African Ancestry Guide to:
African History & Cultures
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# Table of Contents

Map 6

Introduction 7

## Countries
- Angola 8
- Benin 10
- Burkina Faso 12
- Cameroon 15
- Central African Republic 18
- Democratic Republic of the Congo 20
- Equatorial Guinea 22
- Gabon 24
- Gambia 26
- Ghana 28
- Guinea 31
- Guinea-Bissau 33
- Ivory Coast 35
- Liberia 38
- Mali 40
- Mozambique 42
- Niger 44
- Nigeria 46
- Republic of Congo 51
- Senegal 53
- Sierra Leone 56
- Tanzania 58
- Togo 60
- Uganda 62
- Zambia 64

## Resources 66

## Credits 73
African Ancestry is a personal dream come true. It is inspired by my unwavering love and appreciation for the continent of Africa, its people, and the movement of African people throughout the world. As a graduate student, I was fascinated by the emerging new wave of genetic technology and the massive amount of genetic information that was being released on various human populations. The desire to become a part of this innovative and paradigm-changing revolution sparked my interest in the exciting field of molecular genetic anthropology. During my career in the field, I have spent over 12 years focusing on the genetic lineages of African people.

Since scientists have been able to sequence DNA (genetic material called deoxyribonucleic acid) which makes up the human genome, there has been considerable interest and debate surrounding the genetic characteristics that make people different. When asked, “Are there genetic differences that allow us to determine genetic lineages (ancestry) of groups of people?” the answer is yes. Since we all receive half of the entire DNA in our body from our mother and the other half from our father, we can go back generation after generation to determine the percent of DNA that we received from our ancestors. Even more exciting for us at African Ancestry is that technology has afforded us the opportunity to determine that there are some forms of DNA that are passed on in particular patterns in a constant and unchanged way. Two of these systems of DNA are called mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) and Y chromosome DNA (NRY) which define maternal and paternal lineages, respectively. Lineage-based ancestry tests have become popular because mtDNA and NRY sequences can provide information that is geographically and regionally-specific.

As you know, the process involved in testing lineages through African Ancestry is straightforward. DNA is extracted from cheek cells, collected on swabs, and informative genetic markers are sequenced, or genotyped. The genetic markers are then compared to a database of genetic lineages identified in specific African populations in search of a match. The accuracy of lineage matching is dependent on the size and sampling of the database used to match mtDNA or Y chromosome lineages to particular populations or geographic regions. The African Lineage Database™, used by African Ancestry, is the largest and most comprehensive database of indigenous African maternal and paternal lineages ever collected. In comparison, other databases are mainly derived from published research and are too small and lack enough samples in certain geographic regions to accurately assess ancestry.

– Rick Kittles, Ph.D., Scientific Director, African Ancestry

Within the continent of Africa lies a cradle of humanity that contains a diverse mix of people and cultures. In our effort to provide useful information on the present-day geographic locations of our African ancestors we decided to develop this book. This resource contains historical details and important facts on different African communities providing a glimpse of fascinating cultures and peoples. The purpose of this book is not to provide extensive detail about African population history because that would take many, many volumes. Instead, this book is intended to provide a starting point for people who have taken the ancestry test and want to get more information on the people in the geographic region, or regions with which they share ancestry. As you read this book, you will notice that when we describe different indigenous African populations we use not only the social ‘ethnic’ descriptions that theyself-describe, but also their shared genetic ancestry (genetic similarity due to shared common ancestors). Sometimes these may or may not be the same. So for instance, the Mende and Temne in Sierra Leone are defined socially as different ethnic groups, however many of the maternal and paternal lineages found among the Mende and Temne share quite recent ancestry.

Our goal is for this publication to increase the African American community’s understanding and appreciation of the role Africa has played in human history, in general, and in the ancestries of African Americans, in particular. We hope that this publication, and others, will help to resolve common thoughts and prejudices frequently associated with indigenous African peoples and cultures. For instance, in our publications we avoid, whenever possible, pejorative and/or derogatory terminology or phrases. The words tribe, slave, and minority are not used since we find that they carry with them a social meaning of value (or lack of value) placed on them by European thought and practice. Instead of referring to groups like the Mende or Fulani as “tribes”, we refer to them as a “people” or “ethnic group”.

We welcome you to the African Ancestry family, a community of people throughout the world with knowledge of their African roots! This book is a resource for you to begin the process of learning about the present-day region and people of Africa with which you share ancestry. You now have valuable information about a part of your history that can positively influence how you view yourself and the world. We encourage you to actively embrace this new information. Share it with family members. Share it with your children and grandchildren. Seek out native countrymen in your community. Take an active interest in an important issue. Travel. Contribute to a cause. Do whatever you are inspired to do.

– Gina Paige, President, African Ancestry
The Portuguese first sailed into the mouth of the Congo River in 1482. They initially maintained peaceful relations with the Kongo, trading goods in exchange for enslaved Africans. But as they moved farther south into the Ndongo kingdom, Portuguese slave-traders became more violent. When they met resistance from the Bakongo - many of whom considered the trade contradictory to Christianity - the Portuguese monarchy sent troops to Angola. It was not until the middle of the 17th century that the major coastal kingdoms were subjugated. Portuguese officials taxed the African kings in the use of porters and ivory, but mostly in enslaved Africans. It is estimated that between the late 16th century and 1836, when Portugal officially abolished slave trafficking, four million people from the region had been captured for the trade of enslaved Africans. Only about two million of these people survived the march to the coast, confinement, and the journey across the Atlantic. As many as one million enslaved Africans were shipped to Brazil, and the rest went to plantations in the Caribbean.

Ironically, it was the end of the trade of enslaved Africans that brought even worse conditions. The abolition of the trade was followed by repressive taxation and forced labor regimes of Portuguese colonialism. Although much of the rest of the continent underwent rapid decolonization in the 1960s, the armed struggle for independence in Angola took nearly fifteen years and perpetuated internal divisions resulting in a decades-long civil war. Although Angola’s vast natural resources hold great promise, immense obstacles to development remain, such as landmines and a shattered infrastructure.

**Angola Today**

Although Angola’s civil war officially ended in 2002, the country is devastated and continues to struggle with poverty, refugees, and an estimated 11 million remaining landmines.

**The People of Angola:**

**Bakonga**

*(also known as Bakongo, Kongo, Congo)*

**History:** Now dispersed throughout three countries in western Central Africa, the Bakongo were once a highly centralized kingdom extending from the Congo River to the Kwango and Kwanza rivers. The ancestors of the Bakongo began settling small farming communities in the area sometime before the 12th century. These communities became part of a semi-cohesive kingdom ruled during the 14th century from Mbanza Kongo, a prosperous farming village near the mouth of the Congo River. The Mbanza Kongo kings organized the surrounding communities into provinces, collected taxes and tributes, and instituted a monetary system based on shells, called nzimbu, which were farmed at the royal fisheries on the island of Luanda. The kings in turn performed religious rituals and were responsible for protecting the kingdom and its people.
The first documented contact between the Bakongo and Europeans occurred in 1483, when Portuguese explorer Diogo Cam (also spelled Cão), sailed into the mouth of the Congo River and encountered Bakongo villagers. He later took a group of Bakongo emissaries back to Portugal, returned to Africa in 1491 with priests, soldiers, and European goods, and had the Bakongo king Nzinga a Nkuwu baptized. Although Nzinga a Nkuwu later abandoned Catholicism, his son Nzinga Mbande -later Afonso (or Alfonso) - made Roman Catholicism the state religion. He invited missionaries to educate and Christianize his people; and renamed the capital São Salvador.

In addition, Afonso maintained strong trade relations with Portugal, carrying on a slave and ivory trade with the Portuguese for European luxury goods and guns. The slave trade, however, eventually took its toll on the Bakongo kingdom. Weakened but intact, the Bakongo kingdom continued to do business with European enslavers, including the newly arrived Dutch traders. The Bakongo kingdom later broke into factions, whose ongoing mutual raids generated a steady supply of enslaved Africans for Portuguese traders.

**Culture:** Although today nothing is left of the Kongo kingdom, present day Bakonga people still arrange themselves into a stratified society, and much of their artwork continues to reflect the powerful class. Masks and sacred objects are important in Bakonga art, and Bakonga religion continues a long tradition of pantheism and ancestor veneration. Bakonga death and funeral practices, as well as elements of their language and dance, became a major element in African-American culture, particularly in the Carolinas. Many Bakonga today live in towns and cities, but those in rural areas continue to raise cassava, peanuts, and corn.

**Mbundu**  
(also known as Kimbundu)

**History:** According to oral histories, the people who now call themselves the Mbundu came from three different Bantu-speaking groups who, in the 15th century C.E., migrated to the northern coast of what today is Angola. They brought with them iron-making, agricultural, and hunting skills as well as a unifying belief in divine kingship. Their diverse and decentralized political systems gradually coalesced into centralized kingdoms organized around ngola, or lineage emblems, which were inherited through matrilineal succession, though historians continue to debate the reasons for this transformation. By 1500 the Ndongo monarchy, with its capital at Kabasa, was the largest and most prosperous of the kingdoms, built on a mixed economy of agriculture, artisanship and trade.

The Mbundu’s proximity to the coast and their control over trade routes brought them into early and extensive contact with the Portuguese. The Mbundu initially called the Portuguese Ndele, or “masters of the white birds,” for the white sails that powered their ships. In 1520 a royal Portuguese decree called for the conversion of the Mbundu to Christianity, and Catholic missionaries established a mission near present-day Luanda. Unlike rulers of the Kongo kingdom to the north, however, the Ndongo king was indifferent to Christianity, preferring only to trade with the Portuguese. He treated the mission with disdain, and outlawed the preaching of the gospel. The Mbundu resisted Portuguese invasions until 1669, when, after a three-month siege, Portuguese troops overthrew the Ndongo capital.

The primary objective of the conquest of Mbundu territory was to acquire enslaved Africans for the Transatlantic Slave Trade conducted at the time by Portuguese traders and their African middlemen, primarily the Imbangala people of Kasanje. Although Mbundu rulers such as Queen Kazungula resisted, the slave trade destroyed most existing Mbundu kingdoms. With the abolition of the slave trade and the new demand for coffee and sugar in the 19th century, Mbundu men and women became increasingly alienated from their land and were forced to work on agricultural estates. Meanwhile, centuries of interaction with the Portuguese had created a distinct Afro-Portuguese group of Mbundu, many of whom were assimilados, those who had “assimilated” Portuguese culture. Assimilados held an elite social status, creating a divide within the Mbundu between the primarily urban, educated assimilados and the rural Ambakista-speakers.

**Culture:** Today, many Mbundu earn their livelihoods in Luanda or in commercial farming. Mbundu society is strongly matrilineal – men consider themselves bound to their mothers’ families, particularly their mothers’ brothers, and inherit land along the maternal line (though a woman, when she marries, will often join her husband’s family). While many Mbundu are Catholic, most also practice their traditional spirituality, which places strong emphasis on ancestors.

**Kuvaale**

Kuvaale people are nomadic cattle-herders; their status is based on the amount of cattle owned. By remaining isolated in southwestern Angola, they have been able to preserve their heritage and traditions. Kuvaale culture requires women to cover their hair. Having a bilateral society, people trace their heritage through both mother and father.
Benin Today

Home to the ancient Dahomey Kingdom, Benin is still known for its art, especially bronzerwork, textiles and sculpture. Music and dance are also interwoven into Benin culture, especially at the time of festivals. Benin is known as the home of Vodun (the name Voodoo is considered offensive by many practitioners, and many locals and visitors still observe this faith, especially in Ouidah, which was once an important slave trade port and is now home to the Musée d'Histoire de Ouidah (known as the Vodun Museum). Visitors also flock to the beautiful fishing villages near the city of Porto Novo, where the homes are all on stilts.

The People of Benin:

Adja
(also known as Aja)

The Adja primarily inhabit southern Benin and Togo. They speak a Niger-Congo language and those in the west are culturally and linguistically related to the Ewe. Approximately 500,000 people identify themselves Adja/Ewe. “Adja” is sometimes also used as an umbrella term to include all Ewe-speaking and Fon-speaking peoples.

Bariba
(also known as the Borgawa, the Bargu, and the Batoun)

The Bariba primarily inhabit northern Benin, southeastern Burkina Faso, northeastern Nigeria, and northern Togo. They speak a Niger-Congo language belonging to the Voltaic group and are made up of two distinct groups: the Busa of Nigeria and the Nikki of Benin. Approximately 700,000 people consider themselves Bariba.

Overview

Benin, formerly Dahomey, is a country better known for its past than its present. Along its narrow tropical coast, pre-colonial kingdoms grew wealthy through participation in the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Developing rich religious traditions, such as vodun or ancestor veneration, they also built formidable armies, which for years resisted French conquest. But during the colonial era Dahomey, a small palm oil exporter known for frequent uprisings, found itself on the periphery of France’s West African empire. In the years that followed independence in 1960, Dahomey maintained its reputation for political volatility while doing little to invigorate an economy still heavily dependent on palm oil exports. Since democratic reforms in the early 1990s, however, Benin’s political and economic climates have both improved considerably. In 1996 former dictator Mathieu Kérékou was re-elected.
Fon
(also called the Agadjia)

History: Closely related to the Adja and Gun ethnic groups, the Fon were once a part of the Adja Kingdom in Tado (part of present-day Togo). In the late 17th century, however, the Fon broke from the Adja and migrated to Allada. According to Fon legend, the group was forced to leave after Agasu, the son of an Adja princess and a leopard, unsuccessfully attempted to usurp the Adja throne. Agasu and his followers fled to Allada and established their own kingdom, but a later succession struggle forced Agasu's son Dogbari to migrate to Abomey, where he and his Fon subjects established the kingdom of Dahomey around 1620. Dahomey quickly evolved into a highly centralized monarchy, and its large, sophisticated army enabled the Fon to conquer neighboring kingdoms and expand their territory throughout most of southern Benin. After its conquests, the army commonly took captives, who were used as slave labor on the king's plantations or as sacrificial offerings in the annual religious ceremonies held to honor royal ancestors. These ceremonies were also an opportunity for the Dahomey kings to assemble their provincial chiefs and confirm their loyalty.

By the early 18th century the kingdom stretched from the Abomey plateau to the Atlantic Coast, and was well positioned to participate in European trade. Although some scholars believe the Dahomey intended to end or at least curtail the slave trade, the kingdom became one of West Africa's biggest suppliers of enslaved Africans, and it grew heavily dependent on the trade for revenue. By the late 19th century, the French were claiming Dahomean land. In 1894 the French occupied the kingdom, which subsequently became part of the colony of Dahomey.

Culture: The majority of Fon people still live in the southern half of the country and are the principal producers of the country's staple crops, including maize and millet. Those Fon who live in small towns and villages lead lives with strong gender roles, in which men mostly fish, while women take care of the house and garden, as well as sell wares at the marketplaces. However, Fon culture stresses that both parents are responsible for their children - older siblings, as well, are expected to care for the children in their family. Newly married couples live near the groom's father's family, and while polygamy is legal, so is divorce. Funeral rituals are of great importance in Fon culture, and the passing of a loved one can be an occasion for a ceremony lasting several days.

Somba
(also known as Bataba and Temberma)

The Somba primarily inhabit northwestern Benin and northern Togo. They speak a Niger-Congo language. About 300,000 people consider themselves Somba.
landlocked West African country bordered by Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger, Benin, Togo, and Ghana, Burkina Faso was created in 1984 when the leaders of Upper Volta changed the name of this former French colony to a term combining two of the country’s many languages, and meaning “land of upright people.”

Apart from Stone Age axes found in northern Burkina Faso, archaeology provides few clues about the region’s first human inhabitants. The ancestors of the Lobi and Bobo peoples were among the earliest agriculturists, settling perhaps around 1100 C.E. Migrants from the Dagomba region (in present-day Ghana) founded the Mossi dynasties, the most powerful of which, Ouagadougou, was founded in the late 15th century. Nineteen smaller but fairly autonomous Mossi states ruled over territories to the north, west, and east, and eventually assimilated many of the neighboring peoples into Mossi society. In the 18th and 19th centuries, slavery became a common practice in the Volta region. Some Mossi kingdoms captured local peoples or bought enslaved Africans from other kingdoms to work as agricultural or domestic laborers. These enslaved Africans were often allowed to engage in wage-earning activities for themselves, such as farming and raising cattle. In 1887 the French explorer Louis Binger visited Ouagadougou during his trip across West Africa and suggested it would make a suitable “labor reserve” for French ventures elsewhere in West Africa. Despite the resistance of local leaders, over the next several years the French conquered regions to the east, west, and north of the Mossi kingdoms, and in 1895 French troops occupied Bobo-Dioulasso, overcoming resistance from the town’s Zara warriors. The following year the French defeated Ouagadougou’s Mossi army, and burned down much of the city.

