

- Ethiopia is the only great African nation that was organized around Christianity, although Ethiopians' interpretation of the faith has a highly distinct character. The continent of Africa features a wide variety of traditional and neo-traditional religions. African art, music and dance are central to traditional African religions. Divide the class into groups and ask each group to research one of these three aspects of traditional African religions and present examples of it to the class. As a follow-up, ask students to research nature worship and animism as well as voodoo and Santeria, both of which are shrouded in secrecy and frequently depicted as "black magic" by popular culture. Students may explain each religion's customs, practices and religious beliefs. More information on the religions of Africa may be found at the following web site: www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/Internet/africa.htm
- Many African nations resisted European colonization and fought for their independence in the 19th and 20th centuries. Ask students to research and develop detailed time lines describing the issues and circumstances involved in these nationalist movements. Included in the time lines should be biographical information on nationalist leaders such as Menelik II in Ethiopia and Joshua Nkomo in present-day Zimbabwe. As a follow-up, ask students to read documents associated with the Unilateral Declaration of Independence of Rhodesia in 1965 and summarize the reactions of Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith, British Prime Minister Harold Wilson and the Soviet Government to this political development. Students may read primary source documents on the subject of Rhodesia's independence at the following web site: www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1965Rhodesia-UDI.html
- In the 1950s, architect Anthony Whitney catalogued all the buildings at Great Zimbabwe. In the course of his work, he realized how the builders of Great Zimbabwe were able to quarry large quantities of stone to construct their massive city and also distinguished distinct building periods. Ask students to research and write descriptions of how the granite used to build Great Zimbabwe was obtained and to compare and contrast the three periods Whitney identified in his research.

Suggested Internet Resources

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

- www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/zimb/hd_zimb.htm
The Metropolitan Museum offers a map, images and a detailed description of the history of Great Zimbabwe and its fabled stone ruins.
- www.mnsu.edu/emuseum/archaeology/sites/africa/aksum.html
Minnesota State provides a historical overview of Axum, or Aksum, an ancient city located near Ethiopia's northern border. (Continued)

- www.gondarlink.org.uk/guide/history/history.shtml
Students and teachers may learn more about Ethiopia at GondarLink, the first full-school connection with an Ethiopian secondary school.

Suggested Print Resources

- Henze, Paul. *Layers of Time: A History of Ethiopia*. St. Martin's Press, New York, NY; 2000.
- Marcus, Harold G. *History of Ethiopia*. University of California Press, Berkeley, CA; 2001.
- Pikirayi, Innocent. *Zimbabwe Culture: Origins, Growth, and Decline of Pre-colonial States in Southern Zambezia*. AltaMira Press, Walnut Creek, CA; 2001.

TEACHER'S GUIDE

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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

Some of the most dramatic examples of ancient African architecture were developed over a period of hundreds of years and include the massive stone monuments of Great Zimbabwe and, in present-day Ethiopia, the incredible rock-hewn churches of Lalibela and the fortress-city of Fasil Ghebbi. The Great Enclosure at Great Zimbabwe is the largest ancient structure in sub-Saharan Africa, while the stone-cut churches of Lalibela are considered to be the oldest preserved structures on the continent. While it lies in ruins, Great Zimbabwe offers a glimpse into the highly complex East African society that developed in this region. In Ethiopia, the Lalibela churches continue to play a large role for the country's large Christian population and Fasil Ghebbi remains a prominent educational and cultural center.

Episode 1: Great Zimbabwe

Great Zimbabwe is an extensive and mysterious stone ruin lying in southeastern Zimbabwe which uniquely represents a fully indigenous African civilization. Great Zimbabwe, a Bantu term meaning “stone enclosure,” grew to dominate the Zambezi Valley and was the heart of a thriving trading empire from about 1100 to 1500 CE. At the peak of its power in the 14th century, Great Zimbabwe, sometimes called the African Acropolis, supported an estimated population of 10,000 to 20,000 people through the gold trade and a strong agricultural economy. The famed stone buildings at Great Zimbabwe were constructed of granite without the use of mortar and were encircled by high stone walls that formed a protective zone for the city's ruling classes. For centuries, explorers, historians and archaeologists struggled with questions about Great Zimbabwe's origins. Many doubts remain about the cause of the ancient city's decline, causing the ruins to retain much of their age-old mystery.

Vocabulary

Shona — A group of Bantu-speaking peoples living in eastern Zimbabwe.

Karanga — An ancient African people who ruled an empire built on trade from around 1000 to 1600 CE. The empire included the vast stone ruins of Great Zimbabwe.

