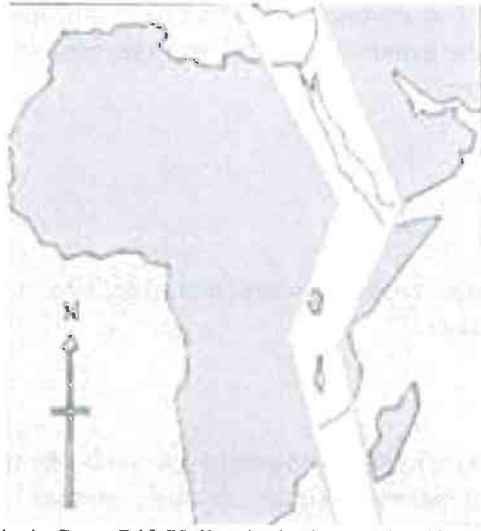


Africa



Africa's Great Rift Valley is the largest landform on Earth, and the only one visible from the moon. It was here our earliest ancestors evolved.

Upon Africa's soils our prehistoric relatives have walked side by side. From its territories, great civilizations have risen to glory. Through its peoples, astounding cultures have grown and flourished. Yet many myths remain about Africa.

Why is such an important place so stigmatized and misunderstood?

Many factors have contributed over time to the degradation of Africa and its peoples. Stories and pictures in the news, the legacies of European colonialism and the slave trade, and attitudes conjured up through racial dissention within America have all distorted modern perceptions of the African continent and its people. But one of the biggest reasons for the perpetuation of negative ideas and misinterpretations is the simple neglect or avoidance of the continent's ancient history.

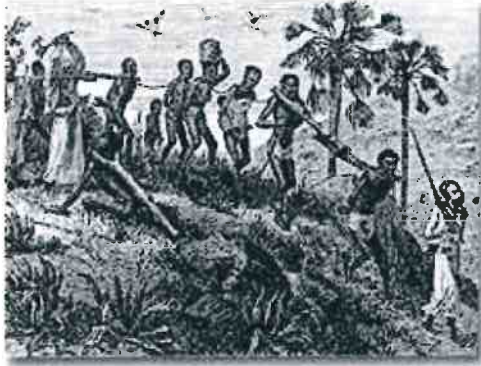


This is Sao Jorge da Mina, a 17th-century Portuguese and Dutch fort in Ghana, as it looks today. Influence of European colonization in Africa is still felt both culturally and linguistically.

New-Found Treasures

For years, educators have either bypassed Africa altogether, or pointed to prehistoric, colonial, and present times. However, times have changed, and of course, continue to change. Every day new discoveries are made about Africa and new artifacts are displayed to enrich the community through their historic and cultural value. The lack of serious and positive attention that has been given to Africa's ancient and medieval civilizations makes them even more important and exciting to study today. They are treasures that should not be hidden from the world.

So what were these civilizations all about and why are they so important? From the beginnings of the Common Era to the period of European imperialism, worlds of great empires, royal courts, pastoral nomads, tribal chiefs, stone palaces, intricate art, and glorious gold emerged, collapsed, and intertwined. Powerful states were built from small towns and villages and a great network of regional and overseas trade was established. Wars were waged, territories were seized, kings became rich, and Islam was spread across the continent.



West African slaves were marched to the coast for transport. An estimated 10 to 12 million West Africans were sold into slavery for the Americas and another 12 to 20 million were sent east to Arab lands.

Different Kingdoms, Similar Stories

These kingdoms or cultural groups have unique traits, but similar patterns can be found in the development and decline of each. The resources, locations, economies, governments, and social divisions that heightened each society are linked to a common foundation. And the repeated patterns that are evident in the kingdoms' downfalls make it clear that the movement from stateless to state societies is often a very difficult transition.

As few written records exist for reference, the entire story of early Africa is difficult to unravel. But, through clues that range from art to oral accounts, a remarkably complete picture of its early landscape has already been drawn. Together, the tales of the successive reigns of the Ghana, Mali, and Benin kingdoms, the invasions of the Bedouin nomads, and the mysterious rocky ruins of Great Zimbabwe close the gap between the missing pieces and bring much of Africa's cultural heritage closer to light.

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1. What are two factors that have contributed to the generally negative attitudes toward Africa?

a.

b.