The first quarter of the 20th century was a period of extreme hardship for the peoples of Upper Volta. Although the French officially ended slavery in 1901, tens of thousands of Voltaic were put to work in cotton fields and construction sites, while others were forced into the military. Such policies, coupled with a punitive system of taxation, provoked popular revolts throughout the colony. By 1931 Upper Volta was not only famine-stricken but also bankrupt, and in September 1932 the country was dismantled and divided up among neighboring French colonies. When World War II began, more than 10,000 Mossi volunteered for active military service. Some served in Europe or North Africa, but many remained in the Bobo-Dioulasso military camp, or were used for forced labor. Soon after the war ended, the French government agreed to grant its colonies representation in the French National Assembly; the Mossi chiefs asked France to restore Upper Volta as a separate colony. In 1958, two years after universal suffrage was granted throughout French West Africa, France’s African colonies took part in a referendum on whether to become semiautonomous members of the French Community. Upper Volta, like all its neighbors, except Guinea, voted yes. Upper Volta became independent on August 5, 1960. Over the next two decades, one regime after another tried to invigorate the country’s stagnant economy, which remained heavily dependent on exports of cotton and migrant labor, as well as on foreign aid. In 1983, however, flight commander Thomas Sankara came to power promising an end to both neocolonialism and rural suffering. Although the Burkinabé revolution was cut short by Sankara’s assassination in 1987, it did initiate improvements in rural literacy, health, and food security, as well as women’s rights.

Burkina Faso Today

Burkina Faso is one of the world’s poorest nations, but it enjoys a reputation for religious and ethnic tolerance, as well as for its rich performing arts traditions. Since 1969 the capital has hosted the biennial Festival Panafrique du Cinéma et de la Télévision de Ouagadougou (FESPACO). Ouagadougou has come to be known as the “Cannes of Africa,” and BurkinaFaso filmmakers such as Idriissa Ouédraogo and Gaston Kaboré have won international renown. The state has also actively supported theatre festivals, as well as Bobo-Dioulasso’s biennial “Bobo Fête,” a week-long event featuring contests and cultural performances of all kinds (including cooking and hairstyling), drawn from traditions throughout the country. In 1998 Burkina Faso hosted the African Cup
of Nations soccer tournament, Africa’s biggest sporting event. Even though the home team lost in the quarterfinals, positive international media coverage of the games’ host suggested that the country had, at the least, scored a public relations victory.

**The People of Burkina Faso: Bobo**

**History:** The Bobo were among the earliest settlers of the semiarid savanna region of southwestern Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta). Similarities between the Bobo language and Mande languages spoken in southern Mali provide linguistic support for the Bobo’s oral traditions, which claim that its ancestors migrated from ‘Mande country,’ probably between the 12th and 14th centuries C.E. These ancestors are believed to have first founded a village called Tinima, on the plateau east of the Houet River. Other early migrants to the area settled alongside the river, on the site now occupied by the city of Bobo-Dioulasso. Their descendants established settlements to the north, east, and west of this site. The lack of a centralized state made the Bobo vulnerable to slave raids and conquest in the 18th century, especially after the rise of the Dioula Kong empire in the northern part of modern-day Ivory Coast. Many Bobo communities defended themselves by moving closer together; the large size, dense settlement, and fortified housing of many older Bobo villages are architectural legacies of the slave era.

When the French began their conquest of the southern Volta region in the late 19th century, they assumed the Bobo peasants were the subjects of the resident Dioula traders. During the early years of colonial rule, however, unrest in Bobo demonstrated the peasants’ lack of respect for the Dioula ‘chiefs’ appointed to collect taxes and recruit labor.

This period also saw rapid cultural changes. The Catholic mission in Bobo-Dioulasso found many converts in Bobo villages just outside the city, while members of the Zara clan, who had already distinguished themselves by their participation in trade and warfare, converted to Islam. After forced labor was abolished in 1946, many Bobo villagers applied their farming skills to commercial crops such as cotton, maize, and vegetables.

**Culture:** In the past the Bobo referred to themselves as the San-San, or “the cultivating people.” Merchant caravans traveled through Bobo country from at least the 16th century onward, but the Bobo themselves participated in the long-distance commerce only peripherally, primarily as suppliers of food for the caravans. The Bobo rejected as well the merchants’ Islamic teachings, and instead organized their rituals of ancestor veneration around village shrines. The pre-colonial political organization of the Bobo was also largely village-based. Village elders presided over matters of marriage and inheritance, both of which were (and to a certain extent still are) shaped by the Bobo’s “dual descent” kinship system. Rights to land, in other words, are traditionally passed patrilineally (from father to son) while moveable forms of property, such as cattle or cooking pots, were passed matrilineally (from maternal uncle to son, or mother to daughter).

**Fulani or Fulbe** *(also known as Peul, Fula, and Fellata)*

SEE NIGERIA

**Mossi**

**History:** Although the origin of Mossi society is debated, oral tradition claims that the kingdom was founded by Ouédraogo, the son of a Mamprusi princess from Gambaga (in present-day Ghana), and a Mande hunter. Ouédraogo (meaning “stallion,” after the horse that his mother rode to find her husband) migrated north as a young man with a group of Dogomba followers and founded the village of Tenkodogo, site of the first Mossi kingdom. Ouédraogo later sent three of his sons and a cavalry to acquire new territory in the Volta River basin region; by the 15th century his descendants had established over 20 kingdoms and had assimilated numerous peoples, including the Nioniosse, Ninsi, Gurunis, Dogon, and Bisa. The most important dynasty was founded in Ouagadougou in 1495 by Ouédraogo’s grandson, Oubry, who called himself the mogho naaba, “king of the world,” a title that was adopted by subsequent Ouagadougou kings.

By the 18th century the Mossi had developed a complex hierarchy, ruled by the nobles, or nakombse, who claimed direct patrilineal descent from Ouédraogo. The ruler of Ouagadougou exercised loose authority over the kings (naaba) of the four other largest kingdoms - Tenkodogo, Yatenga, Boussouma, and Gurma - who in turn collected payment from smaller kingdoms. Mossi society also distinguished between the talse (commoners) and yemese (slaves). Among the talse, those lineages who claimed descent from the original settlers were known as the tengabíse (children of the earth); this indigenous status gave them privileged claims to land as well as responsibility for harvest rites.

**Culture:** Most Mossi kingdoms supplemented agricultural production with trade. Caravans brought gold and kola from the south, and salt and livestock from the north. The region’s pre dominant traders were the yarase, assimilated Mande Muslims who paid the naaba annual tributes in return for market space in Mossi towns and safe passage through the region. In the late 18th century some Mossi kingdoms also participated in the Transatlantic Slave Trade, but many enslaved Africans were diverted to the royal court in Ouagadougou after the European abolition of the trade. The current mogho naaba remains a respected figure in contemporary Ouagadougou society. Today the Mossi constitute over half the population of Burkina Faso. Known for their traditions of migration, hundreds of thousands of the approximately 5.5 million Mossi move seasonally for farming work in neighboring countries, especially to Ivory Coast.
Lyela

The Lyela people are one of Burkina Faso’s smaller ethnic groups with a population of 230,000. The Lyela live approximately 75 miles from Ouagadougou, the nation’s capital. Living in Tiogo Forest Reserve, they view the earth as a sacred place. According to Lyela folklore, ancestors and spirits dwell in the forests.

Marka

Today, there are only 25,000 Marka speakers left. The majority of them have integrated with the Soninke and Bambara, which are also in the Mande language family. During the Bambara Empire, the Marka established Muslim merchant towns. The merchant towns monopolized on the desert-side trade between the Sahel communities and the nomadic Berber communities that crossed the Sahara.

Nuna

The Nuna have a population of 100,000 people. At the end of the 15th century, the Nuna people emigrated from northern Ghana to Burkina Faso. They are sedentary farmers producing: millet, sorghum, yams, maize, rice, peanuts and beans. Until the end of the 19th century, slave raids constantly ravaged the region. Since Nuna towns were structured with narrow alleys between their houses, farmers were able to stand on the roof of their homes and defend themselves from mounted warriors.

Bissa

There are around 650,000 Bissa people living throughout south-central Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, northeastern Ghana, and the northern tip of Togo. The Bissa are known for their peanut cultivation. Traditionally, a Bissa man who wants to marry a Bissa woman would have to provide the woman her own peanut field. Over half of the Bissa are Muslims, having extravagant mosques they have built throughout the region.
The Republic of Cameroon is located in Coastal West Africa, bordered by Nigeria, Chad, Central African Republic, Republic of the Congo, Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea. Its capital is Yaounde; other major cities include Douala, Garoua, and Maroua. The first inhabitants of what is now Cameroon were various hunter-gatherers such as the Baka, who lived in the area in small, nomadic communities as long as 50,000 years ago. Evidence suggests that Bantu-speakers originated in present-day eastern Nigeria and western Cameroon well before the Early Iron Age, and eventually dispersed across Central, East, and southern Africa, taking with them agriculture, iron working, and unique pottery styles. The Nok people, who lived near the Benue River from around 200 B.C.E. to the 4th century C.E., left rich archaeological evidence of their crafts. Present-day Cameroon is formed from two former colonies, the French-ruled Cameroun, which gained its independence in 1960, and the southern section of British Cameroon, which became free in 1961 (the northern section became part of Nigeria). Of the country’s population - around 15 million in the latest census - 31% are Cameroon Highlanders, and 19% are Equatorial Bantu. Other major ethnic groups include Kirdi, Fulani, Northwestern Bantu, and Eastern Nigrritic. Both French and English are official languages, but French is more widely used. Christians represent 40% of the population. Another 40% of the people practice Indigenous beliefs, and about 20% are Muslim.

Cameroon Today

Modern Cameroon is a cosmopolitan, diverse country, famous for its music - especially Makossa, a fast-paced dance music popular across the continent - and its food. Among the country’s most popular dishes are spicy brochettes of grilled meat and fish, sold by street vendors. Yaounde and Foumban have museums devoted to the art and culture of Cameroon’s ancient kingdoms, and the coastline boasts some of Africa’s best beaches. The writer Mongo Beti is perhaps the best internationally known modern Cameroonian; inside the country the national soccer team is venerated and widely celebrated.

The People of Cameroon: Bamiléké

History: The name Bamiléké comes from the phrase mba leko, or ‘the people who live over there,’ which was used by people of the western grasslands of Cameroon to describe their neighbors to the east. European travelers to the region corrupted the word into “Bamiléké” and used it to describe the people of the eastern highlands, including such Bantu-speaking groups as the Babadju, Bafoussam, Bagam, Baham, Bajoun, and Bangu. The Bamiléké were not indigenous to the eastern grasslands, but fled there from the north, primarily during the 18th century, to escape the slave raids of the Fulani. They mixed with the indigenous inhabitants of the area and reestablished highly stratified dynasties, loosely based on an idea of divine kingship that had been adopted from various Sudanic empires. Sub-chiefs often formed their own chieftoms.

Although the grasslands had long held high population densities, since the colonial era many Bamiléké have migrated to urban centers, especially Douala, as a result of both their business aspirations and increasing pressures for land. After Cameroon was divided between the French and British colonial mandates, many Bamiléké began working on French-owned agricultural plantations, but over time they came to own their own land and became involved in commerce and transportation.

Culture: Historically, most Bamiléké have been agrarian peoples, cultivating maize and peanuts, though in contemporary Cameroon they have excelled in business as well. They are also accomplished carvers of wood and ivory; their elaborate masks are used in the elephant masquerades held by men’s societies, and in public ceremonies and funerals. Customary political structures revolve around kinship, which the Bamiléké define by dual descent - patrilineal ties typically determine village residence and rights to land, but matrilineal ties...
define ritual obligations and the inheritance of movable property. Although Islam penetrated some Bamilélé groups, most of the people have retained their traditional religious beliefs.

**Ewondo**  
*(also called Ewundu, Yaunde, and Jaunde)*

The Ewondo are one of three main subgroups of Bete, themselves a subgroup of the Fang people. They speak a Bantu language and the majority practice Christian faiths. Most live in and around the capital city of Yaoundé, but some Ewondo live in more rural regions in the central and southern provinces of the country. There, the Ewondo are chiefly farmers. Their agricultural system is based on crop rotation, using crops such as groundnuts, cassava, macabo, and cucumber.

**Fali**

The Fali are part of the larger Kirdi ethnic group (see below), and are known for their glass beads and colorful clothing.

**Fulani or Fulbe**  
*(also known as Peul, Fula, and Fellata)*

SEE NIGERIA

**Kirdi**

**History:** Inhabiting northern Cameroon, southeastern Nigeria and southwestern Chad, the Kirdi make up approximately 11% of Cameroon’s population. The term Kirdi, which means “pagan” in some local languages, refers to a grouping of several smaller ethnic groups, some of whom have converted to Islam but many of whom continue to practice their traditional faith. The Kirdi were displaced during the 1800s by the encroaching Fulbe people, who migrated into formerly Kirdi land to form large Islamic cities. The Kirdi moved to the Mandara Mountain region, where many remain, living as subsistence farmers. Major crops include peanuts, maize, millet, melons, pumpkins and beans. Many Kirdi farmers also grow cotton and indigo – some Kirdi groups are famous for their colorful indigo-dyed clothing.

**Culture:** Kirdi villages are mostly on hilly territory, and consist of round, thatched roof buildings, often connected by woven straw fences. Married couples may live in separate houses. Polygamy is accepted, though rare, in Kirdi culture. Marriage is usually arranged by a young couple’s parents. Both men and women work on the farms, while men also make leather crafts and baskets. Children do household chores and care for the smaller animals. Musical traditions are very important in Kirdi culture, especially ceremonial music made with whistles, flutes, and drums. Traditional Kirdi religion speaks of the earth as a mother goddess who created natural phenomena, many of which are seen to have a supernatural aspect. Ancestor veneration is an important part of Kirdi culture.

**Mbenzele**

Traditionally a forest-dwelling people, the Mbenzele are considered, along with the Ituri of Congo, as among the oldest ethnic groups on the continent. Sometimes referred to as “pygmies,” a term they consider offensive, they are known for their small stature and skill at cultivating native plants in the forest, as well as their complex improvisational vocal music.

**Northwestern Bantu**

The Northwestern Bantu are a sub-group of what is one of the continent’s largest language and ethnic groups, the Bantu. It is believed that from an original Bantu homeland on the Cameroonian-Nigerian border, Bantu peoples began a massive migration south and east throughout the continent. Linguistic evidence shows Bantu influence in languages as far south as Zulu in South Africa and as far east as Swahili in Kenya and Tanzania. The Bantu remaining in Cameroon descend from those who stayed in the ancestral homeland.

**Tikar**

**History:** Although little is known about the Tikar, they are closely related to other peoples of the Cameroon grasslands, including the Bamilélé and Bamum. They are believed to have originally come from the north and migrated to their current location over several centuries. The migration that brought today’s grassland inhabitants to Cameroon was often spurred by Fulani traders moving southward into Cameroon in the 17th century. The region was at the center of trade routes that connected Fulani and Hausa traders in the north with the southern port cities. The Tikar were prominent in the region’s arts, politics and military for several centuries, making them highly visible and often prime targets for enslavers.

**Culture:** The Tikar of Cameroon are closely related to other grassland groups, and share a similar political and familial structure. Villages are governed by single leaders, known as Fon, usually chosen from among the area’s ruling families. Every village’s Fon is attended by a council of elders who assist him in decision-making. Most Fon serve for an entire lifetime. Traditionally the Tikar are subsistence farmers, growing peanuts, maize and yams and raising chickens and goats. Men clear the
fields and hunt, while women - who are thought to make the soil more fruitful - plant and harvest the crops.

Tikar culture places great emphasis on ancestor veneration, and families practice this respect by placing great importance on their forebears’ skulls - whether their literal skulls, which may be moved and reburied if the family moves to a new location, or the representation of skulls in masks and other arts. Tikar masks are highly detailed and among the most beautiful in Africa – they are known for strongly defined noses, and large almond-shaped eyes.

**Masa**

There are 222,000 Masa people in Cameroon. Half of the population is Muslim and the other half is Christian. Masa is an Afro-Asiatic language in the Chadic linguistic subfamily. Primarily, the Masa are farmers, but may sell livestock and fish when crops are insufficient.

