

- The West African empires of Mali, Songhai and Ghana were great trading kingdoms famous for their gold, but each declined for similar reasons. Ask students to research historical accounts of Arab traders, scholars and storytellers and to review evidence found by archaeologists regarding these ancient empires. Based on this information, students may write position papers analyzing how these once great African kingdoms rose to power and develop their own conclusions as to why they declined. As a follow-up, students may compare and contrast the achievements of West African kingdoms with those of the Europeans.
- Mansa Musa, Sundiata and Suleyman were three prominent leaders of the Mali Empire at its peak. Ask students to research and develop detailed biographical profiles of these men and to create Venn diagrams comparing and contrasting their accomplishments and leadership styles. Students may infer information about Mansa Musa from the account of Arab historian Al-Umari, which can be found at the following web site:  
[www.bu.edu/africa/outreach/materials/handouts/k\\_o\\_mali.html](http://www.bu.edu/africa/outreach/materials/handouts/k_o_mali.html)
- Ask students to create time lines of significant moments in the history of the West African empires of Ghana, Mali and Songhai, including the historical founding of Mali by Sundiata, also known as the "lion prince," who converted to Islam as a gesture of good faith toward Islamic traders and is one of the most legendary figures in African history. As a follow-up, students may research and write essays analyzing the achievements of the Arab world in areas such as art, architecture, science, math and literature.
- Timbuktu, Djenné and Bukhara are ancient cities that all played a strong role in the propagation of the Islamic faith. Have students complete a map of countries that have significant Islamic populations. Attach pie charts showing the composition of each country with regard to members of different faiths, particularly Islam. Use these statistics to spark discussion about their implications on the social and political practices of the countries.
- The Timurids were the final great dynasty to come from the steppes of Central Asia. The Timurid dynasty (1370-1507) initiated one of the most brilliant periods in the history of Islamic art. The architectural style of Timurid palaces and mosques is highly distinctive and very representative of Islamic artistic expression. Ask students to explore the origin of this architectural style as well as gather information and images of some of the most historically significant Timurid structures. Information on the art of the Timurid period may be found at this web site:  
[www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/timu/hd\\_timu.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/timu/hd_timu.htm)

### Suggested Internet Resources

Periodically, Internet Resources are updated on our web site at [www.LibraryVideo.com](http://www.LibraryVideo.com)

- [www.silkroadproject.org/smithsonian/xian/geography.html](http://www.silkroadproject.org/smithsonian/xian/geography.html)  
"The Silk Road: Connecting Cultures, Creating Trust" is offered by the Smithsonian Institute and features information on the economic and cultural exchanges that took place on this famous ancient trade route.
- [mali.pwnet.org/](http://mali.pwnet.org/)  
The Virginia Department of Education provides teachers with a wealth of curricular resources in "Mali, Ancient Crossroads of Africa."
- [www.loc.gov/exhibits/mali/](http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/mali/)  
The Library of Congress presents "Ancient Manuscripts from the Desert Libraries of Timbuktu," an online exhibit of manuscripts that document the African intellectual legacy and literary tradition from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- [www.fordham.edu/halsall/med/leo\\_afri.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/med/leo_afri.html)  
Fordham University provides excerpts from "Description of Timbuktu" written by Muslim traveler Leo Africanus.

### Suggested Print Resources

- Dethier, Jean and Dorothee Gruner. *Banco: Adobe Mosques of the Inner Niger Delta*. 5 Continents Editions, Milan, Italy; 2003.
- Khan, Aisha Karen. *Historical Atlas of Uzbekistan*. Rosen Publishing Group, New York, NY; 2003
- Sattin, Anthony. *The Gates of Africa: Death, Discovery and the Search for Timbuktu*. St. Martin's Press, New York, NY; 2005.

#### TEACHER'S GUIDE

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- ANCIENT CITIES OF THE ARAB WORLD, VOLUME I
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# THE ARAB WORLD

## ART & ARCHITECTURE OF THE ARAB WORLD, VOLUME I

Grades 7 & up

This guide is a supplement designed for teachers to use when presenting programs in the series, *The Arab World*.

**Before Viewing:** Give students an introduction to the topic by relaying aspects of the show overview to them. Select vocabulary to provide a focus for students when they view the program.

**After Viewing:** Review the program and vocabulary, and use the follow-up activities to inspire continued discussion. Encourage students to research the topic further with the Internet and print resources provided.



## Program Overview

Developing at important crossroads on ancient trans-Saharan and Silk Road trade routes, the legendary cities of Timbuktu and Djenné in Mali and the city of Bukhara in what is today Uzbekistan once served as renowned centers of Muslim scholarship. Each city features unique examples of Islamic architecture, including some of West Africa's oldest earthen mosques and Central Asia's most prominent and impressive medieval structures. While Bukhara has a population of a quarter million people and is a growing urban area, Timbuktu and Djenné are struggling economically and are both threatened by the encroachment of desert sands.

