

Ask students to create a detailed time line outlining the circumstances surrounding Nkrumah's fall from power. As a follow-up, students may summarize the West's reaction to the toppling of Nkrumah and research U.S. involvement in the coup. What were the immediate reactions of the U.S. government and the U.S. ambassador in Ghana at that time to news of the coup? More information on the coup may be found at this web site: www.utexas.edu/conferences/africa/ads/197.html

- Like many of the world's rainforests, Ghana's lush tropical environment is endangered. The Forestry Commission of Ghana is responsible for the regulation of the utilization of forest and wildlife resources, the conservation and management of those resources and the coordination of policies related to them. Ask groups of students to research and develop action plans to sustain and develop an environmentally-sensitive area in Africa such as the Ghanaian rainforest. What trade-offs would have to be made in order to utilize the resources of each group's selected region? What are the potential environmental impacts? Over the course of the activity, students should determine the viability of developing their region and present alternative scenarios. Students may learn more about programs associated with the Forestry Commission of Ghana at the following web site: www.fcghana.com/
- Despite having a rich history and culture and being home to world-renowned historic cities, Mali is ranked as one of the poorest countries in the world, with average income under \$300 and with some districts reporting 90% of the population living below the poverty line. The great hope for many African nations is oil, as it is predicted that Africa will supply more oil to the United States than the Middle East by the end of the decade. In 2005, an Australian company was awarded two onshore petroleum exploration licenses in the Republic of Mali. Until now, the benefits of oil have not trickled down to the vast majority of people in Africa. Ask students to research the social and economic issues related to oil production in Africa and conduct a roundtable discussion representing the interests of oil companies, Mali's government, and the citizens of Mali. If oil is discovered, what is the best way to ensure that its revenues are used to benefit all parties? Students may expand the activity and conduct similar exercises featuring mock discussions between various interest groups involved in other oil-exporting African nations such as Nigeria, Angola and Equatorial Guinea.

Suggested Internet Resources

Periodically, Internet Resources are updated on our web site at www.LibraryVideo.com

- web.mit.edu/akpia/www/AKPsite/4.239/lamu/lamu.html
The Massachusetts Institute of Technology presents "Lamu, Kenya: Conservation of an East African Seaport," a case study on plans to raise awareness about this important cultural heritage site.
- www.uiowa.edu/~africart/toc/people/Dogon.html
The University of Iowa provides a brief summary of the social, cultural and economic aspects of Dogon culture.
- www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/africa/features/storyofafrica/index.shtml
The BBC offers an extensive history of Africa.

Suggested Print Resources

- Diamond Group. *History of East Africa*. Facts on File, New York, NY; 2003.
- Hollyman, Stephenie. *Dogon: Africa's People of the Cliffs*. Harry N. Abrams, New York, NY; 2001.
- Worger, William H. *Africa and the West: A Documentary History from the Slave Trade to Independence*. Oryx Press, Phoenix, AZ; 2001.

TEACHER'S GUIDE

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Wonders of the ANCIENT WORLD™

ANCIENT AFRICAN CIVILIZATIONS

Grades 7 & up

Wonders of the Ancient World transports viewers to ancient civilizations of the Americas, Asia, Africa and Europe and provides a firsthand look at the magnificent achievements and contributions of a wide range of cultures. Through the study of ancient peoples, students will understand the diversity of the human experience—the contrasts between settled and nomadic lifestyles, the characteristics of different religions and belief systems and the development of large cities and powerful empires—which provides a solid basis for the understanding of civilization today.



Program Overview

Ancient African cultures such as the Ashanti, Dogon and Swahili tell the history of the continent from an African perspective. Exploring ancient African civilizations allows us to understand the causes and effects of the rise and fall of African empires and kingdoms and not only reveals the huge diversity of religious practices on the continent, but also shows the centrality of religion to the lives of many Africans. The rich mineral deposits of the land of the Ashanti Empire, the bustling commercial activity of the Swahili coast and the reclusive and exotic life of the Dogon have fallen into decline in many ways, but these cultures still attempt to maintain elements of their ancient lifestyles and remain important symbols of a bygone era.

Episode 1: Ashanti

The Ashanti Empire was a powerful West African kingdom that ruled in what is now southern Ghana in the 18th and 19th centuries. The Ashanti kingdom was active in the slave trade and flourished because of its land's famous gold deposits, strong government leaders and powerful military which fought actively against, but ultimately succumbed to British colonialists in the 19th century. Groups of villages made up the traditional Ashanti state, ruled over by a chief whose primary duties were religious and military. The ancient capital city of Kumasi was symbolized by the Golden Stool and is where all Ashanti kings were enthroned. Today, Kumasi is one of the most densely-populated regions in modern Ghana.