**Mafa**

There are over 100,000 Mafa people who reside in Cameroon and 1,000 live in southeastern Nigeria. Mafa people reside along the northern inner slopes in the Mandara Mountains. They primarily cultivate Guinea corn on their terraced fields. Having a patrilineal culture, land is passed through the father. Around 83% of Mafa people are Muslim, 10% practice their traditional religion and 7% are Christian.

**Kotoko**

Kotoko people are a small ethnic group, having a population of less than 3,000. The Kotoko Kingdom was a monarchy located in Cameroon, northern Nigeria and southwestern Chad. Smaller kingdoms assimilated into the Kotoko Kingdom. The height of the Kingdom was from the 15th to the 19th century. But, by the 19th century the Kotoko kingdom merged into the Bornu Empire.

Other Ethnic Groups of Cameroon represented in the African Lineage Database™: Bakaka, Cameroon Highlanders, Eastern Nigritic, Hausa, Hide

![Bamileke Mask with Nigerian Coins](image-url)
Central African Republic Today

Given its current political and economic problems, the Central African Republic receives few tourists. But for those who make the trip, the country is known to have some of the most beautiful wildlife and vibrant village life in the continent. Local celebrations are known for abundant food - many dishes are based on okra, beer, and dancing.

The People of Central African Republic: Banda

History: The Banda comprises the largest ethnic group of the Central African Republic and occupies adjacent parts of Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Though their oral history tells of a migration in the early 1800s from the Darfur in the Sudan to their present homeland, their language suggests a longer presence in the region. During the 19th century, the Banda resisted slave raids from the kingdoms of Wadai and Darfur. Later they resited conquest by Rabih. The Banda traditionally worked iron and grew crops such as peanuts, corn, and sweet potatoes. Women traditionally gathered wild foods and they farmed, while men hunted and fished in the many rivers.

Culture: Families in pre-colonial times could be polygamous, and marriage required payment of a bride price, often in the form of iron tools. They lived in dispersed homesteads loosely governed by a headman. During times of crisis, such as slave raids and warfare, the people would select a war chief. The Banda are perhaps best known for their craftsmanship, especially their large slit drums, typically carved in the shape of animals. Historically, people in homesteads and villages used the drums in order to communicate in times of crisis and celebration. Their music is renowned for its polyrhythmic structure, derived from its use in initiation rites and ancestor veneration rituals. The demands of a market economy and modern life have brought an end to many Banda traditions, such as polygamy.

Baya
(also known as Gbaya)

History: The Baya, who speak a Niger-Congo language, today number close to 1 million and live mainly in the west of the Central African Republic. Fleeing Fulani slave raids and holy wars connected with the founding of the Sokoto Caliphate, the ancestors of the Baya migrated to the region from present-day northern Cameroon and Nigeria in the early 1800s. Fulani continued to raid the Baya region each year to capture Africans for sale, both in the Caliphate and to Trans-Saharan caravans. French colonizers imposed brutal forced labor on many Baya. Many were forced to work on the Congo-Ocean Railway. In 1928 the Baya initiated the three-year Kongo Wara War against French rule. The French suppressed the rebellion in a "nightmare campaign"
that decimated the Baya population. However, many Baya became nationalist leaders and later figured prominently in political circles.

Culture: The traditional Baya political organization was decentralized, with village chiefs acting as symbolic leaders and judges rather than political rulers. Only in emergencies were war chiefs temporarily elected, as among the Banda. In war, age sets insured unity by cutting across clan identities. The clans managed trade with foreigners, marriage arrangements, and religious customs. Today most Baya remain rural farmers, growing cassava, corn, peanuts, tobacco, and yams, and supplementing their diet by hunting and fishing. For cash, many Baya grow rice or coffee, prospect for diamonds, or work for mining companies.

Biaka (also known as Bayaka)
The Biaka (Bayaka) are sometimes referred to as the “Western Pygmies” (though the term is considered offensive by many). They inhabit the tropical rainforest that expands in a southeastern direction from the Lobaye River, in the southern region of the Central African Republic, and speak Aka, a Nilo-Saharan language spoken by neighboring farmers. There are estimated to be about 30,000 Biaka.

Mbaka (also known as the Bwaka, the Ngbaka, and the GbWaka)
The Mbaka primarily inhabit the Lobaye prefecture of northwestern Democratic Republic of Congo and neighboring parts of the Central African Republic. Historically, many leaders of the Central African Republic have been Mbaka, including Barthélemy Boganda, David Dacko, and Jean-Bédel Bokassa. The Mbaka speak a Niger-Congo language and number around 300,000 people.

Sara (also known as Sar)
The people known collectively as the Sara comprise several smaller subgroups that were not always considered one ethnic group. Among the largest of the subgroups are the Madjingayè, Gambayè, and Goulaye peoples. Their sense of a group identity was in part forged by the attitude of neighboring Arab groups, who considered the Sara an inferior people. Their northern Arab neighbors enslaved the Sara for centuries, and consequently, the Sara initially welcomed the intervention of French colonizers in the early 20th century. While the French indeed ended the slave trade in Chad, the lives of many Sara changed drastically under colonial rule. The French imposed forced labor, especially in railroad construction and other large projects, and established large-scale cotton plantations. In addition, the French selected local chiefs to oversee the village governments, ignoring the political structures traditional in Sara subgroups. Under the influence of the Arabs and Europeans, some Sara converted to Islam or Christianity, although the majority continued to adhere to traditional religious practices.

In addition to language, the Sara peoples share a common traditional lifestyle as village-dwelling fishers and farmers.

Ubangi (Oubangui) River at the outskirts of Bangui

Lisongo
Although widely studied by geneticists and ethnographers interested in locating the source of human life in Africa, the Lisongo have received less attention from anthropologists, historians, and journalists. Therefore little is known about the history or culture of this ethnic group, which comprise a small minority within the Central African Republic.
Although relatively little is known about the early history of the Congo, it is believed that the first inhabitants were the people sometimes referred to as "Pygmies" (a term considered offensive by many) who lived as hunter-gatherers in the rainforests of the northwest. During the 1st millennium B.C.E. Bantu-speaking peoples migrated from the north and settled throughout the Congo Basin, establishing agricultural communities. After contacts with non-Bantu speaking people, they began herding cattle. Some of these communities were eventually incorporated into relatively centralized states such as the 14th century Kongo at the mouth of the Congo River, and the 15th century Luba and Lunda kingdoms to the west of Lake Tanganyika. The first documented contact with Europeans occurred in 1483, when a Portuguese explorer sailed into the mouth of the Zaire River and encountered Kongo villages. Subsequent relations between the Portuguese and the Kongo were based on missionary pursuits and trade. The slave trade, however, eventually resulted in the demise of the Kongo Kingdom. In 1874 Anglo-American journalist Henry Morton Stanley was commissioned by the New York Herald and Daily Telegraph to finish the explorations of David Livingstone, a Scottish missionary who had spent several years mapping the Congo Basin.

For three years, Stanley explored the Zaire River, returning in 1877 to Europe, where his reports of the region's untapped natural wealth caught the attention of King Leopold II of Belgium. Leopold, keen to extend his personal domain, hired Stanley to return to the Congo Basin to secure treaties with local chiefs. Leopold subsequently declared all land not actively occupied or cultivated to be "vacant land" belonging to him and the Free State government, in effect turning much of modern-day Congo into a rubber plantation, enslaving and killing over ten million of Congolese as he pursued his own wealth.

By 1908, after rising international pressure to end his personal rule over Congo, Leopold handed the colony over to the Belgian government, which renamed it the Belgian Congo. By the early 1950s, a movement for Congolese independence was growing, and at a 1960 meeting Belgium offered to grant independence within six months, an extraordinarily short time frame. In May 1960 the first national elections were held in the Belgian Congo. Nearly forty parties fielded candidates and, after much controversy, a coalition was finally formed between Patrice Lumumba's Congolese National Movement and Joseph Kasavubu's Bakongo Alliance, in which Kasavubu was named president and Lumumba was named prime minister. On June 30, 1960, King Baudouin I of Belgium declared the Democratic Republic of the Congo independent. Within a week of independence, however, large-scale chaos erupted. In the face of continuing riots, Lumumba asked the United Nations for assistance and the UN Security Council authorized a military force, comprised mainly of African troops, to restore order in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and oversee the withdrawal of the Belgian troops. Lumumba's action angered President Kasavubu, who fired Lumumba and replaced him with Joseph Ileo. Before Ileo could take office, however, Colonel Joseph Mobutu (later Mobutu Sese Seko) seized power through a military coup and arrested Lumumba. Lumumba was killed in January 1961. Mobutu went on to rule the Congo, which he named Zaire in 1970, until he was overthrown in 1997 by Laurent Kabila, who himself proved a dictator. Civil war broke out in 1998, partly over Kabila's perceived ethnic discrimination and autocratic misrule (other factors included the regional politics following the 1994 Rwandan genocide), and did not end until a 2003 ceasefire was signed. Some fighting still continues, and the war is estimated to have killed at least three million, and displaced many more.

**Democratic Republic of the Congo Today**

Today the Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to struggle to re-establish a normal life for its people, but fighting continues, especially in the east along the Uganda border. The country's infrastructure is in a state of near-total disrepair.
Still, Congolese culture continues to be heard worldwide, especially as represented by musicians like Papa Wemba. Many hope that today’s fragile peace will hold.

**The People of Democratic Republic of the Congo: Kuba**

**History:** Although the origins of the Kuba are unknown, it is believed that they moved to the Kasai region in the Democratic Republic of the Congo after conflicts with the Portuguese and other ethnic groups forced them away from their homeland near the mouth of the Congo River. During the 16th century they became skilled farmers and fishermen. By the late 16th century the Kuba people had become a federation of 18 distinct groups. This federation became a cohesive kingdom during the reign of Shyaam, a chieftain from the dominant Bushong group, in the early 17th century. Shyaam established a capital, created an army, and appointed followers to state offices. He also encouraged the cultivation of valuable new crops such as maize, tobacco, cassava, and beans. The Kuba’s very productive agriculture fostered population growth and commerce; by the 18th century they had established relations with people throughout the region between the Kwango and the Lualaba Rivers. Despite the constant influx of new groups into the Kasai region, the Kuba were able to maintain this empire until the late 19th century. At this time invasions from neighboring groups significantly weakened the Kuba and probably would have destroyed the empire had King Leopold II’s Congo Free State not taken control of the area. The Kuba remained fairly cohesive during the colonial period and were active in the independence movement in the 1950s. After independence they were eager to assert their own autonomy and launched a short-lived secession movement in 1960. The Kuba have maintained their customary hierarchies while exercising considerable influence over provincial politics.

**Culture:** A Bantu-speaking people, the Kuba are known for their carved wooden helmet masks, which play important parts in religious and other ceremonies. The masks, whose wooden surfaces are decorated with fur, beads, shells and feathers, are still used in some rituals, such as circumcision, (performed on boys poised to become men) and funerals, which remain an important link to the past. Kuba masks have become very sought after by collectors. Other Kuba arts are equally well developed, including the royal portrait figures known as ndop. An ndop is a carved wooden representation of the king, and was said to help boost his fertility. In addition, Kuba artisans worked in metals such as brass, iron and copper, and were known for their pipes, drums, and cups. Today, many Kuba still maintain traditional farming and fishing lifestyles. Typically, farming of most crops is considered women’s work, while the men focus on growing tobacco.

**Mbuti**

**History:** Perhaps the oldest culture of the Congo region and considered by some to be the earliest inhabitants of Africa, the Mbuti were forest-dwelling peoples. They were considered “pygmies” by outsiders (including Egyptians, who wrote of the Mbuti following an expedition in 2500 BCE, calling them “people of the trees”). During the colonial period, government policies and political upheaval caused some Mbuti to leave the forest. In addition, the gradual overhunting of the forests has led to a depletion in the animal population. Despite the growing interdependence between the Mbuti and neighboring Bantu groups, the forest people continue to assert their autonomy and independence.

**Culture:** Inhabiting the Ituri Forest at the heart of the Congo, the Mbuti have developed a culture that reflects the reverence with which they view their homeland, with traditional rituals celebrating the forest they see as a deity. The “molimo” is perhaps the best-known Mbuti ritual, in which the community gathers to give thanks to the forest following a death or other unhappy event. Known for their musical mastery, the Mbuti men play wooden trumpets and sing, imitating the voices of the forest animals. A dance around a central fire is another important part of the molimo ritual. The Mbuti are also known for their excellent hunting skills, and for their intimate knowledge of the forest’s edible and poisonous plants. Men and women both take a role in the hunt, and in caring for the children, although women are the primary cooks. Their culture has typically lacked any concept of centralized authority, with the community preferring to live cooperatively and peacefully.

Other ethnic groups of the Dem. Rep. of the Congo represented in the African Lineage Database™: Bakonga, Monga, Nilotic
Archaeologists and linguists believe that the Bioko language cluster was one of the first groups to break from Western Bantu, arriving in present-day Gabon probably around 1500-1000 B.C.E., while oral historians date their arrival much later. From there the Bubi migrated to Bioko Island around the 7th century C.E. Several successive societies rose and fell over time, concentrated primarily on the northern coastline. They grew palm on the rich soils of the volcanic islands, fished, and engaged in pottery and tool-making.

In 1472 the Portuguese navigator Fernão do Pó explored both regions, and named the island after himself. Portugal formally claimed the lands in the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas with Spain. But attempts to establish sugar plantations on the island were abandoned due to the difficulty of cultivating the crop. Access to the few natural ports was limited. Furthermore, although some European vessels took individual captives, a regular slave trade never developed on Bioko. By contrast, the Mbini mainland became an important site for commercial agricultural production, as well as busy markets for enslaved Africans and other commodities. Spain, seeking a dependable base for its Slaving operations, purchased Annobón from Portugal in 1777. A year later the Treaty of Pardo provided for Portugal to cede part of the mainland as well as Bioko and other islands, in exchange for lands in Brazil. The only Spanish colony in Sub-Saharan Africa, Equatorial Guinea was run by a dictatorial colonial regime, primarily devoted to exploiting the small territory’s rich natural resources. The leadership since independence (achieved in 1968) has proven equally undemocratic: for three decades two men from the same family have ruled Equatorial Guinea, making use of clan patronage and widespread country’s wealth. Increasing oil exports in recent years have brought extraordinarily high rates of economic growth, but most of the country’s citizens have seen few, if any, of the profits.

**Equatorial Guinea Today**

Equatorial Guinea today is a country in flux; the discovery and export of oil may well change the local cultures, but traditional values and practices are still strong. Fang culture which includes the religious tradition of sorcery predominates. Ceremonies to banish evil from the community are held, as are various celebratory dances. Small orchestras of three or four musicians play drums, xylophones, and thumb pianos.

**The People of Equatorial Guinea: Bubi**

**History:** Archaeologists and linguists believe that ancestors of the Bubi were among the first groups to break from western Bantu, arriving in present-day coastal Cameroon and Gabon around 1500-1000 B.C.E., though unlike many Bantu-speaking groups they did not produce iron. Oral historians date their arrival much later. The Bubi migrated to Fernão do Pó, also known as Bioko Island,
in four waves beginning around the 7th century C.E. Settling mostly the island’s northern coast, they developed four distinct dialects.

Several Bubi chiefdoms rose and fell over time, though political authority was generally diffused, and a chief’s power was dependent upon the approval of village elders. This changed in the 19th century when European merchants, who for years had largely avoided Bioko’s rough coastline, began coming ashore, trading European goods for fresh fruits and other foods to crews while at sea. As the Bubi chiefdoms competed for trade with the Europeans, small chiefdoms were subsumed by larger ones, and ultimately a supreme chief emerged among the previously disparate chiefdoms.

**Culture:** The Bubi grew palm and yams on the island’s rich volcanic soils, fished, and made pottery and tools. They used small, round pieces of shell as currency. Their monogamous, matrilineal society distinguished primarily between occupational groups, such as hunters, fishers, and farmers, rather than between economic classes. The religion was monotheistic, and based on the worship of fire and other elements.

**Fang**

**History:** The Fang, a Bantu-speaking people, occupy southern Cameroon, much of mainland Equatorial Guinea, and northern Gabon. They are a dominant group in the region, despite the fact that they are relatively recent migrants. The Fang are also referred to as the Fan or Pahouin. Although scholars originally believed that the Fang came from the upper Nile River, most now agree that they split from other Bantu-speaking groups and migrated to northern Cameroon around the 7th or 8th century. From there they migrated farther southwest to the coastal regions in the 19th century. Though the evidence of the exact causes is contested, pressures from other groups, such as the Hausa, and attempts to flee the Trans-Saharan slave trade played a part, as did trade and the belief that the Europeans were rich spirits from the sea.