### Episode 1: Timbuktu

Timbuktu, founded around 1100 CE by nomadic Tuaregs, was incorporated into the Mali Empire in West Africa in the late 13<sup>th</sup> or early 14<sup>th</sup> century. The city became a thriving commercial hub for the trans-Saharan gold and salt trade, and grew into the center of Islamic culture and learning, with universities and libraries attracting scholars from all over the Arab world. Timbuktu features the environmentally threatened earthen mosques of Djinguereber, Sankore and Sidi Yahya, which were built during the 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The city declined after a Moroccan invasion in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and was not rediscovered by Europeans until the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### Vocabulary

**infidel** — A person who doubts or rejects a particular belief system or religion.

**El Dorado** — The mythical city of gold, thought to be in South America, which inspired Europeans during the Age of Exploration.

**nomads** — People who move from place to place as the seasons change in search of provisions and arable land.

**mosque** — Also known as a *masjid*, a Muslim place of worship.

**minaret** — A tall thin tower connected to a mosque from which people of the Islamic faith are called to prayer.

**Koran** — The holy writings of Islam.

**Tuareg** — A member of a nomadic, Berber-speaking people living in North Africa.

### Episode 2: Djenné

Djenné, Mali was founded in the 13<sup>th</sup> century near Jenne-Jenno, the oldest known city in sub-Saharan Africa. It grew into a trading and market center expediting commerce between merchants of semiarid Sudan and the more tropical geographical area of West Africa. Around the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, Djenné became renowned as a center of Muslim learning and facilitated the spread of Islam throughout the region. While many of the city's traditional earthen structures have survived to this day, the original Great Mosque of Djenné fell into decay by the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, this famous mosque, the world's largest mud structure, was rededicated in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### Vocabulary

**Sahel** — An increasingly dry geographic area in Africa that acts as a transitional zone between the Sahara Desert and the more tropical savannah in the South.

**Bozo** — An indigenous people known for their fishing skills living along the Niger River in Mali, West Africa.

**Animist** — A person who believes that both spiritual beings and spiritual forces in nature influence our life, health and security.

**Islam** — A religion practiced by more than one billion Muslims, "Islam" comes from the Arabic word for surrender.

**Surah** — A chapter in the Koran.

### Episode 3: Bukhara

Founded around the first century CE, Bukhara was a prominent trade and cultural center when the Arabs captured it in 709. The city became the capital of the Persian Samanid dynasty in the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries, and developed into the heart of Central Asia's Islamic community. Bukhara was known as the holy Islamic center of the Silk Road, and served to connect culture and commerce between East and West. The city was later conquered by the Uzbek Shaybanids in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and is now part of the independent country of Uzbekistan. Bukhara has an impressive architectural heritage including major mosques and madrasas and features the Ark Fortress, its oldest structure.

### Vocabulary

**Silk Road** — A historical trade route that operated from around 200 BCE until the 16<sup>th</sup> century, which involved cultural and economic exchanges between East and West.

**Timurid** — A dynasty in Central Asia founded by Timur (Tamerlane) that thrived between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries.

**madrasa** — An Islamic religious school.

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**Mongols** — An ethnic group from Central Asia known for its nomadic ways and formation of one of the largest empires in world history.

**Uzbeki** — One who lives in the country of Uzbekistan or in the surrounding areas.

**Zoroaster** — A Persian prophet and teacher who founded the religion of Zoroastrianism around 600 BCE.

**czar** — The absolute monarch and ruler of Russia. The word "czar" is derived from Caesar.

**hamam** — A word that means "public bath" or "bath house" in Arabic.

### Follow-up Discussion Questions

- Who was Heinrich Barth? Explain the significance of his journeys and describe how he contributed to the West's knowledge of the legendary city of Timbuktu.
- The narrator explains that "learning was the wealth of Timbuktu." Offer evidence to support or refute this statement.
- Describe the traditional building materials used in Djenné. What economic, geographical and environmental conditions contributed to this unique style of construction?
- Who was Koumboro? Explain his role in the adoption of Islam in Djenné and how this cultural change affected the town's architectural development.
- When did the Arabs secure a footing in Bukhara? Analyze the spread of Islam as an example of cultural diffusion in Central Asia.
- What is the significance of the year 1920 in Bukhara's history? Compare and contrast life in Bukhara before and after this time.
- What is Lab-i-Hauz? Describe its role in the city of Bukhara and analyze how the components of culture work together to make each culture unique.

### Follow-up Activities

- Bukhara, with its domed market halls, was a famous city along the Silk Road — a network of ancient trade routes that provided cultural and economic links among peoples from the Mediterranean to the Far East. Break students into small groups and assign each group to research a specific location along the Silk Road. Students may develop a poster advertising the goods and technologies that were produced and traded at their location on this famous ancient trade route. They may choose from places such as Bukhara, Luoyang and Palmyra. A wealth of information on the Silk Road may be found at the following web site: [www.ess.uci.edu/~oliver/silk.html](http://www.ess.uci.edu/~oliver/silk.html)

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