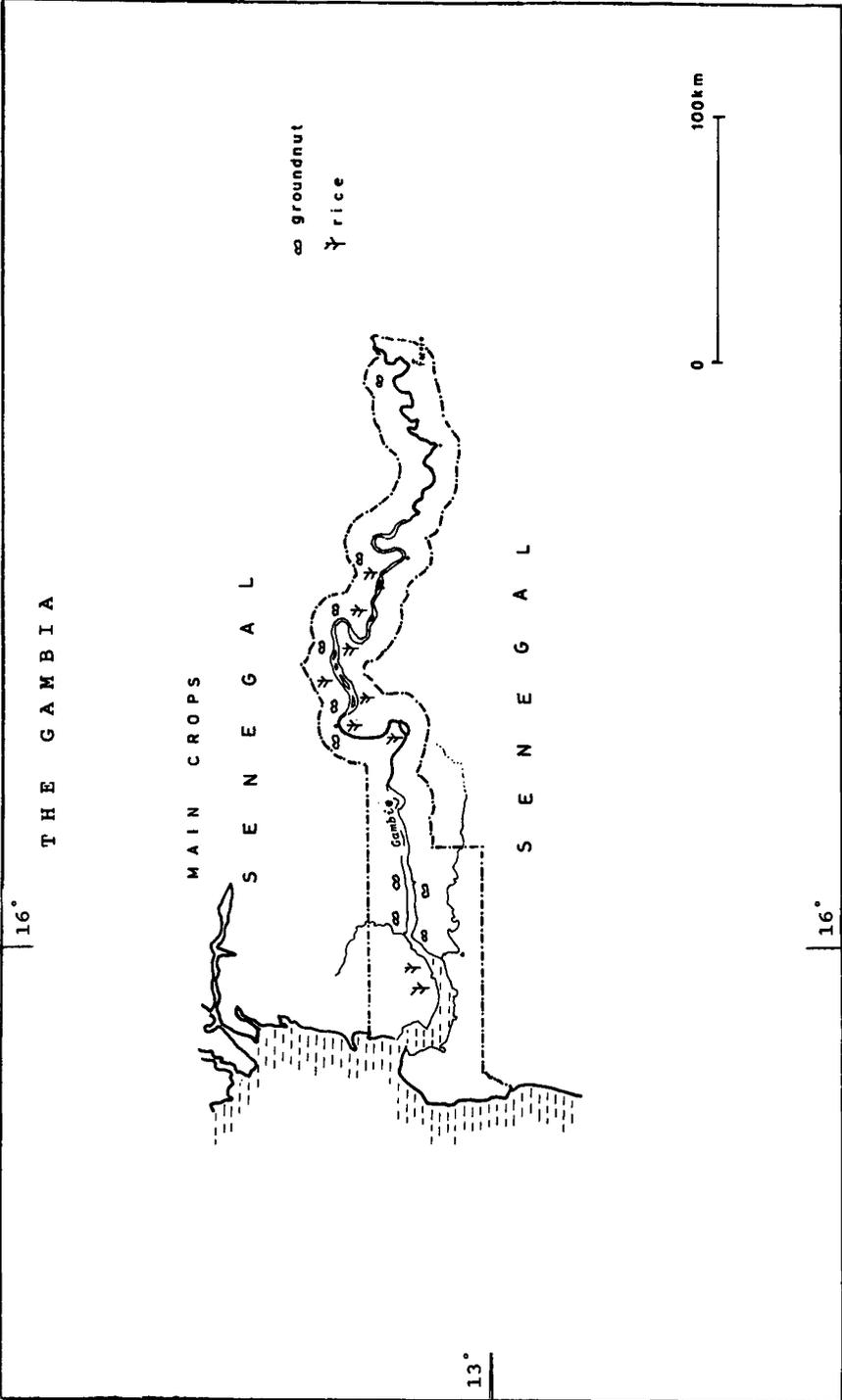
Little is known about the Gambian history before its discovery by the Portuguese. More than 40% of the population belongs to the Malinke, the rest belongs to smaller ethnic groups in the Gambia, such as the Wolof, the Serer, the Dyola and the Soninke. The region was in the beginning of the 13th century a part of the Wolof kingdom. The first European contacts were established in 1455. After a period of domination by a number of European colonial nations, the Gambia became British in 1661. After the fixation of the borders it became a British protectorate in 1902. It acquired independence in February 1965. In 1982, after a revolution, a special agreement was made with Senegal, leading to the Senegambian Confederation. The Confederation was dissolved in 1989; in 1991, a new 'Treaty of Friendship' confirmed several bilateral agreements.

5. Nature of political system:

The Constitution of the Republic came into effect on 24 april 1970. The President is elected by universal suffrage for a period of five years. He appoints a Vice-President and other Cabinet Ministers are chosen from the House of Representatives. This House of Representatives consists of 50 members; 36 chosen by universal adult suffrage, five traditional chiefs, eight non-voting nominated members and the Attorney-General.

6. Economy:

GDP: agriculture: 34% (1989), industry: 39% (1980).



THE GAMBIA

MAIN CROPS

S E N E G A L

S E N E G A L

○ groundnut
△ rice

0 100 km

16°

13°

16°

Employment: agriculture: 80% (1990).

6.1. Mining: No mining activities. Minerals present: kaolin, tin, ilmenite, zircon, rutile.

6.2. Agriculture: 16% of the total area is arable land or cultivated with permanent crops (1989). Groundnuts are the principal agricultural product, followed by cotton and oilpalm. Main food crops are millet and sorghum, cassava and rice in the swamp areas. Normally a rotation with millet and groundnuts is applied. Fruit trees like mangoes, oranges, papayas and lemons are widespread.

6.3. Livestock: 8% of the total area is permanent pasture (1989). Cattle are mostly the tsétsé-fly resistant Ndama (400 000). Cattle is still kept for social prestige rather than as a marketable asset. There are about 170 000 sheep, 150 000 - 200 000 goats, 10 000 pigs, 4000 donkeys and 2 000 000 poultry.

6.4. Forestry and woodland: 14% of total area (1990). Approximately 95% of the removed volume is classified as fuel wood.

6.5. Fishery: Coastal waters are well-stocked and the lower reaches and estuaries yield significant quantities of prawns, some of which are exported (frozen) to Europe.

6.6. Industry: Poorly developed apart from groundnut transformation and oil extraction, food industries and slaughter houses. Tourism is being promoted.

**6.7. Weights, measures and currency: pound, foot
1 Dalasi (D) = 100 Butut
1 US \$ = 8.626 D (31 March 1991)**

7. Trade:

Total exports amount to 50 mln US \$ (1976/77): groundnuts and groundnut products (81%), palmkernels, hides and skins, fishproducts. Main clients are the EEC, the USA and Japan.

Total imports amount to 36 mln US \$ (1976/77). Main suppliers are the EEC and Taiwan.

8. Miscellaneous:

Membership of international organisations:

GATT, IMF, OAU, UN, UNESCO, WHO, African Development Bank, African Groundnut Council, Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (recipient), Economic Commission for Africa, Economic Community of West African States, Commonwealth, Islamic Conference, World Bank.

The Gambia is a signatory to the Lomé Convention (EEC-ACP).

The Gambia has with Senegal a 'Treaty of Friendship'; it is also member of the Gambia River Basin Development Organisation (OMVG), together with Senegal, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau.

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