The Transatlantic and Trans-Saharan slave trades from the 16th to the 19th century took thousands of Fang from the region. To secure control over trade in the interior, the Ndowe spread the rumor that the Fang were cannibals, something European missionaries were convinced of when they found skulls in Fang households. In fact, the Fang did not practice cannibalism, but ate parts of deceased persons in order to gain the deceased person’s strength and power.

**Culture:** Successful hunters and renowned warriors, the patrilineal Fang pushed such groups as the Ndowe farther to the coast and settled in the interior forests as farmers. The large patriarchal clans of polygamous families in the south had little centralized political authority, whereas their counterparts in the north had clan chiefs and were more centralized. Spiritual beliefs, including ancestor worship, influenced the methods and styles of traditional Fang iron working and wood carving. Fang masks in particular are famous for their beauty (they were among the masks that influenced European modern art when seen by Picasso and Matisse). These trades and crafts were largely destroyed by European influence.
Facts and Figures

Area: 103,347 square miles
Comparative Area: slightly smaller than Colorado
Population: 1,355,246
Religions: Christian 55%–75%, animist, Muslim less than 1%
Languages: French (official), Fang, Myene, Nzébi, Bapounou/Eschira, Bandjabe
Literacy: 63.2%
Life Expectancy: 56.46 years
Capital: Libreville
National Holiday: Founding of the Gabonese Democratic Party (PDG), March 12 (1968)
Agricultural: Cocoa, coffee, sugar, palm oil, rubber, okoume (a tropical softwood)
Major Industries: Cattle, fishing, petroleum extraction and refining, manganese and gold mining, chemicals, ship repair, food and beverage, textile, lumbering and plywood, cement
GDP Per Capita: $5,500

Overview

For thousands of years, the ancestors of the Babongo people inhabited the tropical rainforest that today covers three-quarters of the area of present-day Gabon. The Babongo hunted chimpanzees, gorillas, and other forest animals, and gathered vegetable foods for their livelihood. Most archaeologists believe that Bantu peoples first arrived in the region around 1300 B.C.E. and established small farming communities at the edge of the forest. By the 7th century C.E., they acquired iron-making skills and came to dominate the region.

Extended families and clans provided the foundation of the social structure; ethnic identities were fluid and secondary in importance. Male leaders or “big men,” gained prominence through hunting, war, trade, and rituals, and distinguished themselves by the number of their dependents. Women bore cultivated crops, danced, and performed religious rituals. Bantu peoples used iron for tools, weapons, and jewelry; woven raffia circulated as a form of currency. Over time, clans grouped into scattered villages of a few dozen to several hundred people, located along trade routes such as rivers or footpaths. Most villages held common beliefs in ancestral veneration, sorcery, and witchcraft, although these beliefs were often clan-specific in their details; many villages maintained secret societies. The peoples of early Gabon generally lacked state structures, though by the 14th century C.E., the kingdom of Loango had extended its rule northward from present-day Congo-Brazzaville along the Gabonese coast.

Slavery, international trade, and French colonialism brought profound changes to Gabon. In 1472 the Portuguese first visited the Gabon Estuary, which they named the Gabão, or “hooded cloak,” because of its shape. From the late 16th through the 18th centuries, French, Dutch, and British traders visited the coast and exchanged manufactured goods and salt for enslaved Africans and ivory. Local inhabitants rose in opposition to European mercantilism, most spectacularly in 1600 when a group of Ndiwa attacked the Dutch at Corisco Island. However, Gabon never attracted large numbers of enslavers because it had a small population, mostly concentrated in the inaccessible interior. At their height between 1815 and 1830, slave shipments from Gabon did not exceed a few thousand enslaved Africans per year. The French established a colonial presence in Gabon beginning in 1839, their arrival coinciding with an important shift in the ethnic balance of Gabon. The Fang people, who subsequently became the largest ethnic group in Gabon, had begun their migration into the region from the north. To many Fang, the coming of the French fulfilled an ancient Fang legend in which white warriors arrived from the sea. Many Gabonese opposed French colonialism. In the early 1900s local rebellions were common. Indeed, it was not until World War I that French colonial authority encompassed the interior.

During and after World War II, relations between France and its African colonies shifted dramatically. Few Gabonese pushed for complete independence; in the 1958 referendum the population voted overwhelmingly for continued association with France. However, on August 17, 1960, Gabon became an independent parliamentary republic. The French created a two-tiered society, with a small elite loyal to French political and commercial interests and a poor, disenfranchised, majority. The leaders of independent Gabon have preserved and maintained this division. At the head of Gabon’s elite is President Omar Bongo, who has maintained a firm monopoly on power since 1967. Although Bongo’s government has made investments in transportation and social services, the country’s large oil wealth has primarily benefited Bongo and his clients. The vast majority of the population remains impoverished.

Gabon Today

Gabon is a nation of both ancient arts and modern conveniences. Its capital, Libreville, is a city of high-rise hotels and placid beaches. It is among the most expensive cities in Africa. Libreville is known for its nightlife – bars and dance clubs stay open late and are packed most
nights. As for daytime culture, the country celebrates its history with displays of masks carved by Fang and other ethnic groups at its Musée des Arts et Traditions.

The People of Gabon:

**Fang**

The Fang, a Bantu-speaking people, occupy southern Cameroon, much of mainland Equatorial Guinea, and northern Gabon. They are a dominant group in the region, despite the fact that they are relatively recent migrants. See Equatorial Guinea.

**Téké**

Historians believe that the Téké probably migrated to the central plateau in the late 15th century and became part of the decentralized Kongo kingdom. See Democratic Republic of Congo.

**Akele**

The Akele people, a Bantu language family with a total population of 11,000. As fishermen and farmers, they live along the Ogooue and Ngounié Rivers and in the Lake Region around Lambarene. Although Christianity is the primary religion, many people continue to practice their traditional religion.

**Benga**

The Benga have a small population of 5,800 people. In the nineteenth century, they fled the interior of Gabon due to militant Fang expansion. As merchants, they traded with the French in the ivory and redwood trade. Currently, the Benga live on the northern Atlantic coast of Gabon, Corsica Island in Equatorial Guinea and the Islands of São Tomé and Principe. Being fishermen and sailors, the Benga are known as “páyeros”, meaning beach people in Spanish.

**Duma**

The Duma have a population of 12,000 people that reside exclusively in Gabon. They are known for making exceptional canoes, along with being excellent canoeists. The Duma people live near the south bank of the upper Ogooue River, near Lastoursville.

Historically, the Duma traded rubber, ivory, ebony, as well as enslaved people for guns and cloth.

**Galoa**

The Galoa people have a population of around 800,000 people who reside in Gabon and Cameroon. They migrated to the region as a small group of nomadic agricultural families; having a militant culture, they were able to seize the land from their neighbors. As farmers, the Galoa use slash and burn techniques, along with crop rotation, to avoid erosion and soil depletion. Due to colonization, the majority of Galoa people are Roman Catholic. They are renowned for their abstract anthropomorphic carvings and wooden artwork.

**Makina (Shiwa)**

The Makina are a small ethnic group that live in Gabon. As a result of the Fang Expansion in the 18th century, the Makina culture became scarce. The Fang forced all of their conquests to assimilate into their society. Therefore, the Makina language called Shiwa (Chiwa) is an endangered language. The majority of Makina people today speak Fang.

**Nzebi**

The Nzebi people have a population of 144,000 people. They live in both Gabon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Due to colonization, the majority of the Nzebi are Roman Catholic.

**Punu**

Over 40,000 Punu people live in Gabon. This Bantu-speaking group is renowned for their artwork and carved white masks, which have been compared stylistically to Japanese art. The Punu economy is based on farming, hunting and fishing.

**Tsogo (Mitsogo)**

Around 25,000 Mitsogo people live in central Gabon. The Tsogo or Mitsogo people migrated to the region around the 13th century. With an agricultural based economy, the staple crops include: banana, yams, cassava, peanut, and maize. Bwiti is the name of their traditional religion and is one of Gabon’s official religions. Bwiti use a hallucinogenic bark of the Iboga plant, to induce spiritual enlightenment and for initiation rites. This plant is also used in traditional medicine, treating: narcotic addiction, alcoholism, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Other Ethnic Groups of Gabon included in the African Lineage Database™: Pounou.
Only a small strip of Atlantic coastline keeps the Republic of The Gambia from being completely surrounded by Senegal. Fewer than 30 miles wide, Gambia stretches for more than 300 miles along both banks of the Gambia River and into the center of Senegal. Despite its small size, it is a country of extraordinary diversity, representing a cultural frontier between Sudanic cultures and those at the northern limits of the Guinean forest. Gambia was one of the areas where an African species of rice was first domesticated more than 2,000 years ago. Beginning in the 13th century, Mandinka warriors from the empire of Mali conquered much of the Gambia River valley. Wolof, Serer, and Fula immigrants also entered the area during this period. Portuguese travelers first entered the region in 1455. In the 16th century, the Portuguese established trading factories, where they purchased beeswax, gold, ivory, and enslaved Africans from Mandinka and Bainounk merchants. While the French and British traders pushed the Portuguese out of the region, they tried to expand the area's involvement in the Transatlantic Slave Trade. At its late 18th-century peak, approximately 8,000 enslaved Africans were sold to European merchants in Gambia each year; in addition, large numbers of people died in warfare or slave raids, or while being transported to slave-trading posts along the Gambia River.

After the British abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade in 1807, and with the end of the Napoleonic Wars, British interest shifted toward the suppression of the trade by other Europeans and Americans. Throughout the latter half of the century, the Soninke-Marabout Wars - fought between followers of Islamic political leaders known as Marabouts and followers of an older Mandinka form of leadership, who were called Soninke - had become increasingly violent. By the late 19th century, Gambia had become predominantly Muslim. For much of the 19th century it was not even considered a separate colony. In 1894 the British proclaimed a protectorate over the interior areas of Gambia, establishing a system of indirect rule over the region.

Gambia achieved independence on February 18, 1965.

**Gambia Today**

In the late 1960s, Gambia began to promote its scenic beaches as winter vacation spots for European tourists, and by 1975 more than 25,000 tourists, mostly from Sweden and Denmark, visited each year. Local artisans increased production of batiks, tie-dyes, and other crafts to meet the demand for souvenirs. Gambian farmers found new markets for their fruits and vegetables in resort restaurants. But the country has struggled to reconcile the needs of a tourist economy with efforts to avoid exploiting its cultures and people. Although the majority of Gambians are Muslim, many people continue to practice traditional faiths, and social structures reflect older traditions, including that of the village griot. A great emphasis is placed on good manners, music and storytelling. Gambia is perhaps best known to Americans as the ancestral home of Alex Haley’s family, the place from which the character Kunta Kinte was taken into slavery.

**The People of Gambia**

**Aku**

A small community of Gambians identify as Aku, which is also the name of the distinct English Creole they speak.

**Fulani or Fulbe**

(Also known as Peul, Fula, and Fellata)

SEE NIGERIA
**Jola**  
(also known as Djola)

**History:** The Jola, numbering approximately half a million people, are the major ethnic group of the lower Casamance region of Senegal and represent a significant minority group in Gambia and Guinea-Bissau. Reflecting the irrationality of the partition of Africa, national boundaries often bisect Jola villages or separate the villages from their rice paddies.

Described by agronomists as the best wet-rice farmers in West Africa, Jola farmers regularly produced substantial food surpluses until the frequent droughts of the last 30 years. Traditionally they have not formed states, but have lived in communities governed by village councils and groups of elders, without formal political authorities. Since 1981 they have been one of the principal ethnic groups involved in the Casamance regional movement to secede from Senegal, a movement that has become particularly violent in recent years.

The name Jola is a relatively recent one. It was first applied in the 19th century by Wolof sailors in response to French administrators’ questions about the ethnicity of the people they encountered along the Casamance River. Oral traditions suggest that the Jola originated in the coastal areas of central and northern Guinea-Bissau. In the 16th century a substantial Jola kingdom dominated the southern Jola areas in Casamance and Guinea-Bissau. The growth in the slave trade destabilized this state, and the Jola assumed the stateless political organization that has characterized them ever since. Jola captives were sold into the Transatlantic Slave Trade as early as 1500 and were taken initially to Spanish and Portuguese colonies off the coast of Africa, such as the Cape Verde Islands, and to Latin America. As the British became active in the slave trade in the 17th century, they took Jola captives to the Carolinas and Georgia, where they taught British settlers how to grow rice.

**Culture:** All three colonial powers found the Jola difficult to govern; they were reluctant tax payers and highly resistant. In 1942 a prophetic movement, led by a woman named Alinesitoué Diatta, contributed to open resistance to the pro-Nazi Vichy French government. She was arrested and died of starvation after a year of exile.

**Mandinka**  
(also known as Malinke or Mandingo)  
SEE SENEGAL

**Wolof**  
SEE SENEGAL
Ghana is a West African nation bordering Togo, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, and the Atlantic Ocean. Its pre-colonial history included some of Africa’s most notable kingdoms, among them the early kingdom of Ghana and the Asante Empire. The earliest regional superpowers were involved in the continental gold trade. After the advent of European influence, Ghana became one of the nations most devastated by both the Transatlantic Slave Trade and colonization. Known as the Gold Coast, Ghana became home to many of the most notable ports of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. For 250 years, an estimated 10,000 enslaved Africans a year were shipped from Ghana’s ports. Once the slave trade was abolished, the British took over Gold Coast as a crown colony, exploiting its people and resources for the next 80 years.

In 1957, Ghana became the first former colony to gain its independence (it was formed by leader Kwame Nkrumah by merging with the Gold Coast with Togoland). Its post-independence history has included coups and instability, but since the early 1990s Ghana has had a stable, free democratic political system. Its capital is Accra; other major cities include Kumasi and Sekondi. With a population of about 20 million, Ghana is home to at least seven major ethnic groups, including the Fante; Asante; Nzima; Ahanta; Ga; Moshi-Dagomba; and Gonja peoples.

**Ghana Today**

Today, Ghana is one of the African nations most visited by Americans. With its friendly people, political stability, and thriving tourism industry, Ghana provides a great introduction to the continent. The country is known for its famous kente cloth, its Adinkra symbols, its cuisine including stews and fufu, and its historical architecture. Among the most famous Ghanaians is Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations.
The People of Ghana:

Akan

History: The broad Akan grouping includes a number of separate ethnic groups, who share several cultural traits but have their own histories and customs. The main Akan ethnicities include the Akyem, Akwamu, Asante, Brong, Denkyira, Fante, Nzima, Sefwi, and Wassa of Ghana, and the Baule and Anyi of Ivory Coast. Linguistic and archaeological evidence suggests that ancestors of the Akan have inhabited a heartland in south central Ghana for at least 2000 years. The early Akan lived in agricultural villages raising yams, plantains in forest regions, and millet and sorghum in the north. Many Akan also hunted, worked metals such as iron and gold, and wove baskets and cloth. During the 14th century, the Brong were the first Akan people to form a powerful kingdom, known as Bono. Bono introduced standard gold weights made of brass, later adopted by other Akan nations, for use in the gold trade. With the arrival of Portuguese on the coast during the late 15th century, Akan groups began to expand south toward the coast to trade directly with the Europeans. It was the Asante who built the strongest Akan state, which dominated most of what is now Ghana from about 1700 until the British finally conquered it in 1900.

Today Akan peoples number more than 10 million, almost half of Ghana’s population. They are primarily agriculturalists, farming cash crops such as cocoa and coffee along with subsistence crops such as yams and plantains. They have occupied prominent political offices in both Ghana and the Ivory Coast. Ghana’s first president, Kwame Nkrumah, was an Akan of Nzima origin, and Ivory Coast’s independence leader, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, was a Baule.

Culture: In ancient times, headmen governed rural villages. Some scholars say that even small units had queen mothers and kings who ruled with the assistance of a council of elders. Traditionally, Akan societies trace descent - including inheritance, kinship ties, and succession - matrilineally, or through the mother’s line, though spiritual attributes and certain offices may pass patrilineally, or through the father’s line. All Akan societies comprise seven or eight matrilineal clans, or abusua. Patrilineal groupings, the ntoro, also control certain taboos and rituals. Traditionally, Akan peoples worship a supreme being, Nyame. His children or creations form a secondary group of lesser deities, abosom, which inhabit everyday objects. Priests derive their power from the third level of supernatural entities, the talismans. Although many Akan today retain traditional beliefs, Christianity is a major force in Akan society, especially in the south. Muslim influence is stronger in the north.