2. How have educators treated Africa as a subject?

3. According to the graphics, what is one thing that makes the Great Rift Valley unique?

4. According to the graphics, approximately how many African people were sold into slavery?

5. From the beginning of the Common Era to Imperialism, what were four examples of important African accomplishments?

a.

b.

c.

d.

6. As African civilization began to move toward state governments, what are some challenges people might face when this begins?

a. Not used to being governed by others

b. Disagreement on laws

c. Trouble identifying and relating with others

d. All of these

7. Without many written records, what do historians rely on to understand the past?

Benin and Its Royal Court



This mask from Benin City, Nigeria, displays Benin cultural influence. Masks play a central role in African art and ceremony.

In a small, tribal village nestled in the dense forestlands of northwest Africa, an important meeting is called by the chief.

Villagers anxiously assemble and chatter nervously as they

await the news. A fire crackles as the chief and village elders deliver the proposal of an alliance. Several neighboring villages are soon to be united, and they feel it will be prosperous to join the new group.

With fear, wonder, and excitement, the villagers consider the alliance. Though confused, they realize one thing for sure: life in Benin will never be the same.

While there are no written records documenting Benin's early history, historians speculate that meetings like this were the beginnings of its rise to statehood. Based on archaeological evidence and stories passed on through many generations, it is known that clusters of villages preceded the great kingdom. They embodied its territories from about 900 to 1300 C.E., when Benin officially became a city-state.

Rise to Power

Shortly after statehood was established, a foreign official named Oranyan became leader of Benin. Was he invited? No one knows for sure. According to oral tradition, Oranyan came to power because he married a local chief's daughter and formed a kinship connection that led to ruling rights. Others argue that this story is just a cover-up and that Oranyan's rise to power was most likely the result of an invasion. In either case, during Oranyan's rule, he fathered a son who was called Ekewa. Historians agree that Ekewa was considered the first king, or *oba*, of Benin.

While these events solidified Benin's transformation to a unified state, it was Eware the Great (1440-73) who launched Benin to its greatest height. Under his rule, and the successive reigns of his son and grandson, Benin changed dramatically.

An Empire Emerges

Government structure was the biggest reform as bureaucracy replaced the kin-based system. Supreme power was held by the *oba*, who ruled through an assembly of chiefs and advisors representing various districts.



The art of Benin is the product of an urban royal court, and is meant to symbolize the power, mystique and endurance of the ruling dynasty and its governing institutions. This memorial head, cast in bronze, is an example of that tradition.

The system was one in which competition for leadership grew strong and much was accomplished. New territories were acquired through strategic military expansion, vibrant commercial activities arose, the economy boomed, and the arts flourished. Benin, with its royal court, joined the ranks of the largest, most powerful empires of the region.

One of the most crucial events of this prosperous period was the arrival of Portuguese mariners in 1486. Through contact with the Portuguese, Benin established important trade relations in Europe and became the chief exporter of cloth, pepper, and ivory. Trade also brought copper and brass into the empire, allowing metalworkers to refine their traditional techniques of sculpting and casting.

Eware established great guilds for Benin's artists and craft workers. The activities and facilities were open only to privileged artists who were chosen by the king and highly esteemed in the royal court. The casting of brass was monitored carefully. Upon Eware's command, anyone found casting brass without royal permission faced execution.

Benin's art formed a central part of the kingdom, and for that reason, it is important today as a historical record. Many bronze, ivory, and wood carvings give a glimpse of life in the royal court through their depiction of historical personages and events.

Sold into Slavery

While the growth of trade and strengthening of European relations brought Benin great prosperity, it also led gradually to the kingdom's collapse. The European slave trade began in the early 16th century and swept through the region boasting of great wealth and prosperity. Many sources credit Benin for opting out of the slave trade completely, but it is important to consider facts that are often disregarded.

Although Benin did not engage in full-fledged slave trade until the 18th century, it never abstained from the system entirely. Its leaders prohibited the export of male slaves during the 16th and 17th centuries, but women, as they did not play a role in the political system, were considered expendable and traded freely. Benin officials also became involved in the importing and reselling of slaves from other regions during this period.

The commercial gains brought to West Africa through the slave market were immense but the prosperity quickly led to competition and war. Incessant fighting driven by hunger for human captives destroyed much of Benin's civilization and weakened its economy.

Despite these trials, Benin survived through the late 19th century. Though on the road to demise, the kingdom held resistance as European powers swept through the region in search of prime territories to seize as colonial real estate.

