



## GREAT CITIES OF AFRICA



# THE ANCIENT CITY OF KOUMBI SALEH

The Empire of Ghana was first established in 300 AD in Western Africa. The Empire of Ghana covered a much larger region than modern day Ghana, the total region encapsulated modern day Mali, southern Mauritania, and the area between the Niger and Senegal Rivers.

The city of Koumbi Saleh was established as the capital of the Empire of Ghana by 800 AD. Koumbi Saleh was originally two cities which grew to very large populations and eventually combined to one city with two sections. The city was located Situated about 200 miles north of modern-day Bamako, Mali. One side of the city was named El Ghaba which was the location of the royal palace of the king and the wealthy members of the empire whose homes were constructed from stone. The other side of the city was the trading center and mostly populated by the Muslim Africans which also consisted of Berber Africans from Northern Africa. This side of the capital was home to 12 mosques and was inhabited by 30,000 people. Within the city multi-story houses were constructed and also two cemeteries. The city of the African non-Muslims was constructed using

the more traditional materials found in west Africa such as hardened clay, wooden beams and thatch. Fresh water well surrounded the city and these were utilized for the cultivation of vegetables.

We find that the historian Al Baki in his book called 'Kitab fi Masalik wal Mamalik' (The Book of Roads and Kingdoms) describes the city in his writing as follows:

**“THE CITY OF GHANA (KUMBI SALEH) CONSISTS OF TWO TOWNS LYING IN A PLAIN. ONE OF THESE TOWNS IS INHABITED BY MUSLIMS. THERE ARE IMAMS AND MUEZZINS, AND ASSISTANTS AS WELL AS JURISTS AND LEARNED MEN. IN THE TOWN WHERE THE KING LIVES, AND NOT FAR FROM THE HALL WHERE HE HOLDS HIS COURT OF JUSTICE, IS A MOSQUE WHERE PRAY THE MUSLIMS WHO COME ON DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS.”**