Ashanti

(also known as Asante)

History: According to one account, the Ashanti are descended from the rulers of the ancient Ghana Empire, which was located far to the north in present-day Mali and Mauritania. This account forms the basis for the name of the modern nation. Linguistic and archaeological evidence suggests that ancestors of the Ashanti have lived in their present homeland for at least 2000 years. The political, military, and spiritual foundations of the Ashanti nation date to the first Ashanti king, Osei Tutu. He forged the Ashanti Union by bringing together several subgroups from roughly 1670 to the 1690s. He also built a capital, Kumasi; created the legend of the Golden Stool to legitimize his rule; and began celebrating the Odwira, or yam festival, as a symbol of national unity. From 1698 to 1701, the united Ashanti army defeated the Denkyira people. Over the course of the 18th century, the Ashanti conquered most of the surrounding peoples, including the Dagomba.

By the early 19th century, Ashanti territory covered nearly all of present-day Ghana, including the coast, where the Ashanti could trade directly with the British. In exchange for guns and other European goods, the Ashanti sold gold and enslaved Africans, usually either captured in war or accepted as tribute from conquered peoples. During the 19th century, Ashanti fought several wars with the British, who sought to eliminate the slave trade and expand their control in the region. A series of defeats at the hands of the British gradually weakened and reduced the territory of the Ashanti kingdom. After nearly a century of resistance to British power, Ashanti was finally declared a crown colony in 1902 following the uprising known as the Third British-Ashanti War, or the Yaa Asantewaa War. Before long, however, Ashanti reemerged to contribute to the nationalist movement that would help shape modern Ghana. The exiled Ashanti king was allowed to return to Kumasi in 1924, and the British recognized the Ashanti Confederacy as a political entity in 1935. Today, most Ashanti live in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. They are
primarily farmers, growing cocoa for export and yams, plantains, and other produce for local consumption.

Culture: The Ashanti are often considered the custodians of the nation’s culture, because of the power, artistic splendor, and duration of their empire, which covered nearly all of present-day Ghana by 1800. As they prospered, Ashanti culture flourished. They became famous for gold and brass craftsman-ship, woodcarving, furniture, and brightly colored woven cloth, called kente. Ashanti masks and stools are especially prized. The Golden Stool, the Ashanti imperial palace, and artifacts at the Museum of National Culture in Kumasi have become enduring symbols of Ghana’s illustrious past.

Fante

History: The Fante are part of the Akan cultural and linguistic family. Oral tradition holds that the original Fante immigrated south to their current location from what is now central Ghana. Although when the Fante arrived is not clear, they were well established there by the time the first Europeans came to the coast in the late 15th century. While most Fante made their living as fishers or farmers, some became powerful acting as intermediaries in the gold trade between the Europeans and the neighboring Asante. Throughout the 18th century, the Fante expanded their territory. However, they could not overcome the powerful Asante, their neighbors to the east, who finally overthrew the Fante in the early 19th century.

The Fante regained their independence when the British, their allies in trade for centuries, proclaimed a treaty granting Fante autonomy in 1831. The Fante are considered one of the more Westernized ethnic groups in West Africa, perhaps because of their long association with the British and other European groups. Most today are Christian. Farming is an important economic activity, especially the cultivation of yams, cassava, and plantains. Some Fante also work in the fishing and timber industries. Probably the best-known modern Fante is United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan.

Culture: As with other Akan groups, Fante social structure places primary importance on matrilineal descent (that is, family ties to the mother’s side). The various Akan groups commonly believe that all people belong to one of eight mmusua (abusua is the singular term) matrilineal kinship groups, each of which breaks down into several smaller units. Other aspects of an individual’s identity, including membership in an asofo, or military association, are inherited through the father’s side of the family. Beyond their military purpose, asofo groups also play religious and political roles in Fante society.

Ga

The indigenous inhabitants of Ghana’s coast, the Ga are the dominant ethnic group of Ghana and the founders of the capital city of Accra. They speak a language of the Kwa branch of the Niger-Congo language family and are closely related to the neighboring Adangbe, who speak a similar language. Legend holds that the Ga people arrived from the east, in a series of land and sea migrations, before the 14th century; however, linguistic and archaeological evidence suggests that the ancestors of the Ga occupied their present homeland for more than 1,000 years. In the Ga language, the name Garefers both to the Ga people and to the city of Accra.

Gonja

The Gonja primarily inhabit northwestern Ghana and northeastern Ivory Coast. They speak a Niger-Congo language and belong to the Guan linguistic group. They established a powerful kingdom during the 17th century that was conquered by the Asante kingdom during the following century. Today approximately 200,000 people consider themselves Gonja.

Moshi
(also known as Dagomba)

The Moshi live in small villages in northern Ghana, near the Volta River. They make their living primarily through farming.

Yams are the specialty crop, but farmers also grow maize, millet, rice, peanuts, and beans. The Moshi also work as fishermen and hunters, and are known as skilled tailors, ropemakers and blacksmiths.

Nzima
(also known as Amany, Appolonian, Assoko, Nzema, N’zima, and Zéma)

The Nzima primarily inhabit southwestern Ghana and south-eastern Ivory Coast. They speak a Niger-Congo language and belong to the Akan cultural and linguistic group. Approximately 400,000 people consider themselves Nzima.

Other Ethnic Groups of Ghana included in the African Lineage Database™: Bobo
Overview

Archaeologists have found evidence of human occupation in present-day Guinea dating back 30,000 years. Artifacts show that inhabitants of the central Guinean savanna were farming cereals such as millet and sorghum by 1000 B.C.E. The people of the southeastern forest region were cultivating yams, oil palms, and vegetables by 100 B.C.E. By around 200 B.C.E. the region’s inhabitants were smelting iron. Anthropologists believe that the earliest inhabitants of upper Guinea may have been the ancestors of modern Mandé speakers.

Upper Guinea (the northeastern savanna region) formed part of the heartland of the great Mande empires of Ghana and Mali. The first of these, ancient Ghana, also extended into present-day Mali and Mauritania. Ghana achieved its power by controlling trade in particular, by exacting duties in gold for the transport of salt from northern mines and it dominated the western savanna from the 8th to the 11th century.

Ghana was supplanted by the Mali empire, which arose around 1200 C.E. under the leadership of the Mandinka king, Sundiata Keita. Mali also exploited the rise of long-distance trade, including gold and slaves transported across the Sahara for markets in the north of Africa.

Internal divisions caused the slow collapse of the Mali empire beginning in the 14th century. Starting in the 15th century, a new migration brought Fulani herdsmen to the Fouta Djallon highlands. Although the first Fulani migrants mostly followed traditional religious practices, subsequent waves included Islamic Fulani migrating from areas presently known as Senegal. Islamic Fulani founded Fouta Djallon, an Islamic theocratic state, in the early 18th century. Fouta Djallon was a strictly hierarchical society with a ruling class (led by two families from which the alimamies, or leaders, were chosen), artisans, and slaves (mostly consisting of non-Muslim Fulani and non-Fulani inhabitants). To escape this forced servitude, the Susu people who had lived in the region began moving to coastal lower Guinea, where they dominated and gradually absorbed the existing Baga and Nalu populations.

The Susu and other coastal peoples established trade relations with the Portuguese, who first arrived on the coast during the 15th century. European powers were attracted to the region’s strategic location for trade to the Niger River Valley. By the 18th century the French and English came to dominate the coastal trade. Meanwhile, the Fulani maintained a powerful theocratic state in the Fouta Djallon.

In the early 19th century the French established a trading settlement on the northwest coast as an outpost of their colony in Senegal. In 1849 they declared the coastal region a protectorate, administered from Senegal. They concluded treaties of mutual protection with indigenous leaders and began erecting an administrative structure that eventually included the entire area now known as Guinea. France established three military posts in the region by 1866. In 1891 Conakry became the capital of the newly founded colony of French Guinea. The French colonial system, increasingly under attack by both French Socialists and the educated elite of Africa, began to loosen after World War II (1939-1945).

Fighting a system in which European workers earned three to four times more than indigenous Guineans on the same jobs, the country’s communications workers were the first to organize. Sekou Touré, who would become independent Guinea’s first president, got his start as the secretary general of the postal workers’ union in 1945. The rise in unions such as Touré’s occurred alongside similar growth in political parties. In 1946 Touré was instrumental in the formation of the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA). He also helped found its Guinean branch, the Parti Démocratique de Guinée (PDG). Labor unions functioned not only as effective mobilizers across ethnic group lines; they also served as a training ground for the country’s future political leaders. Elected to the national assembly in both 1951 and 1954, Touré was barred from his seat until 1956, when he won office as Conakry’s mayor. By then,
the Mandinka from upper Guinea had gained a reputation as both a powerful speaker and a shrewd politician. By 1957 he was both vice president of the executive council of Guinea (the national governing body) and the founder of the Union Générale des Travailleurs d’Afrique Noire (UGTAN), a new labor union for Africans under French colonial rule. Immensely popular among the poor and dispossessed of Guinea, Touré effectively quashed rival political parties and by 1958 was the acknowledged leader of Guinean anticolonialism.

Guinea Today

Although today Guinea struggles with persistent poverty, the country possesses agricultural and mineral riches and an equally rich history. In pre-colonial days the area now known as Guinea was homeland to several distinct ethnic groups - principally the Mandinka (or Malinke), Fulani, and Susu. The region was also the site one of Africa’s longest-lasting autonomous Islamic theocracies, known as Fouta Djallon. Under French colonial rule, Guinea was one of the most productive of West African colonies. Its lucrative exports included rubber and bananas. However, French investors and merchants retained most of the wealth those exports produced.

Guinea achieved renown as the first of the French colonies in Sub-Saharan Africa to claim independence, and it served as an example to other African nations seeking autonomy. Guineans voted in 1958 to break ties with France. In the words of Guinea’s first president, Sékou Touré, Guinea chose “poverty in freedom to opulence in slavery.” In fact, poverty has haunted Guinea since independence. Hunger and disease are widespread, literacy levels are low, even by African standards, and the infant mortality rate is among the highest in the world.

The People of Guinea:

Fulani
(also known as Peul, Fula, and Fellata)
SEE NIGERIA

Mande
SEE LIBERIA

Mandinka
(also known as Malinke or Mandingo)
SEE SENEGAL

Soso
(also known as Susu, Sossa, or Sousou)

History: Among Guinea’s major ethnic groups - including the Mandinka, Fulani, and various forest peoples of southeast Guinea - the Soso are the third largest. Smaller Soso communities are also found in Senegal and Sierra Leone. The most recent estimates place the total Soso population at more than one million. The exact history of the Soso people is unclear. Most anthropologists now believe that they arrived in Guinea around 900 C.E. However, they carry the name of a powerful kingdom that dominated parts of present-day Mali and Mauritania from the early 12th century until its defeat by the Mali Empire in the 13th century. Refugees from the defeated kingdom may have settled among the people who then became known as the Soso. Linguistic similarities suggest that the Soso later split off from the Yalunka (or Djallonka) people who once inhabited the Middle Guinea empire of Fouta Djallon. According to this theory, when the Muslim Fulani took over that region, the Soso migrated to the coast, probably around the 18th century, joining the Konangi, Bagas, and Nalou peoples.

Culture: Guinean Soso mostly inhabit the coastal regions known as Lower Guinea. On the coast itself, many Soso earn their livelihood from fishing or salt production; other Soso are traders or farmers, cultivating a mix of subsistence and cash crops such as rice, millet, coconuts, pineapples, bananas, and palm kernels. The majority of the Soso are now Muslims, but some still observe traditional religious practices. Soso society is organized into patrilineal clans; polygamy and marriage between cousins are common. The Soso are also known for their crafts, such as basketry, cabinetry, and leatherwork.

Other Ethnic Groups of Guinea represented in the African Lineage Database™: Berber
Guinea-Bissau is one of the poorest countries in the world, its poverty due to a long history of slave trading, Portuguese colonial neglect, an 11-year war for independence, economic mismanagement, and a lack of natural resources.

Archaeologists believe that small groups of hunters, gatherers, and fishing people occupied the region by 9000 B.C.E. A more pronounced migration toward the coast came around 900 C.E., when wars, poverty, and climatic shifts pushed new groups into the region from points farther east. They were primarily agriculturists and hunters, though some raised cattle on the eastern savanna. The people held land communally and worshipped local gods in addition to their own ancestors. The Mandinka were one of the last groups to arrive in the region. Their kingdom of Kaabu, the region’s first real kingdom, emerged in present-day northeastern Guinea-Bissau around 1250, originally as a tributary of the Mali Empire.

In 1446 Portuguese explorers arrived in the region. Portuguese and mestizos, or those of indigenous and European descent, traded alcohol, horses, manufactured goods, textiles, and weapons, for copra (coconut flesh, containing the oil), gold, ivory, palm oil, and, increasingly, enslaved Africans. Kaabu and other chieftdoms and kingdoms had long been involved in the Arab Trans-Saharan slave trade and they simply shifted some of this trade to the Portuguese on the coast. Scholars estimate that from the coming of the Portuguese to the end of the 18th century around 600,000 people were sent down the rivers of Guinea to the international slave market. The Portuguese sent enslaved Africans to their Cape Verde Island territory, where they were put to work on sugar plantations or shipped to the Americas. As the Transatlantic Slave Trade ended, the Portuguese and Cape Verdians established agricultural estates along Guinea-Bissau’s rivers, while the colony’s interior was roiled by tensions between the Kaabu leaders and Fulani religious leaders. It wasn’t until 1973 that Guinea-Bissau gained its independence, but its small, lineage-based communities had resistsed domination by a series of overlords for many centuries. This strong tradition of resistance has been a unifying theme in Guinea-Bissau’s history.

Guinea-Bissau Today

Because of its long history as the colony of a fascist dictatorship in Portugal, Guinea-Bissau today struggles to regain indigenous cultural and social structures. Its location in West Africa has made it vulnerable to the instability that plagues neighboring countries, and for years it has been challenged by an influx of refugees from Senegal.

The People of Guinea-Bissau: Balanta or Balente

The Balanta, literally “those who resist,” are the largest ethnic group of Guinea-Bissau, representing more than one-quarter of the population. But despite their numbers, they have remained outside the colonial and postcolonial state because of their social organization. The Balanta can be divided into four subgroups, the largest of which are the Balanta Brassa. Archaeologists believe that the people who became the Balanta migrated to northern present-day Guinea-Bissau in small groups between the 10th and 14th centuries. During the 19th century they spread throughout the area that is presently Guinea-Bissau and southern Senegal in order to resist the expansion of the Kaabu kingdom.

Chiefs occasionally governed some Balanta groups, but in general egalitarianism prevailed among the rice-cultivating Balanta. Consequently, the Portuguese colonialists found it difficult to govern
the Balanta. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Portugal mounted “pacification” campaigns against the resistant Balanta, and subjected them to appointed Fulbe chiefs. Because of this Portuguese repression, the Balanta enlisted as soldiers in great numbers in the nationalist struggle during the 1960s and 1970s. However, when the nationalists assumed power after independence, they found it difficult to establish village committees and other organizations among the Balanta because of their decentralized social organization.

Many Balanta resented their exclusion from the government. Their prominence in the military spurred a series of Balanta-led coup attempts in the 1980s.

**Fulani or Fulbe**  
(also known as Peul, Fula, and Fellata)  
SEE NIGERIA

**Mandinka**  
(also known as Malinke or Mandingo)  
SEE SENEGAL

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**Mandyako**  
(also known as Manjago or Manjaco)

The Mandyako primarily inhabit Guinea-Bissau, The Gambia, and southern Senegal. They speak a Niger-Congo language and are related to the neighboring Jola people. Approximately 200,000 people consider themselves Mandyako. The Mandyako people have historically lived in semi-autonomous, relatively egalitarian villages organized by extended family units. They cultivated rice and traded in local markets. The Mandyako have generally resisted Islam and maintain their traditional spiritual practices, including bargaining with spirits thought to have great influence over daily life.

Other ethnic groups represented in the African Lineage Database™: Baiote, Banhu, Beafada, Bijago, Brame, Cassanga, Djola, Futa-Fula, Fula-Preto, Fula-Forro, Fula-Toranca, Jancanca, Landoma, Machanha, Mandinga, Manjaco, Mansonca, Nalu, Sussu, Papel

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Fulani Woman
Dense forests in the south and a treacherous coastline protected Ivory Coast from inroads by early European explorers, who made only halting contacts before the 19th century. In the 1840s, however, the French, while patrolling the Gulf of Guinea to block the now illegal slave trade, decided to reestablish a foothold in the region of Ivory Coast. In 1893 France declared Ivory Coast a colony, although fierce resistance kept the French from fully establishing control over the region until 1918. The most famous resistance fighter was Mandinka warrior Samori Touré, but even after the French defeated him in 1898 the Europeans waged a bitter “pacification” campaign, rooting out and killing thousands of suspected rebels. After decades of growing independence and entry in the French civil service, the country was decolonized after World War II, and in 1960 became independent.