Like many great civilizations, Benin's rise to power was filled with excitement and wonder, but its eventual social crises and political instability displayed the effects of greed, inhumanity, and love of power.

1. What are two advantages that could be gained if the Benin, or any tribe, joined an alliance?

- a.
- b.

2. How did Oranyan become the leader of Benin?

- a. By war
- b. By a test of strength
- c. By birth
- d. No one is sure how

3. Who was Ekewa?

4. What was an *oba* in Benin?

5. Which of the following did NOT contribute to Benin's rise?

- a. Military growth
- b. Economic growth
- c. The arts
- d. Kin based government

6. How has Benin's art helped us understand its history?

7. How did the contact with Europe help and hurt Benin?

Help:

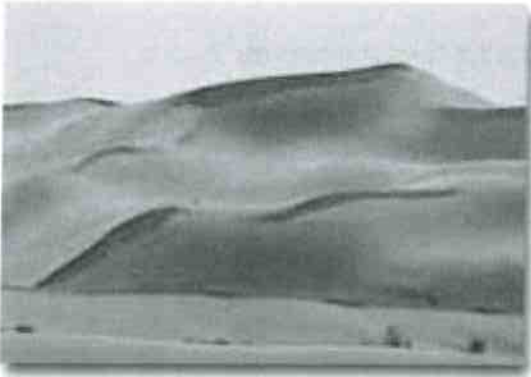
Hurt:

8. True or False: Benin participated in the slave trade?

What evidence is there of this?

9. Why do you think the Benin Empire eventually collapse?

Life in the Desert



Only around 20% of the Sahara looks like this stereotypical desert; the rest is rocky desert or has small amounts of brush. But that 20% is still larger than a quarter of the entire United States.

"There's no place like home." To the Bedouin people, this "home" meant the entire Sahara desert.

Traditional Bedouin are pastoral nomads, or wanderers who travel with herds of domesticated animals. They are constantly on the move, with no permanent camping place. Their staple belongings include camels and tents, and they frown upon agriculture and all types of trades and crafts. Any type of settled life is traditionally considered beneath Bedouin dignity.

While it may seem like the Bedouin lack order, this is far from true. Tribes are the basic unit of their social organization, and though simple, they are highly structured. For wandering purposes, tribes break into smaller clans and family units. Traveling and exploiting the land is much more efficient this way.

Most of what is known about the Bedouin today involves Middle Eastern tribes and lands, but it is important to recognize that much of Bedouin history also took place in northern Africa. In fact, the Sahara was one of the first Bedouin territories.

Islam Comes to Africa

The first Arab invasion of North Africa was led by ancestors of the Bedouin and occurred in 643 C.E. At the time of the invasion, northern Africa already had a long history of foreign attack and cultural infusion. The Greeks, Romans, and Phoenicians had

previously left their marks, and it was time for the Arab Muslims to do the same.



The traditional desert city is walled for defense, as the flat desert provides no natural barriers. Walls have gates, which are points of access to the city. Here you see that the walls of Marrakech are fortress-like, often 20 to 30 feet thick and 30 to 40 feet high.

Followers of the prophet Muhammad emerged from the Arabian Peninsula and moved westward across Berber-occupied areas of northern Africa. Their goals were to teach the fundamentals of Islam and establish regional, political, and religious unity under the rule of a Muslim leader, or *caliph*.

The invasion was intense, and by the 8th century, the primary goals were accomplished. Muslims had succeeded in saturating the region, but they had also encountered internal conflict that led to big changes. Hostile disagreement between two Arab leaders had divided Islam into two branches — Sunni and Shia.

A long chain of events resulted from this division, and one important link led to the invasion of the Bedouin. Around 1040 C.E., a group of Islamicized Berbers who had become affiliated with the Shia decided to take revenge. They neglected lands given to them by their caliph, defied the creeds of the Shia, and launched a rebellion among other Berbers to convert to the Sunni branch.

These events no doubt led to vengeful reactions. The angry Shia caliph invited two tribes of Arabian Bedouin, known collectively as the Hilalians, to travel west and issue the Berbers' punishment.



A view of the minaret of the Great Mosque at Kairouan, Tunisia. Minarets are towers in mosques from which Muslims are called to prayer five times each day. Kairouan is said to be the fourth holiest city in Islam.