Queen of Sheba — According to the Old Testament, the ruler of Saba who married King Solomon. Their son began a dynasty of rulers in Ethiopia.

Ophir — An ancient region where King Solomon is said to have obtained great quantities of gold.

kraal — A collection of huts within an African village.

Acropolis — In Greek, “high hill” — the highest point in the Greek city-state of Athens where important monuments and temples were built.

Episode 2: Lalibela

Lalibela is named after a late 12th- and early 13th- century Ethiopian ruler who called for the development of the famed monolithic churches of the area. The 11 subterranean churches were cut by hand out of solid rock. Separate groups of these churches are connected by underground passageways. The interiors were hollowed out by hand and given vaulted ceilings, reflecting a level of craftsmanship that characterizes the remarkable history of Ethiopian architecture. Lalibela is a religious center and sacred place for Ethiopian Christians, and its rock-hewn churches continue to attract thousands of pilgrims during the major holy day celebrations.

Vocabulary

Crusaders — Europeans who participated in a series of offensive campaigns, called Crusades, which took place between the 11th and 13th centuries. These battles, originally attempts to capture Jerusalem from the Muslims, became wars over territory.

Golgotha — From the Aramaic, meaning “skull,” a hill in Jerusalem referred to in the Bible as the site of Jesus' crucifixion.

Sinai — A mountain site in Egypt where, according to the Bible, God appeared to Moses and gave him the Ten Commandments.

Axum — A powerful Ethiopian trading kingdom that was Christianized in the fourth century CE. Also spelled “Aksum.”

Ark of the Covenant — The golden container that, according to Judaism and Christianity, housed the Ten Commandments.

Episode 3: Fasil Ghebbi

Situated in the ancient Ethiopian capital city of Gondar, Fasil Ghebbi features the remains of castles and palaces that were constructed by a series of emperors from the 17th to the 18th centuries. The most important architectural monuments are the palace residences of Emperor Fasilides and his successors, structures that were developed in the midst of a fortress-like city that also features churches, monasteries and unique public and private buildings. The architecture at Fasil Ghebbi shows prominent indigenous, Portuguese, Hindu and Arab influences. While few of the original buildings have survived over the centuries, the city of Gondar is still an important cultural and economic center.

Vocabulary

Gondar — The capital of Ethiopia from 1632 to 1855, where many castles and palaces such as Fasil Ghebbi were built.

Abyssinia — The former name of Ethiopia, which changed in the 20th century.

Oromos — A large ethnic group in Ethiopia.

Follow-up Discussion Questions

- Describe some of the historic legends surrounding the origins of the civilization of Great Zimbabwe. Brainstorm names of other geographic or historical sites that have a similar air of myth and mystery.
- Who were the Karanga? Discuss theories regarding why they denied having any connection with the stone buildings of Great Zimbabwe and offer your own conclusion.
- Who was Gertrude Caton-Thompson? Evaluate her contribution towards the development of a more accurate depiction of the history of Great Zimbabwe.
- Explain the legend of the founding of the holy city of Lalibela. Speculate about the social, cultural and religious importance of this site.
- Discuss theories as to how 13th-century architects approached the monumental task of building the Beta Georgis church.
- Why are Bet Golgotha and the Selassie Chapel shrouded in mystery? Speculate about the reasoning behind the desire to generally keep these culturally significant sites off-limits to visitors.
- Discuss the role Portuguese missionaries played in the lives of Ethiopia's Orthodox Christians. Theorize the social and political effects of this divisive strategy.
- What difficulties did the successors of King Fasilides face? Analyze the causes for the decline of the Gondar monarchs.

Follow-up Activities

- Over the centuries, because of its stonework and further evidence of an advanced culture, the building of Great Zimbabwe was attributed to non-African civilizations by European colonialists intent on preserving the myth of the supremacy of the white race. According to Innocent Pikirayi, a lecturer in history and archaeology at the University of Zimbabwe, “When African nationalists were demanding independence in the 1960s, the Ian Smith [Prime Minister of Rhodesia] regime actually sanctioned historians to write a fake history on the origins of Great Zimbabwe, denying its African origins.” Ask students to read Pikirayi's comments and define what he means by “antiquarian revisionism.” Students may discuss why historical revisionism has been used by governments and historians and analyze its effects on our understanding of world history. Students may also break into groups to conduct research and provide past and current examples of revisionist history. Pikirayi's views may be read or listened to at the following web site: www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/africa/features/storyofafrica/10chapter1.shtml

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