Post-independence Ivory Coast was long considered one of the region’s most stable nations, but the past decade has seen a devastating civil war that has only recently concluded. Conflict in neighboring Sierra Leone contributes to the regional instability that continues to challenge Ivory Coast.

**Ivory Coast Today**

Ivory Coast is known for its art, especially the wooden carvings and masks of the Dan, Senufo and Baule peoples, and music, in particular the polyrhythmic style with which village griots entertain townspeople. The reggae artist Alpha Blondy is one of Ivory Coast’s most famous musicians. Although the security situation has made travel to Ivory Coast difficult in recent years, the country offers riches for the traveler, including one of the continent’s last remaining virgin rainforests. Its major city, Abidjan, is known as “the Paris of Africa.”

**The People of Ivory Coast:**

**Baule**

*(also known as Ton)*

**History:** According to oral tradition, the Baule were originally part of the powerful Asante Confederation, based in what is present-day Ghana. But a violent succession struggle forced the group to break from the confederation. Led by Queen Aura Pokou, the sister of one of the slain contenders, the Baule migrated west in the late 18th century. During the journey they absorbed members of the many smaller Dyula, Kru, and Voltaic groups they encountered. They also established profitable trade connections with several of the larger groups with whom they traded the luxurious cloth produced by Baule women for guns, salt, and grain. They eventually settled in the valley between the Comoé and Bandama rivers, in the central region of what is now the Ivory Coast, and established trade connections between the coastal and savanna peoples. By the mid-19th century, the Baule had become prosperous from a lucrative north-south trade in gold, cloth, palm oil, and enslaved Africans. Originally a highly centralized and hierarchical society, by the time France attempted to colonize the
Ivory Coast in the late 19th century, the Baule state had broken into decentralized village clusters, bound only by kinship and commerce. Although village chiefs typically led these groups, successful traders with connections to other powerful clusters occasionally seized control. They were satisfied to trade with the French, but resented attempts at incursion into their territory.

In 1893 their attacks on French troops delayed a military campaign against the warrior-chief Samory Touré. In the following years they accumulated guns and ammunition. When the French finally defeated Touré in 1898, they found the Baule stronger than ever and just as resistant to colonial rule. In 1900 the French began a series of military campaigns against the Baule, but they proved no match for the Baule's guerrilla warfare tactics. The French administration sought to play rival trade groups against each other - a strategy that, by 1911, ultimately destroyed organized Baule resistance. Throughout the colonial era the Baule remained wary of the French, though many were educated at missionary schools, and went on to become high-ranking civil servants and wealthy plantation owners. The Baule's most famous nationalist leader, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, led the country to independence in 1960. In 1993 he was succeeded by another Baule, Henri-Konan Bédié, whose administration has continued to promote the concerns of Baule plantation owners.

**Culture:** The Baule are mostly farmers, growing yams and maize, as well as cocoa and kola nuts. They also raise sheep, goats and chickens. Women traditionally run the markets, at which they sell local produce and hand-crafted items. Baule art is famous for its wooden masks and gold and brass sculptures. Many Baule continue to practice traditional spirituality, venerating both ancestors and several deities, most of which represent nature spirits.

**Bété**
*(also known as Magwe)*

One of the largest groups of Kru speakers, the Bété number more than 600,000 people, the majority of whom live near the cities of Daloa, Soubre, and Gagnoa in southwestern Ivory Coast. According to Bété history, the group migrated to the area in the 17th century after warfare (perhaps connected with the expansion of the Mali empire) drove them out of their home in the savanna to the northwest. They displaced the people who formerly occupied the region and practiced hunting and gathering. The Bété fiercely resisted French colonial rule into the early 20th century. After a final rebellion in 1906, the French army incorporated Bété territory into the Ivory Coast colony.

Surprisingly, the group quickly embraced both Christianity and cash-crop farming - the mainstay of the colonial economy - and soon constituted one of the largest groups of plantation workers in the colony. According to some historians, the term Bété took on a pejorative meaning during the colonial era because of the affiliation with plantation work, which was considered degrading. At times the term was indiscriminately used to refer to any plantation worker. Since independence in 1960, however, members of the Bété group have made a concerted effort to redefine Bété ethnicity and to affirm their own cultural importance. Today the Bété make up a substantial percentage of coffee and cocoa farmers in the southern regions of the Ivory Coast, though many have also migrated to the capital of Abidjan.

**Mandinka**
*(also known as Malinke or Mandingo)*

**SEE SENEGAL**

**Mande**

History: Nearly 20 million people in West Africa speak Mande languages, and the linguistic group incorporates dozens of ethnic groups sharing traditions and common cultural features. Mande speakers have inhabited the western Sudan, at the head-waters of the Niger and Senegal rivers, since at least 5000 B.C. In this region they first domesticated many of the most important crops of Sub-Saharan Africa, including millet, sorghum, African rice, peanuts, okra, cola, and perhaps cotton.

Many Mande groups remain skilled agriculturists. Later, Mande speakers developed gold mines, including those in the Bambouk region of the upper Senegal. These mines provided a source of wealth for empires founded by Mande speakers, including ancient Ghana, or Wagadu (fifth through 11th centuries C.E.) and ancient Mali (thirteenth through 16th centuries C.E.). Both ancient Ghana and ancient Mali prospered from trade with the Tuaregs and Moors, whose Trans-Saharan trade caravans brought salt, textiles, and cloth in exchange for gold and slaves exported by the Mande empires.

**Culture:** Trade connections also exposed Mande speakers to Islam. Most of the larger Mande groups in the Niger and Senegal basins converted to Islam between the 12th and 19th centuries. Mande speakers fall into two broad cultural groupings: the Mande-tan and the Mande-fu. Most Mande-tan groups, known as the “nuclear Mande,” still live in the original Mande territory near the upper Niger River in present-day Mali. These groups, such as the Bambara, Soninke, and Malinke, share a hierarchical social structure including nobility, various castes, and ranks. In these predominantly Muslim societies, farmers usually occupy elevated positions while nyamakala- specialists such as black-smiths, potters, leatherworkers, and bards - occupy lower social strata. Many of the Mande-fu groups, such as the Mende and Dan, have decentralized and relatively egalitarian societies, and most are not Muslim. Some scholars think that these people spread the practice of agriculture to the forest regions of West Africa. The Mande-fu are also known as “peripheral Mande,” that is, Mande-speakers who live outside the original Mande territory.
Although the peripheral Mande groups exerted tremendous influence on the regions to which they moved, they generally did not form major empires; one of the few exceptions was the short-lived Mandinka empire of Samory Touré in the late 19th century.

**Kru**

**SEE LIBERIA**

**Senufo**

(also known as Siena and Sene)

**History:** There are more than three million ethnic Senufo. Many of them live in the Middle Volta valley, between the Bagre, Bani, and Mouhoun (formerly Black Volta) rivers in West Africa. The Senufo ancestry is not entirely known. The peoples now known as the northern, central, and southern Senufo had distinct histories. In the early 17th century, Dyula traders migrated from the collapsing Songhai Empire into the Middle Volta valley and settled among the southern groups. The merchants called their peasant neighbors Senufo, a Mande term for “those who speak Senari.” The Dyula also converted many Senufo chiefs to Islam, and in the 18th century the Dyula traders took control of the Kong Empire.

During the colonial era many Senufo migrated to work on cash-cropping schemes in more fertile areas to the south and west; today many Senufo youth still seek wage employment outside their rural homelands. Senufo farmers grow a variety of cash crops, depending on the local ecology. Certain towns in Senufo regions, such as Sikasso, Mali, have become important commercial centers.

**Culture:** Many Senufo people still practice their traditional religion, which has always emphasized the veneration of ancestors and earth spirits. The Senufo’s secret societies - Lofor men, Sandogofor women - provide the transmission of ritual knowledge from one generation to the next. Elder Lo members also serve as consultants to village chiefs. Senufo towns are often divided according to the maternal ancestry of the inhabitants, and society is also structured in terms of occupation — jobs like farmer, blacksmith, carver, and leatherworker pass down through generations of the same families. While the Senufo play relatively minor roles in the national governments of the countries in which they live, they have won international renown for their art. The most spectacular pieces are the sculptures of hornbill birds, which display long beaks and outstretched wings, and stand more than four feet high. In recent years many Senufo artisans have begun producing for tourist markets.

**Voltaic**

A term comprising many smaller ethnic groups. The word encompasses millions of people who can trace their origin to the region around the Volta River.
A series of political assassinations and coups resulted in decades of war, instability and poverty in the country.

Liberia Today

Liberia is struggling to recover from the enormous costs of decades of warfare. The country retains its strong connection to the United States, and has long hoped for help and guidance from its ally, the homeland of many of its national heroes. Liberia’s cultural traditions continue strongly, however, from the quilt-making brought by the American-Liberians to the praise songs performed on ivory trumpets of the pre-colonial indigenous peoples. Liberia is home to Africa’s first woman president, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.

The People of Liberia:

Bassa
(also known as the Basa, Basso, and Gbasa)

The Bassa primarily inhabit Grand Bassa County, Liberia. They speak a Niger-Congo language belonging to the Kru group and are divided into several distinct subgroups. Approximately 400,000 people consider themselves Bassa.

Bello
(also known as Bella)

Little is known of the Bello, also called Bella, who were historically seen as a subordinate class to the Tuareg people of Niger and Burkina Faso.

Gio

History: Spread between Liberia and Ivory Coast, the Gio live in forests and grassland. According to their oral tradition, they migrated from present-day Mali and Guinea centuries ago. Constantly embattled by neighboring ethnic groups, the Gio developed a reputation as warlike, but most Gio have traditionally been farmers, raising crops like rice, cassava, and sweet potatoes. Some cocoa, coffee, and rubber are produced for export or sale.

Culture: The Gio speak a Mande language. Men and women occupy separate spheres and are initiated into adult life in sex-specific secret societies. Polygamy is accepted, and a man’s many wives will live in separate rooms of their husband’s house.

Kissi
(also known as the Kisi)

History: The Kissi primarily inhabit the borderlands of Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea. They speak a Niger-Congo language. About 400,000 people consider themselves Kissi. Long dominated by neighboring Mande-speaking people, the Kissi have existed somewhat in the

Overview

Liberia is a West African nation bordered by Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, and the Atlantic Ocean. Africa's oldest republic, Liberia was founded as a nation in 1838, and settled by free African-Americans. The newly arrived settlers, calling themselves Amercoid-Liberians, soon crafted a political and economic structure that profited them – causing conflict with the various other groups already living in the region. In addition, Liberia became home to thousands of former enslaved Africans from the Caribbean, as well as people rescued from illegal slave ships in the years following the abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

This complex society functioned for decades as one of only two African nations colonized by non-Europeans. But Liberia's political history has been rocky since the 1970s, when descendents of the indigenous people of Liberia rose up against the Amercoid-Liberian regime.
political shadows, living as subsistence farmers. They grow rice, peanuts, cotton, corn, bananas, and potatoes. Most villages also raise livestock. Cows are raised mostly for religious ceremonies at which they are sacrificed.

**Culture:** Kissing culture is ordered by age-groups, with a powerful sense of respect for one's elders. Kissi villages are small - typically less than 200 people - and consist of thatch-roofed houses and a central public square. Kissi culture holds that children are impure, and must be purified at puberty in a ceremony known as biriye. Music plays an important part in Kissi culture, as does basketry and weaving.

**Kpelle**
*(also known as Guerzé, Ngurze, Ngere, and Pele)*

**History:** The Kpelle primarily inhabit northern and central Liberia. Representing roughly 20% of the population, they are the largest single ethnic group in Liberia. Kpelle also live in Sierra Leone and in Guinea, where they are sometimes called the Guerzé. Their total population is about 1 million. They speak a Mande language. Most Kpelle are rice farmers. They also grow cassava, peanuts, and a variety of vegetables. Particularly since the 1960s, however, large numbers of Kpelle have migrated to urban centers. Today around 15% of Kpelle live in cities such as Monrovia.

**Culture:** The patrilineal Kpelle have traditionally lived in several chiefdoms. While chiefs settle disputes and perform political functions, the Pofo and Sande secret societies also enforce conformity to social conventions.

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**Kru**
*(also known as Kroo and Klu)*

**History:** The Kru people inhabit a homeland in coastal southeastern Liberia and neighboring Ivory Coast. Some Kru have also migrated to Sierra Leone to work as fishermen and dockworkers. The origins of the Kru people are unknown, although some historians believe that the group first migrated to the coastal areas in the early 18th century. There the Kru settled in loosely connected villages based on lineage and lived by hunting and subsistence farming. Although they lived along the coast, most Kru refused to take part in the Transatlantic Slave Trade and they fought enslavers who attempted to capture Kru. During the late 18th and 19th centuries, Europeans frequently recruited the Liberian Kru, well known along the coast for their skillful seamanship, to work as sailors on European ships traveling between Europe and India. Other Kru worked as loaders and pilots along the coast.

**Culture:** Renowned as the sailors of West Africa, the Kru throughout history have been associated with the sea. Early European visitors noted their extraordinary skills on the water, both as sailors and fishermen. Fiercely independent, the Kru were known during the slave trade as people who would not participate, and they adopted the habit of marking themselves with blue paint on their noses to identify themselves as Kru. Kru villages, nearly always coastal, consisted of round thatch houses with pointed roofs. Marriages are usually arranged, and men pay a bride price for their wives, who are adorned in dozens of brass and bead necklaces and bracelets for their marriage ceremonies.
Mali, formerly the French Sudan, is a country best known for its ancient kingdoms and empires. Controlling the rich Trans-Saharan trade in gold and enslaved Africans, kingdoms such as Ghana, Mali, and Songhai achieved prosperity and cultural advancement. During the period of colonialism, however, the French imposed an economic dependence on cash crops that left the country vulnerable to drought and the vagaries of the world market. The structural weakness of the country’s overwhelmingly agricultural economy has left Mali one of the poorest countries in the world. In recent years, economic liberalization has attracted new foreign investment to Mali. It remains to be seen whether this investment will bring renewed prosperity to modern Mali, whose history is surely one of the richest in Africa.

**Mali Today**

Mali remains one of the most culturally dynamic countries on earth. Musicians like Ali Farka Toure, who brought the Malian Blues to American ears, and singer Oumou Sangare, the Malian songbird, carry on and nurture artistic traditions. The famed Malian photographer Seydou Keita captured his countrymen’s unique styles and aspirations on film and in photographs now fervently collected in the West. Perhaps the most influential Malian musician working now is Salif Keita – based mostly in Paris, he tours the world.

**The People of Mali:**

**Bambara**

**History:** The million or so Bambara (sometimes called Bamana), who speak languages of the Mande group, live primarily in Mali along the Niger River. They are descendants of the people of the ancient Mali empire, who founded the kingdoms of Segu and Kaarta. Bambara means “unbeliever” or “infidel”. The group acquired the name because it resisted Islam after the religion was introduced in 1854 by Tukulor conqueror el-Hajj Umar. Although the Bambara are linked by clan, there has long been a great deal of intermingling among ethnic groups in this region, and there is no strong centralized Bambara political authority. Traditionally cultivators of millet and guinea corn, the Bambara now also grow crops such as peanuts, rice, and cotton. Many Bambara now live in Bamako, Mali, and some migrate seasonally to work on the cocoa and coffee plantations of Ghana and Ivory Coast.

**Culture:** Religion and agriculture for the Bambara are intertwined. For example, the high god of the Bambara is represented as a grain from which the whole of creation is born. The Bambara recognize one god, known as Bemba or Ngala, as the creator of all things. This god is a being who cannot be perceived by humans through the usual senses. The god’s existence is manifested as an immaterial force, often as a whirlwind or a thought. Many of their religious beliefs are symbolized in their masks and carvings, which often feature the antelope. The Bambara believe that the antelope taught humans to grow crops. Although many present-day Bambara are Muslim, they still make masks, mostly to sell to tourists. The traditional social organization of the Bambara is the large united clan, a group of families descended from a common ancestor. Family heads are obligated to obey the village chief, who not only organizes the village for religious activities but also acts as mediator for the chief of the earth spirits.

**Bozo**

**History:** Traditionally a fishing people, the Bozo control the water ways in the floodplain of the Niger and Bani Rivers. They have had little political power. While the men primarily fish for a living, women traditionally farm millet, corn, peanuts and okra. The Bozo speak a Niger-Congo language, and have been in the region they now inhabit for at least 1000 years.

