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Harvesting mineral riches: 1000 years of gold mining in Ghana

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Abstract

This paper provides a concise historical account of gold mining in Ghana, from the pre-colonial period, through to the present. For over 1000 years, the Ancient Kingdom of Ghana, the former Gold Coast Colony, and present-day Ghana, have produced a substantial portion of the world's gold. Initially frequented by Arab traders who had crossed vast stretches of the Sahara, the trading routes of the Ancient Kingdom of Ghana had stimulated significant conflict among groups, in particular, the Europeans, who, for centuries, battled for control of the West African gold monopoly. The region's first gold mining companies were formed shortly after the British established the Gold Coast Colony in 1874, and, following two successive gold rushes in the early-1900s, gold prospecting and extraction were widespread in Obuasi, Tarkwa and Prestea. However, the industry soon entered a period of depressed production, which began at the time of country independence in 1957, and ended shortly after implementation of the country's Economic Recovery (ERP) Plan in 1983. The Ghanaian gold mining industry has since grown rapidly, supplanting cocoa cultivation as

Ghanaian gold mining industry has since grown rapidly, supplanting cocoa cultivation as the country's chief economic activity. In the past 20 years, production increases in the order of 700% have been achieved, and today, output from resident gold mines accounts for some 37% of national exports and 97% of mineral exports.



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Keywords

Ghana; Gold Coast; Gold mining; Trade; Policy

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