Invasion and Arabization

The Bedouin groups agreed to the task and carried it out well. They moved in aggressively, making their way mercilessly through Egypt and Libya — and some even continued on to the coast of Morocco. This was their chance to acquire new territory through conquest.

The Hilalian invasion was devastating to the region. The Bedouin and their herds left little behind. Towns were quickly demolished. Great cities were sacked and literally trampled to dust. Farmlands were defaced. Some Berbers eventually decided to join the Bedouin invaders — they obviously could not beat them, so this was probably a survival choice.

The Bedouin invasion of northern Africa was obviously one of destruction, but it was also one of introduction. As the nomads swept through the region, they continued the process of Arabization — the teaching and spreading of Islamic culture.

The early Bedouin left behind much more than a good story. They left the ideals of strength and endurance that have allowed their culture and peoples to survive today. Modern Bedouin tribes have been forced over the years to adapt to modern conditions. Gradually they have become more sedentary, but their foundation of pastoral nomadism is still firm and the desert is still the place they call home.

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1. Where did the Bedouin people live?
2. What are “pastoral nomads”?
3. Name three groups that early Northern African societies have been invaded by.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
4. One Muslim goal was to unify people under one leader called a
 - a. king
 - b. god
 - c. caliph
 - d. Berber
5. A disagreement in leadership led to the division of Islam into what two groups?
 - a.
 - b.
6. What was the result of the ensuing wars between Shias and Sunnis?
 - a. Cities were destroyed
 - b. Farms were destroyed
 - c. Total devastation
 - d. All were results of the wars
7. True or False: The Bedouin tribes still exist today.
How have they changed?

Kingdom of Ghana



Penny Tweedie/Oxfam
Traditions more than 1,000 years old still thrive in Ghana. Ghanaian boys are perfectly at home with traditional masks.

Between the 9th and 11th centuries C.E., the kingdom of Ghana was so rich that

its dogs wore golden collars, and its horses, which were adorned with silken rope halters, slept on plush carpets. Based on animal luxuries alone, it is no wonder that foreigners touted Ghana's kings as the richest men in the world.

Certainly they were living the high life ... but how did they do it?

Located within the present-day borders of Mauritania, Mali, and Senegal, medieval Ghana literally sat on a gold mine. The land's abundance of resources allowed Ghana's rulers to engage in years of prosperous trading. Strategic governing coupled with great location led to the rapid emergence of a very wealthy empire.

Gold in Wagadugu

Most of what we know about ancient Ghana — which is more accurately called Wagadugu — is based on writings of Arab travelers who came in contact with the nation's peoples. "Ghana" was actually the title given to Wagadugu kings and was used by the Islamic "reporters" to describe the rich and mysterious place they observed.

Evidence of Ghana's occupation dates back to the 4th century, but it was several hundred years later that it became established as a nation by a tribe known as the Soninke, whose leaders have been credited with the early strengthening of the Wagadugu state and the expansion of its territories.

By 1000 B.C.E., the nation had undergone strategic expansion and taken control of a large pocket of land between the upper Niger and Senegal Rivers. The region was rich in gold, and its acquisition meant that Ghana would become a leading force in the trans-Saharan trade network.



The golden stool of the Ashanti kings of Ghana, a symbol of their power, has not been seen by the general public for 300 years. Its location is kept secret, and a replica is used for public display.

Ghanaian Politics

The leader of all leaders was the king, who was also known as the *ghana*, or war chief. His word was law. He served as the commander in chief of a highly organized army, the controller of all trade activities, and the head administrator of justice. Mayors, civil servants, counselors, and ministers were appointed by the king to assist with administrative duties — but at all times, the king was in charge.

Each day, the king assembled his court and allowed people to publicly voice their complaints. Beating drums that resounded throughout the area signaled the courts assemblage and people gathered to speak their minds. Whether they were neighborly conflicts, or cases of violated rights, the king listened to the complaints and gave his judgment.

Such hearings were reportedly peaceful, unless they involved issues of criminal nature. Two of the most serious criminal offenses were the denial of debt and the shedding of blood. These crimes were tried by ordeal.

According to Islamic reports, the criminally accused was given a foul concoction to drink that consisted of sour and bitter-tasting wood and water. If he vomited after tossing back the nasty brew he was declared innocent and was congratulated for passing the test. If he did not vomit, and the beverage remained within, he was considered guilty as charged and suffered the king's wrath.