**Culture:** The Bozo typically live in small villages, normally in rectangular houses of sun-dried brick. Bozo society is patriarchal, with each village ruled by a chief, who lives at the center of the village. Most are Muslim,
and so polygamy is an accepted practice. Married men continue to live within their family groups, while unmarried men must live, dormitory-style, with other unmarried men.

**Dogan**

**History:** According to oral tradition, the Dogon were originally members of the Keita, a Mande-speaking group from the headwaters of the Niger River. They fled their homes sometime between the 10th and 13th centuries because they refused to convert to Islam. However, the Voltaic (or Gur) language of the Dogon suggests a more ancient presence in their present-day homeland. They inhabit the rugged and isolated Bandiagara escarpment and surrounding regions southwest of the Niger bend. The cliffs at the edge of the escarpment protected the group from outside invaders. Dogon settlements concentrate around isolated pockets of arable land, where they farm millet as a subsistence crop. Traditionally, the Dogon have shared this territory with the pastoral Fulani, who exchanged their dairy products for Dogon grain and produce.

The Dogon’s rugged and isolated territory left them relatively unaffected by French colonialism and missionary work, though the French did introduce the cultivation of onions as a cash crop during the 1920s. In recent years, however, the Dogon have increased their participation in the cash economy. Some villages have specialized in traditional crafts and performances in order to attract commercial tourism. Some Dogon have even left their homeland in search of wage labor, particularly in Bamako and the mines of Ivory Coast. Unfortunately, the Dogon have also recently faced animosity from their Fulani neighbors, with whom they compete for scarce mineral resources and mining jobs.

**Culture:** Traditionally, the extended patrilineal family forms the basic social unit of the Dogon, who lack strong centralized authorities. A hogon, or headman (traditionally the oldest man in the area), provides spiritual leadership and arbitrates disputes for one or more villages. The hogon performs rituals and safeguards the religious masks for which the Dogon are famous. The power of the hogon, however, is relatively weak; a council of elders holds decision-making power within each village. The Dogon fall into at least four smaller groups: the Dyon, Arou, Onon, and Domno. Like neighboring Mande groups, the Dogon maintain a kind of caste system based on occupation. Farmers rank at the top of the system, while blacksmiths and hunters are lower on the caste scale.

Unlike their Muslim neighbors, most Dogon still practice a traditional religion with a complex mythology. Dogon cosmology considers everything a combination of complementary opposites; elaborate rituals are necessary to maintain the balance. Ancestor worship is another importance facet of Dogon religion. Members of the Society of Masks perform rituals to guarantee that a person’s “life force” will flee from his or her corpse to a future relative of the same lineage. One of the most famous Dogon rituals is the Sigi - a series of rituals performed once every 60 years.

**Fulani or Fulbe**

*(also known as Peul, Fula, and Fellata)*

SEE NIGER

**Mandinka**

*(also known as Malinke or Mandinga)*

SEE SENEGAL

**Mande**

SEE IVORY COAST

**Songhai**

*(also known as Songhay, Songhai, Songrai, Sonhrai, and Sonhray)*

**History:** The Songhai primarily inhabit western Niger and southeastern Mali, along the bend of the Niger River. Others live in Benin, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria. Some have migrated to Ghana, where they are known as the Zabra or Gao, as well as to Togo and Ivory Coast. They speak a unique Nilo-Saharan language, also called Songhai. The ancestors of the Songhai established a kingdom on the Niger bend as early as the 7th century. Its ruling dynasty would last until 1491. Today the Songhai are mostly subsistence farmers. They grow rice along riverbanks, as well as millet, sorghum, peanuts, black-eyed peas, sorrel, and other crops. Many Songhai also live in cities such as Tombouctou (or Timbuktu), Niamey, and Bamako, where they engage in a wide range of trades and professions. The Songhai include a number of regional subgroups, including the Fono, the Gabibi, the Gow, the Kado, the Kotey, the Sorko, and the Zerma (also known as Djerma or Zabarma). Over 2 million people consider themselves Songhai.

**Culture:** The Songhai trace descent patrilineally, or along the father’s line. Traditionally, they inherited a distinct position as noble, commoner, griot, or slave. Paramount chiefs from noble lines hold office and continue to exert at least symbolic authority in rural regions.

**Tuareg**

SEE NIGER

Other ethnic groups represented in the African Lineage Database™:

**Bodoi**
In Southeastern Africa, on the coast of the Indian Ocean lies Mozambique. Neighboring countries are: Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Swaziland. Due to the overpopulation in the Niger-Congo area, Bantu-speakers migrated to this area around 100 CE. The Khoikhoi who resided in this area migrated west in order to preserve their culture and nomadic lifestyle. Bantu-speaking people brought their culture along with their iron-making technology to the region. With Mozambique's incredibly diverse ecosystem, a variety of very different societies were created. Agricultural communities, costal fishing towns, along with cattle herding societies became developed.

Many communities were decentralized and heterogeneous, while others were homogenous centralized kingdoms. In the south, Chopi, Tonga, and Tsonga typically lived in village-sized political units. Around the Zambezi River, in the central region, the Barue, Maravi, Macua-Lomue, Shona and Tonga lived. These groups were not homogenous. For example, the Maravi consisted of a series of decentralized kingdoms. These Maravi Kingdoms were diverse with multiple ethnic groups residing in them, including: Chewa Nyanji, Chipeta, Zimba, Nsenga, and Nyassa. On the contrary, the Macua-Lomue organized their political structure around clans that would make alliances against invading Maravi peoples. In the north, the Makonde and Yao lived in isolation among the hills in the Mueda plateau.

At the beginning of the 8th century, Arab traders came to Mozambique. They bartered ceramics, cloth, glass, beads, salt and metal goods for gold, palm oil, rhinoceros horn, amber, valuable animal skins and ivory. By the 15th century, the trade continued to expand and Arab traders had several trading stations along the Zambezi River. The Shona Empire of present day Zimbabwe became a major influence in Mozambique. A subgroup of the Shona, the Karanga, invaded the Zambezi valley. The Karanga invasion erupted a war, which disrupted numerous local political entities and dislocated people in southern Mozambique.

In 1498, the Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama stopped in Mozambique after sailing around the Cape of Good Hope. The Portuguese seized many posts along the Swahili coast, challenging the Arab monopoly of the spice trade in the region. They traveled inland in search of ivory and to establish Jesuit churches. In 1629, the Portuguese crown granted land to merchants, Catholic clergymen, soldiers, and landless people who wanted to settle in Mozambique. They obtained the land by seizing and dismantling the Monomotapa Kingdom. The 'prazos' or 'leasehold' system was a semifeudal system of land tenure gave the Portuguese crown ownership of the land but allowed settlers to lease the land for a fixed time, usually three lifetimes. Hybrid colonial kingdoms were established by fusing prazeros with various indigenous political units. Mixed race families, of African and Portuguese descent, ruled hybrid kingdoms.

The prazeros colonialists with their African collaborators played a significant role in sustaining the Indian Ocean slave trade. The height of the slave trade was in the 1820s and 1830s, although Britain banned slave trading in their colonies. Around 15,000 enslaved people were annually shipped to Brazil from Mozambique, which made up around ten percent of the transatlantic trade.

During colonialism, the Portuguese instituted a system of forced labor on the indigenous Mozambicans. Africans were forced to work on large plantations harvesting sugar, tea and other agricultural products. To avoid forced labor, thousands of people fled to South Africa to work in gold and diamond mines. By 1968, African Mozambicans had few opportunities for education, health care or skilled employment. Discontent organizations that tried to change the colonial system were violently repressed. Instead, students and exiles in Lisbon, Paris and Tanzania formed opposition organizations. In 1962, the Front for
the Liberation of Mozambique was formed under the leadership of Eduardo Mondlane. Two years later, the war for independence began. Mozambique finally gained its independence in June of 1975. From 1977 to 1992, Mozambique was in a civil war.

**Mozambique Today**

Mozambique is one of Africa's tourist hot spots, with beautiful beaches, offshore islands and metropolitan cities. The capital, Maputo, is known for its Mediterranean-style colonial architecture and cobblestone streets. Since the end of civil war Mozambique’s economy has grown substantially and is now politically stable, however the majority of the 23 million people live below the poverty line.

**Makhuwa (Makua)**

The Makhuwa people are a large population of six million people who reside in Mozambique and Tanzania. The Makhuwa are farmers producing: beans, rice, corn, cassava, and coconuts, cashes, bananas, cotton and tea. They are a matrilineal society, so land is passed through the mother. Although the majority of Makhuwa people are Roman Catholic or Muslim, their traditional religion is still practiced.
had come into the region - France. French colonialism forced Nigeriens to abandon centuries-old techniques in order to produce cash crops. This left Nigeriens more vulnerable to drought and dependent upon unreliable global commodity markets.

Despite achieving independence in 1958, Niger still suffers from its period of colonization. French colonial neglect and the demands of the global market economy have perpetuated Nigerien poverty, ecological vulnerability, and political instability since independence. A brief era of hope when vast uranium deposits were discovered dissipated as the country’s poor remained poor, and the uranium market failed to produce stability or prosperity for the vast majority of the country’s people. As a result, Nigeriens struggle to meet their social and ecological needs amid the pressures of the global economy.

Niger Today

Niger today is a country of poverty and environmental concerns, with the desert encroaching on its arable land more and more each year. Still, the rich cultural heritage of the region’s great empires, as well as its nomadic peoples, remains a source of strength. Niger is a country of the griot, and village elders still sing epic songs of their people’s history, often accompanied by a molo, a three-stringed banjo-like instrument. Visitors can enjoy the Cure Sale, one of the brightest and biggest celebrations in West Africa, which features a festival by the nomadic Wodaabe people, who hold beauty contests for their men. The country is hoping that tourism, both to cultural festivals like the Cure Sale and the Tabaski, a Tuareg camel-race held in the northern city of Agadez and excursions to see the desert’s beauty, will be one key to economic health.

The People of Niger:

Fulani or Fulbe
(also known as Peul, Fula, and Fellata)

SEE NIGERIA

Overview

Niger was ordered by Burkina Faso, Benin, Nigeria, Chad, Libya, Algeria, and Mali, Niger straddles the Sahara and the Sahel. The fragile environment of Niger has shaped the lives of its peoples from the earliest days to the present. Thinely populated and peripheral to the major kingdoms of West Africa, Niger and its early history have frequently been ignored for that of the nearby great empires - Mali, Ghana, and Songhai. Niger has a rich history of its own, however. The human presence in the region dates back at least 60,000 years. Early herders and farmers began to be affected by the emergence, around the year 1000, of empires on either side. The strength and prosperity of these empires was based on their ability to control the lucrative Trans-Saharan and Trans-Sudanic trade in slaves, valuable metals, and salt. Refugees from the invasions and conflicts among the various empires and nomadic groups in the area often settled in Niger. By the late 19th century, however, a new power...
**Kanuri or Beriberi**

**History:** The Kanuri, today dispersed throughout four countries around Lake Chad, once ruled a powerful and centralized kingdom. Linguistic evidence links them to the peoples of the Sahara, but Kanuri oral histories, like those of many other Muslim groups in western Africa, claim that the group originated in Yemen. By 1000 C.E., the kingdom (known first as Kanem, later as Bornu) was renowned throughout the Islamic world for its prosperity and trade connections. A regular stop for many Trans-Saharan trade caravans, the capital city was also a popular resting point for Muslims who were traveling across the continent on the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Beginning in the mid-13th century, however, a series of disputes over succession ravaged the kingdom and made it susceptible to outside invaders. The majority of people fled and established a new kingdom in Bornu. At its peak in the 16th century, the Bornu empire stretched north into the Fezzan of present-day Libya. Its revenues supported the jihads, or holy wars, that Bornu’s kings, like many other West African rulers, launched during the 16th and 17th centuries to subdue the “heathen” groups living outside their territory and to acquire slaves. Three different European powers - Great Britain, France, and Germany - divided the Bornu empire between four different colonies - Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. (Great Britain and France divided the German territory after World War II.) The British and French disrupted the profitable trans-Saharan trade, subjecting the Kanuni to the colonial economy.

**Culture:** Colonization divided the once united Kanuri, although today most inhabit an area in northeastern Nigeria around the city of Maiduguri. The Kanuri now earn their income predominantly through commerce and agriculture. They produce guinea corn, millet, peanuts, and cotton, and they raise cattle. The strong Muslim orientation of the Kanuri influences all their social organizations, especially those involving family, law and education. Students are expected to know the Qur’an, and the father’s authority within the family is unquestioned.

**Songhai**

*(also known as Songhay, Songhai, Songrai, Sonhrai, and Sonhray)*

SEE MALI

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**Tuareg**

**History:** Often called “the blue people” because of the color that the indigo dye of their clothing leaves on their skin, the Tuareg are a semi-nomadic people who live in the western and southwestern regions of the Sahara as well as in the Sahel. Known to Greek and Roman scholars as the “veiled Sanhadja,” the Tuareg claim descent from the Berbers of North Africa and are believed to have migrated southward during Arab invasions of North Africa in the 7th century C.E. Beginning around the 11th century, to assure an adequate agricultural labor supply while the Tuareg nobles traveled on long-distance trade journeys, these confederations conducted raids on communities to the south, acquiring slaves, serfs, and tribute states, which made payments in crops such as millet.

Beginning in 1900, the colonial governments of French West Africa began a relentless campaign to relocate the Tuareg and other nomads into agricultural villages. They also imposed taxes on the trans-Saharan trade caravans, and confiscated camels from the Tuareg to use for their own desert military campaigns. By 1922 many Tuareg groups sought refuge in non-French colonies, such as Nigeria and Libya, though most returned home after the French West African colonies became independent in the early 1960s.

Many wonder how long the Tuareg’s customary nomadic ways can survive. Already, economic necessity has made many Tuareg permanently fixtures in cities such as Ouagadougou, Niamey, and Bamako, where they make a living selling leather goods to tourists.

**Culture:** By the 15th century, Tuareg society recognized numerous categories of status and caste. These included iklan (slaves), the irewelen (descendants of iklan), and the imrad (tribute-paying clients), as well as the Tuareg nobles - fair-skinned nomads who called themselves the imageren (Arabic for “the proud and free”). Most slaves, once captured, were traded to another federation to reduce the chances of escape. The slaves were then assimilated into Tuareg society, cultivating palms, vegetables, and grains on their owner’s land and sometimes accompanying trade caravans. Although subordinate to the nobles, the iklan were generally considered part of the family, and both loyalty and marriage offered opportunities for social mobility.
Nigeria is located in West Africa, on the Gulf of Guinea. It is bordered by Benin, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. The continent's most populous nation, Nigeria is home to more than 155 million people, most of whom belong to the Hausa, Fulani, Yoruba or Igbo ethnic groups. English is the official language. Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, and Fulani are also spoken. About half the country is Muslim, with 40% of the population practicing Christianity and another 10% adhering to indigenous beliefs. Its capital is Abuja. Other major cities include Lagos, Ibadan, and Kano. A former British colony, Nigeria gained its independence in 1960.

Before European contact, the territory now known as Nigeria was home to several distinct regional kingdoms. In the North, the Hausa inhabited the grasslands of the Sahel, on the southern edge of the Sahara desert, where they formed walled city-states known as birane. The kings who lived within the birane were charged with warding off external aggression, in return for which they collected taxes from commoners. In northern Nigeria the state of Kanem Borno, founded between 700 and 800 C.E., grew so powerful that by the early 17th century it controlled a region as far away as modern-day Libya. In the South, the Yoruba kingdoms established a rich artistic and spiritual tradition, as well as a highly urbanized society. The Edo people had a kingdom of their own, known as Benin, whose architecture and court life impressed the Portuguese who were the first Europeans to see it.

Nigeria Today

Modern Nigeria is a nation of bustling cities, a dominant national soccer team, and rich musical and literary traditions. Among the most notable Nigerians known to a worldwide audience are writers Chinua Achebe and Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka; musicians Fela Kuti, King Sunny Ade, and Sade; and basketball star Hakeem Olajuwon. All the members of the Nigerian Super Eagles soccer team are quite famous within Nigeria. Although the country's political history has been rocky and at times bloody, the current government, headed by Goodluck Ebele Jonathan is considered to be very stable.

The People of Nigeria

Edo

History: The Edo people are one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria, though not nearly as dominant as the Yoruba, Hausa, or Igbo. Modern-day Edo come from inhabitants of the ancient kingdom of Benin, centered in Benin City (not to be confused with the country of Benin). The kingdom, which was established in the 14th century, grew to prominence in the 15th century. Much of Benin's power derived from its role in both the Transatlantic and African slave trades.