Vocabulary

Muslim — A follower of Islam, a religion practiced by more than one billion people around the world.

Akom — A traditional religious experience in Ghana in which an individual is thought to be possessed by a spirit. Akomfo means “possessed persons.”

abosom — A word that refers to “lesser gods” as opposed to the Supreme Being; part of the belief system of the Akan people in Ghana.

Akwasiadae — A colorful ceremony of the Ashanti Kingdom in which people honor their king and ancestral spirits.

Asaase — The name of a traditional goddess of the Akan people in Ghana. Asaase is the mother of the earth.

Kumasi — The capital city and important historical center in the Ashanti region of Ghana.

Gold Coast — The name of a former colony of Great Britain established in 1874. Also, the former name of Ghana until the country became independent in 1956.

Episode 2: Dogon

The Dogon are a West African ethnic group from the central plateau region of Mali. They are part of the legendary Mande people, who were driven out of their region over 800 years ago and settled in and around the barren Bandiagara Plateau. In Dogon culture, art and religion are closely related—their art expresses their animist view of the world. The Dogon build their houses out of clay and they believe they were created from clay by Amma, the god of creation. Today, there are approximately 600,000 Dogon in Mali, mostly hardscrabble farmers living in scattered villages without a centralized government. Because of the rocky, arid environment, whole villages have been abandoned and the ancient wisdom of the Dogon is being overtaken by grim, modern realities. However, many Dogon continue to struggle to maintain their old, autonomous culture and traditions.

Vocabulary

Mande — A term that refers to an ancient culture and language group spoken by a large number of people in West Africa.

Bandiagara Plateau — A site in West Africa noted for its landscape of cliffs and sandy dunes that has significant archaeological and anthropological interest.

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

Amma — For the Dogon people, the name of the sky god or creator of the universe.

Tellem — An ancient West African people who lived in present-day Mali.

falaise — The French word for a steep slope or cliff resulting from erosion or faulting that separates two level areas.

toguna — A Dogon meeting house.

Episode 3: Swahili

“Swahili” refers to the coastal people of East Africa, characterized by a unique blend of African and Arab culture that amazed the first European arrivals. The first contact between the peoples of the East African coast and Arabia, and Persia and the Far East occurred long before the arrival of Islam in the eighth century—encounters that have origins dating back to ancient Greece and Rome. It is often argued that the Swahili are closer to Arab cultures than to African societies in the interior of the continent. The Swahili Coast has had a long history of trade, and Lamu Island, located near the exotic Indian Ocean trading center of Zanzibar, became not only a thriving commercial port dealing in gold, spices and slaves, but was the setting for an active global exchange of ideas and styles.

Vocabulary

dhow — A small sailboat used for centuries to trade goods in Africa and Asia.

Babylonian — A people who ruled Mesopotamia after the Assyrians, known for their architecture and laws.

sheikh — A title of respect for the leader of an Arabic village or family.

Swahili — An ancient culture of coast dwellers and a language of East Africa that developed from trade.

Islam — A religion practiced by more than one billion Muslims. “Islam” comes from the Arabic word for surrender.

muezzin — The official who calls Muslims to daily prayer.

Allah — A word that means “the God” in Arabic.

Follow-up Discussion Questions

- Describe the level of commitment many people in the village of Bodwease have toward the ancient village gods. Summarize the debate regarding the maintenance of the temple in Bodwease and the continuation of the Akom ritual.
- Where did the Dogon people originally come from? Discuss why they may have been driven from their native country.
- What is the toguna? Analyze its significance to the social climate and practices of the Dogon people.
- Explain the importance of the *dhow* to the Swahili economy at Lamu. Describe the state of economic conditions in Lamu today and speculate about how this ancient trading center might be sustained.

Follow-up Activities

- The Ashanti are a proud people who have worked hard to achieve a distinct identity among the Akan people. Share with the class examples of Ashanti art, many of which are directly linked to sayings, like poems, proverbs and even folk tales. Ask students to analyze representations of Ashanti culture and identify what they say about how the Ashanti regard themselves, their neighbors and their culture. The Metropolitan Museum of Art features wonderful examples of Ashanti art at the following web site:
www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/asan_1/hd_asan_1.htm
- When Kwame Nkrumah took office as prime minister on March 6, 1957, he had just finished leading Ghana to independence from Great Britain and there was every indication that his infrastructure development goals could be accomplished successfully. The cocoa-based economy was flourishing and the people of Ghana were united behind Nkrumah, a great orator and galvanic personality. However, Nkrumah's term in office would not last.

(Continued)