Ghanaian citizens were not the only ones put to the king's test. Inhabitants of its conquered lands were examined for their good behavior and loyalty as well. In territories where order and obedience prevailed, and taxes were properly paid, autonomy

was granted. But in areas which struggled for independence or defied the king's laws, Ghanaian governors were appointed as watchdogs and little went unreported to the king.

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Trans-Saharan Trade

When the king was not busy enforcing his power among the people, he was spreading it internationally through trade. At its peak, Ghana was chiefly bartering gold, ivory, and slaves for salt from Arabs and horses, cloth, swords, and books from North Africans and Europeans.



This is a map of the ancient kingdom of Ghana, displaying its location well north of present-day Ghana. Today this area is part of the countries of Mali and Mauritania.

As salt was worth its weight in gold, and gold was so abundant in the kingdom, Ghana achieved much of its wealth through trade with the Arabs. Islamic merchants traveled over two months through the desert to reach Ghana and "do business." They were taxed for both what they brought in and what they took out.

With this system, it is no wonder that Ghana got rich quickly. The wealth that the kingdom acquired did not, however, serve in its favor forever. Competition from other states in the gold trade eventually took its toll.

Jealousy, fear, and anger of Ghana's power prompted its neighbors to stand up against the kingdom. Their efforts were at first weak and insignificant, but eventually, in the mid-11th century, a Muslim group known as the Almoravids launched a devastating invasion on the capital city of Koumbi Saleh. Though territories were seized, and a tribute tax was enforced, Ghana recovered and forced the invaders to withdraw.

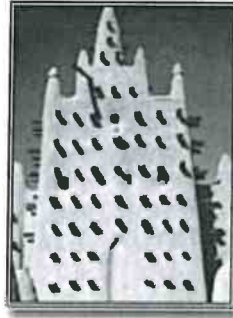
A little less than 200 years later, however, Ghana was not so lucky. Weakened by subsequent attacks, and cut-off from international trade, the kingdom was vulnerable and unable to prevent defeat. In 1240 C.E., Ghana was absorbed into the growing nation of Mali, which would soon become the next great empire.

1. What resource helped Ghana to become wealthy?
 - a. Real name of Ghana
 - b. Leader from Ghana
 - c. Ghana's gold
 - d. The main resource of Ghana
2. What is a Wagadugu?
 - a.
 - b.
3. What two rivers was Ghana situated between?
 - a.
 - b.
4. What were three things the Ghana was in charge of?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
5. How were the most serious crimes judged?
 - a. By the Ghana
 - b. By a jury
 - c. By an ordeal
 - d. By a duel
6. Trade with what group produced the most wealth for Ghana?
 - a. Gold
 - b. Europeans
 - c. Africans
 - d. Arabs
7. What are two things that led to Ghana's fall?
 - a.
 - b.
8. What nation eventually took over Ghana?

Mali: A Cultural Center



Mansa Musa, greatest king of Mali, is shown on this Spanish map of Africa.



The mosque at Timbuktu was the heart of the kingdom of Mali. The empire of Mali expanded after the fall of Ghana, reaching its height under the rule of Kankan Musa (c. 1312-1327 C.E.). Many monumental mosques were constructed during the reign of Mansa Kankan Musa who is still remembered as a great Islamic ruler.

What would life be like if a magician ruled the land? The history of ancient Mali gives us some hints. The founder of this West African kingdom was well known among his people as a man of magic with more than a few tricks up his sleeve.

Before the sorcerer's reign, and the Malian kingdom's birth, years of competition and fighting took place in the lands west of the upper Niger River. A series of fierce battles took place, and in the 13th century C.E., a group known as the Soso emerged victorious. The Soso's new lands, which had once belonged to the kingdom of Ghana, were like giant pots of gold. But before the Soso could settle in and enjoy the wealth, the great "sorcerer-king" Sundiata moved in to take over.

The Lion King

Sundiata claimed that Mali was his by right of inheritance and in 1230 A.D he defeated the Soso and took back the land. According to legend, Sundiata's rival, King Sumanguru, was also a sorcerer. Sumanguru conjured up the heads of eight spirits for assistance. Sundiata had stronger magic. He defeated the eight heads and then shot an arrow, which grazed Sumanguru's shoulder, draining him of all remaining magic. With a pat on the back, Sundiata declared himself ruler, or *mansa*, of the region and set up capital in the city of Niani.

Sundiata, also known as the "Lion King," was determined to

make changes, and indeed he did. He decided to assign specific occupations to particular kin groups and developed a social organization similar to a caste system. For example, if born into a family of warriors, one was destined to be a warrior. If born into a family of *djeli*, or storytellers, one was destined to join the djeli tradition. Choice of destiny was not an option.

This system conveniently meant that if born into a family of mansa, one was part of the ruling dynasty — the Keita. It was one of Sundiata's "tricks" to keep power in the family.

For the most part, the system worked. However, for a short time, power escaped the Keita hands and landed in those of a former slave. The disruptive reign of the ex-slave, known as Sakura, paved the way for Sundiata's nephew, Mansa Kankan Musa, to back the throne. Best known for his wealth, his generosity, and his dedication to Islam, Mansa Musa took the kingdom to new heights.

A Golden Pilgrimage

Through involvement in the gold trade that swept through Africa and reached all the way to Europe, Mansa Musa led Mali to great riches. The region's prosperity was nothing new, but based on Egyptian records, Mansa Musa's display and distribution of the wealth was unprecedented.

In 1324, the great Mansa Musa set out on a pilgrimage to Mecca. Decked out in his finest clothes, he passed through Cairo with 500 slaves, each of whom carried a six-pound staff of gold. Backing them up were 100 camels, carrying in sum over 30,000 more pounds of the precious metal.



The African gold trade was indeed a lucrative one, as shown by this gold from Ghana.

Surely this was a sight to behold, and the accounts left behind say that the show got even better. While cruising through Cairo, Mansa Musa reportedly handed out gifts of gold to bystanders. He

entertained the crowds and made a lucky few suddenly rich.

In Mansa Musa's Hands

Aside from being generous, Mansa Musa made an important mark in Mali by introducing the kingdom to Islam and making it one of the first Muslim states in northern Africa. He incorporated the laws of the Koran into his justice system. Cities such as Timbuktu and Gao were developed into international centers of Islamic learning and culture. Elaborate mosques and libraries were built. The university arose in Timbuktu might well have been the world's first. The cities became meeting places for poets, scholars, and artists.

Though not everyone accepted the new faith and culture, a strong relationship between religion and politics quickly developed. Mansa Kankan Musa ruled with all the ideals of a fine Muslim king. He died in the mid-14th century, and Mali was never quite the same. Internal squabbling between ruling families weakened Mali's governing and its network of states started to unravel. Then, in 1430, a group of Berbers seized much of Mali's territory, including Timbuktu.

Though the wealth and power that Mali possessed was swept up quickly by the next great empire, its legacy stands proudly. The pioneering spirit and groundbreaking accomplishments of Mali's kingdom make its rise and fall an important chapter of African history.

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1. Who was Sundiata?

2. According to legend, how did Sundiata gain power?

- a. By inheritance
- b. By magic
- c. By war
- d. By luck

3. How was the future occupation of someone determined?

- a. Their education
- b. Their choice
- c. Their family
- d. Random draw

4. What "amazing" thing did Mansa Musa do during his trip to Mecca?

5. What was Mansa Musa's law system based on?

6. What happened to Mali after Musa's death?

7. What do you think made Mali a great African empire?

Great Zimbabwe



The word "Zimbabwe" is thought to be derived from a Shona phrase meaning "stone enclosure" or "house of rock."

The House of Rock.

It's not the name of a dance club or a new band. It's actually a translation of the Shona word, "Zimbabwe." Though not the best illustration of the modern African nation,

this phrase is a perfect description of the ancient city within its borders known as Great Zimbabwe. Sixty acres of immense stone ruins comprise the city and tell the story of the people who created and resided in it some 900 years ago.

For a long time, many Westerners argued that such amazing structures could not have been crafted in Africa without European influence or assistance. These notions reflect ethnocentrism, or the tendency to view one's own culture as the best and others as inferior. With the help of modern dating techniques, today's archaeologists have been able to disprove these arguments and expose the truth. Africans, and Africans alone, were responsible for building this astounding and complex city.

Shona Settlement

The first inhabitants of Great Zimbabwe were Shona-speaking peoples who likely settled in the region as early as 400 C.E. Back then, the land was full of possibilities: plains of fertile soil to support farming and herding, and mineral rich territories to provide gold, iron, copper, and tin for trading and crafting. It was fine place for the Shona to call home.

Over the years, descendants of the Shona made transitions from simple farming communities to more complex, stratified societies. By 1000 C.E., the population of Great Zimbabwe was divided and

ranked by status — from elite leaders and their cattle to the peasants who did all the work. Cattle were very desirable and actually more valuable than most of the workers.

Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous

In response to the changing social, political, and economic landscape, new buildings were gradually built. Tremendous stone houses were constructed by the peasants for their kings. Sophisticated workplaces were designed for conducting trades such as blacksmithing.

The buildings were made of heavy granite blocks, stacked tightly together. Stones were arranged carefully, and no mortar was used to seal them together. The largest and most impressive building was an elliptical structure known today as the Great or Western Enclosure. The remains of its outer wall measure over 800 feet long and up to 32 feet high. The wall enclosed several huts and a tall, cone-shaped tower. Archaeologists and anthropologists believe that the enclosure was the city's center and was occupied only by the elite. It was the dividing line between the rich and the rest.

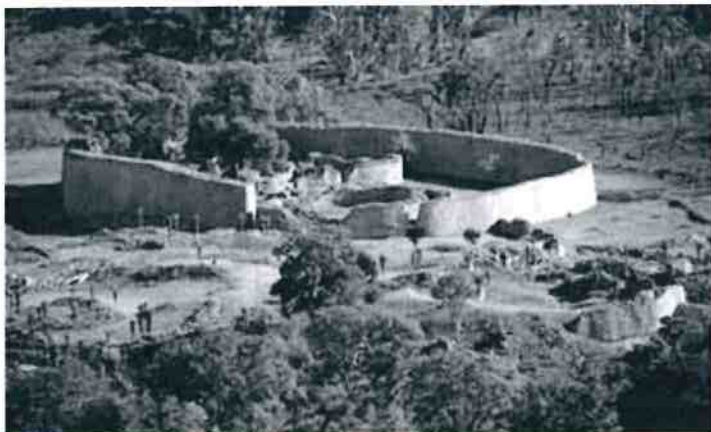
Several clues led to this theory. First, remnants of exotic items from overseas were found within the enclosure. Second, no evidence of cooking was found within the walled area. Most likely, this means that food was prepared elsewhere by servants and delivered to the wealthy inhabitants upon demand. And third, evidence of only 100-200 residents is shown, while many thousands occupied the city.

Where did everyone else live? They lived in mud huts surrounding the enclosure. Although the huts were not quite as glamorous as the granite "palaces," they were well constructed.

Long Live Rock

By 1200 C.E., the city had grown strong, and was well known as an important religious and trading center. Some believe that religion triggered the city's rise to power, and that the tall tower was used

for worship. The people of Great Zimbabwe most likely worshipped Mwari, the supreme god in the Shona religion.



Long looted by treasure hunters, thrill-seekers, and lay archaeologists, it has been only in past two decades that the ruins of the stone city of Great Zimbabwe have begun to reveal their secrets of past African culture and history.

Discoveries of Chinese porcelain, engraved glass from the Middle East, and metal ornaments from West Africa provide evidence that Great Zimbabwe participated in a comprehensive trade network during the 13th and 14th centuries. Gold was probably its chief export and East African cities — especially those along the coast that had overseas connections — were most likely its primary trading partners.

Zimbabwe's prosperity continued until the mid-15th century. At this time, the city's trade activity declined and the people began to migrate elsewhere. The exact cause of the evacuation remains a puzzle, but many scientists agree that a decline in soil quality and fertility was probably a major factor. The Kingdom of Great Zimbabwe has declined, but the House of Rock still stands.

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1. What does Zimbabwe mean?

2. What is ethnocentrism?

3. What were two valuable resources found in Zimbabwe that helped the Shona thrive?

- a.
- b.

4. What is the “Great Enclosure”?

- a. A religious center
- b. Trade route
- c. Peasant housing
- d. None of these

5. What are two pieces of evidence that show that the Great Enclosure was only for the upper classes?

- a.
- b.

6. What did the rest of Zimbabwe’s citizens live in?

7. The Zimbabwe likely worshiped

- a. Greek gods
- b. Roman gods
- c. Muslim god
- d. Shona god

8. What is one proof that Zimbabwe was involved in trade?

9. According to the reading, what was the cause of the decline of Zimbabwe?