Culture: In the postcolonial era most Edo live in villages and small towns in Nigeria's Bendel State. For the most part they are farmers, cultivating yams, corn, and plantains and raising goats and sheep. While some Edo are Christian or Muslim, many still adhere to traditional religious beliefs. Ancestor veneration plays a large role in traditional Edo philosophy. Along with the veneration of ancestors, Edo social structure recognizes age as the primary qualification for leadership. And within the villages, men's work is determined by their generational status. The Edo are known for intricately carved wooden ram's heads, thought to represent dead patriarchs, that are lovingly guarded by families for generations. The artistry of Edo leather and bronework is also renowned.

Fulani or Fulbe
(also known as Peul, Fula, and Fellata)

History: More than half of the Fulani raise livestock. As the Fulani migrated throughout West Africa over the centuries, significant differences emerged among the different groups who considered
themselves as Fulani. Most Fulani, known as the Fulani bororo, or “cattle Fulani,” maintained a traditional pastoral existence. Others, however, known as the Fulani gida, or “town Fulani,” took up a settled existence in the towns of kingdoms such as Mali, Songhai, and especially the Hausa states.

As Fulani groups migrated, they increasingly adopted forms of Islam practiced by neighboring peoples. These Islamic sects inspired reform movements led by Fulani, often with support from neighboring peoples. They advocated jihad, or holy war, to replace rulers perceived as corrupt and greedy with an austere and devout Muslim theocracy. The most famous and powerful of the Fulani theocracies was the Sokoto Caliphate of present-day northern Nigeria. This vast empire arose as the result of a jihad led by a Fulani cleric, Usman dan Fodio, against the Hausa states during the early 19th century. In each of these states, Fulani gida occupied positions of religious and secular leadership. Fulani remain prominent throughout much of this region today. In northern Nigeria the Fulani gida have gradually merged with wealthy Hausa to form an ethnic group sometimes called Hausa-Fulani. This group remains the effective ruling class of northern Nigeria.

Culture: Early explorers and researchers noted the cultural and physical differences between the Fulani and neighboring African groups. The Fulani themselves are keenly aware of their distinctive physical appearance: some have relatively fair skin, long hair and aquiline features. The Fulani reckon descent patrilineally; lineage groups form the basis for the social organization of the pastoral Fulani. Especially in herding families, gender roles are well-defined. Younger boys help their older brothers with the herds, while the girls help their mothers. When a boy reaches the age of 12, he enters sukaabe, or “young adulthood.” At that time, he is taught the rules of respect, courtesy, and justice.

Hausa

History: The word “Hausa” refers to both a language and the ethnic groups who speak it. Hausa is therefore the most widely spoken language in Nigeria, and the most widely spoken Sub-Saharan African language. Hausa speakers include millions of ethnic Fulani. The earliest Hausa states probably formed by 1200 C.E., a consequence of the wealth derived from a thriving trade in slaves, gold, and cola nuts. The seven “true” Hausa states - Biram, Kano, Rano, Katsina, Daura, Zazzau, and Gobir - which the Hausa consider the core of Hausaland, emerged during this period. By the 15th century, Kano was one of the most important trading centers in Africa, with a population perhaps approaching 50,000.

Contacts with the neighboring empires of Mali, Songhai, and Kanem-Bornu probably brought Islam to the Hausa towns as early as the end of the 11th century. By the 14th century, Islam had been embraced by Hausa leaders and was prevalent through much of the region. At their peak, around 1650, the independent Hausa states stretched from the borders of Bornu in present-day northeastern Nigeria to the Niger River, and from the Jos Plateau north to the fringes of the Sahara. During the 1890s British troops conquered the bulk of the Sokoto Caliphate, partly under the premise of stopping the slave trade. The colonial administration permitted existing emirs to remain in office as long as they complied with British demands. The British slowly abolished agrarian slavery and encouraged the cultivation of cash crops such as cotton and peanuts. The pre-colonial elites of Hausaland not only survived colonialism but have remained powerful since independence. Because they are Nigeria’s largest ethnic group, the Hausa have played a dominant role in many of Nigeria’s civilian and military governments.

Culture: Today most Hausa speakers raise food and livestock or cash crops such as millet, sorghum, and peanuts. These farmers live mostly in villages and small towns. The Hausa maintain a hierarchy distinguishing among chiefs, office holders, and commoners. Hereditary occupations also mark distinctions in rank. Hausa society is strongly patrilineal and patriarchal. Hausa men often marry non-Hausa women, and the Hausa thus tend to expand and assimilate outsiders. Most Hausa today are strongly devoted to Islam, although some Hausa follow a traditional faith, venerating nature spirits. Hausa babies aren’t given official names until their Islamic naming ceremony at one week of age. All boys and girls must learn the Qur’an by age 13. In Hausa culture, marriages are arranged by parents, and the wedding ceremony lasts nearly a week.

Ibibio

History: There are many small subgroups within the larger Ibibio family, including the Angam, Andoni-Ibeno, Eket, and EONYONG. The Ibibio are closely associated historically, socially, and linguistically with the Efik ethnic group. Many of the Ibibio support themselves by growing yams and cassava or by producing palm oil products for export. Others fish, typically in dugout canoes.

Culture: Ibibio social structure is decentralized. Each village is led by its council of elders. Most men and many women belong to secret societies that honor traditional rituals and religious practices. Both boys and girls are circumcised at adolescence. Ibibio-carved masks are renowned for their artistry.
Igbo or Ibo

History: The traditional Igbo homeland lies on both sides of the lower Niger River, though most Igbo live to the east of the Niger between the Niger Delta and the Benue Valley. Igboland is one of Africa’s most densely populated regions. Although Igbo speakers fall into over a dozen subgroups, they share a common culture and have lived in the same area for thousands of years. Several of Nigeria’s leading writers are Igbo, including Chinua Achebe, Cyprian Ekwensi, and Nkem Nwankwo.

Until the colonial era most Igbo lived in autonomous, fairly democratic villages, where a complex structure of kinship ties, secret societies, professional organizations, oracles, and religious leaders regulated village society. This mix of overlapping institutions gave most Igbo some decision-making power and prevented any single person from gaining too much power. Europeans arrived in the late 15th century, and by the late 17th century, the area became a major center for the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Many Igbo, especially those living along the Niger River, became traders who sold captives from the interior, including both interior Igbo and members of other ethnic groups. The British (and their North American colonists) played a key role in this trade during the 1700s. From the colonial period onward, the Igbo produced disproportionate numbers of civil servants and military officers. Educated Igbo thus played a central role in the struggle for Nigerian independence. Nigeria’s first president, Nnamdi Azikiwe, was an Igbo.

Culture: The Igbo have a long history of cultural achievement. Traditionally, the Igbo have excelled at metalwork, weaving, and woodcarving. Excavations at the village of Igbo-Ukwu have unearthed sophisticated cast bronze artifacts and textiles dating from the 9th century. Since ancient times, the Igbo have traded craft goods and agricultural products. Traditional Igbo religion varied regionally, but generally included a belief in an afterlife and reincarnation, sacrifice, and spirit and ancestor veneration. The Igbo performed elaborate ceremonies marking funerals and other life passages. The decentralization and cultural openness of the Igbo made them prime targets for missionaries. Today most Igbo are Christian, and they have a high literacy rate.

Ijaw

History: Living in a region covered with mangrove swamps and frequently flooded fields, the Ijaw have for centuries combined fishing and agriculture as their main economic activities. According to Ijaw legend, all Ijaw descend from a common ancestor who arrived in the Niger Delta in the 15th century. In addition to fishing, farming, and collecting palm oil, the Ijaw manufactured salt by leaching it from seawater that flowed into the Niger River Delta. During the African salt trade the Ijaw developed experience as traders. They later used these trading skills, becoming influential brokers in the Transatlantic Slave Trade. European demand also created a vast market for palm oil, and some Ijaw traders built vast fortunes from the trade. Economic and regional pressures forged a sense of identity among the Ijaw people, uniting formerly autonomous villages behind such larger communities as Calabar, Bonny, and Nembe. To some extent, traders replaced kings as Ijaw leaders, and even some former enslaved Africans gained prominence.

During the mid-20th century, life changed drastically for the Ijaw. The discovery of natural gas and oil in their land brought the Ijaw, with the rest of Nigeria, into contact with multinational corporations. Oil brought some new jobs to the delta region; however, its inhabitants felt increasingly oppressed by the oil companies and the destruction of the local fishing economy that came with petroleum production. In the late 1990s some of the Ijaw, especially young people, openly revolted against major oil companies and attempted to sabotage oil operations in order to take back resources that they viewed as their birthright.

Culture: Death, funerals and the afterlife play a large role in Ijaw culture. Ijaw traditional religion includes a belief in karma and ancestor veneration, and funerals there can last for weeks. The living are expected to offer daily prayers and offerings to their ancestors. It is considered the ultimate affront to speak ill of the dead.

Itsekiri

(also known as Chekiri, Irhobo, Iwere, Shekiri, and Warri)

The Itsekiri primarily inhabit Delta State in southern Nigeria. They speak a Niger-Congo language and are closely related to the Edo people, although today many speak Yoruba. Approximately 700,000 people consider themselves Itsekiri.

Kanuri or Beriberi

History: The Kanuri, today dispersed throughout four countries around Lake Chad, once ruled a powerful and centralized kingdom. Linguistic evidence links them to the peoples of the Sahara, but Kanuri oral histories, like those of many other Muslim groups in western Africa, claim that the group originated in Yemen. By 1000 C.E., the kingdom (known first as Kanem, later as Bornu) was renowned throughout the Islamic world for its prosperity.
and trade connections. A regular stop for many Trans-Saharan trade caravans, the capital city was also a popular resting point for Muslims who were traveling across the continent on the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Beginning in the mid-13th century, however, a series of disputes over succession ravaged the kingdom and made it susceptible to outside invaders. The majority of people fled and established a new kingdom in Bornu. At its peak in the 16th century, the Bornu empire stretched from Kano in present-day Nigeria around Lake Chad and north into the Fezzan of present-day Libya. Its revenues supported the jihad, or holy war, that Bornu’s kings, like many other West African rulers, launched during the 16th and 17th centuries to subdue the “heathen” groups living outside their territory and to acquire slaves. Three different European powers - Great Britain, France, and Germany - divided the Bornu empire between four different colonies - Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. (Great Britain and France divided the German territory after World War II.) The British and French disrupted the profitable Trans-Saharan trade, subjecting the Kanuri to the colonial economy.

Culture: Colonization divided the once united Kanuri, although today most inhabit an area in northeastern Nigeria around the city of Maiduguri. The Kanuri now earn their income predominantly through commerce and agriculture. They produce guinea corn, millet, peanuts, and cotton, and they raise cattle. The strong Muslim beliefs of the Kanuri influence all their social organizations, especially involving family, law and education.

Students are expected to know the Qu’ran, and the father’s authority within the family is unquestioned.

Nupe

The Nupe primarily inhabit west-central Nigeria, along the Niger and Kaduna rivers. They speak a Niger-Congo language related to Yoruba and Igbo. Approximately one million people consider themselves Nupe.

Tiv

History: One of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria, the Tiv are concentrated on both sides of the Benue River in the central part of the country. Before the advent of European influence in the area - which did not come until the mid-19th century - the Tiv amassed some regional power, encroaching on neighboring ethnic groups.

But British rule brought changes both to the Tiv political system and family structures. The traditional Tiv marriage arrangement, in which two family groups would exchange brides, was replaced by a system of marriage based on a dowry.

The Tiv place great importance on patrilineal kinship, in which ancestry is traced through the male line. The father’s family line is paramount, and social structure reflects this. A typical Tiv village comprises several households, each headed by a man related to the other men through the father’s side. Dwellings are arranged in a circle, with separate sleeping buildings behind the main “reception” dwellings. Multiple marriage is permitted, and in some cases a man’s reception dwelling will have two or more sleeping buildings behind it, one for each wife and her children.

Culture: Although waves of missionaries from South Africa, Britain, and the United States brought Christianity to the Tiv in the 20th century, many Tiv adhere to traditional beliefs, and some are Muslim. Tiv religion revolves around unseen spirits and forces, called Akombo. Some cause death and disease and must be appeased or defeated through ritual. Traditionally the Tiv have been subsistence farmers, raising chickens and growing yams, millet, sorghum, cassava, and sweet potatoes. Women perform most of the farming duties. In the past, Tiv men assumed the role of hunters, but their territory contains little game today.

Urhobo

History: The Urhobo live in Southern Nigeria. Around 450,000 people consider themselves Urhobo. The origins of the Urhobo are not clear, but linguistic evidence suggests a connection to their close neighbors, the Igbo, Ijo and Bini peoples. Living in tropical rain forests, most Urhobo are slash-and-burn farmers, while some survive by hunting and fishing.

Culture: Leaders within the Urhobo community are given ceremonial swords and insignia representing their importance. Every ten years, Urhobo villages hold ceremonies honoring spirits that are believed to influence humans’ daily lives. The Urhobo are known for their wooden sculptures and masks.
Yoruba

History: Most Yoruba speakers live in southwestern Nigeria. They form a majority in Lagos, Africa’s second most populous city. Yoruba speakers are traditionally among the most urbanized African people. For centuries before British colonization, most Yoruba speakers inhabited a complex, urban society organized around powerful city-states. These densely populated cities centered around the residence of the king, or oba. Though they lived in cities, traditionally most Yoruba men farmed crops such as yams, maize, plantains, peanuts, millet, and beans in the surrounding countryside. Many men also engaged in crafts such as blacksmithing, textile manufacturing, and woodworking. Traditionally, Yoruba women specialized in marketing and trade. They could gain considerable independence, status, and wealth through their commercial activity. Yoruba speakers identify themselves as members of several different groups, including the Ife, Isa, and Ketu. All of these groups, however, share a similar material culture, mythology, and artistic tradition. Art historians consider 13th- and 14th-century Yoruba bronzes and terra-cotta sculptures among Africa’s greatest artistic achievements. Yoruba oral histories, folklore, and proverbs have also won international acclaim. Traditional Yoruba religious beliefs recognize a supreme god presiding over a complex pantheon of hundreds of spirits or “orishas”. Over the past several centuries, Islam and Christianity have spread to Yorubaland. Many Yoruba take a pluralistic approach to religion that integrates traditional religious elements with Christian and Muslim beliefs, as in the Aladura spiritualist movement.

Culture: According to folklore, the Yoruba originated from the mythical Olorun, God of the Sky, whose son, Odudua, founded the ancient holy city of Ife around the 8th century C.E. By the 11th century, Ife-Ife was the center of a powerful kingdom. It was one of the earliest to emerge in Africa south of the Sahel. While the institution of kingship probably predates the emergence of Ife-Ife, the holy city became the preeminent Yoruba spiritual and cultural center. Another Yoruba city, Oyo, probably originated in the 11th century and became a powerful military state by the 17th century. The rulers of Oyo acquired horses by selling enslaved Africans to Europeans and reselling the manufactured goods to Hausa traders. Wars among Yoruba groups and city-states raged for much of the 19th century, leaving many Yoruba vulnerable to enslavement. Large numbers were sold to traders who brought them to Latin America. To this day, Yoruba culture remains influential in Brazil and Cuba, where Candomblé and Santería religious practices carry on Yoruba traditions.

Other Ethnic Groups of Nigeria represented in the African Lineage Database™: Bini

Hausa Schoolgirls in Kano
Republic of Congo

Facts and Figures

Area: 356,669 sq miles
Comparative Area: Slightly more than twice the size of California
Population: 133,881,703
Religions: Muslim 50%, Christian 40%, Indigenous beliefs 10%
Languages: English (official), Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo (Ibo), Fulani
Literacy: 68%
Life Expectancy: 51.01 years
Capital: Abuja
National Holiday: Independence Day (National Day), October 1 (1960)
Agricultural: Cocoa, peanuts, palm oil, corn, rice, sorghum, millet, cassava (tapioca), yams, rubber, cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, timber, fish
Major Industries: Crude oil, coal, tin, columbite, palm oil, peanuts, cotton, rubber, wood, hides and skins, textiles, cement and other construction materials, food products, footwear, chemicals, fertilizer, printing, ceramics, steel
GDP Per Capita: $900 (2002 est.)

Overview

The Republic of Congo, commonly distinguished from its larger neighbor as Congo-Brazzaville, is a highly urbanized, oil-rich country in west and central Africa. The country’s history has been characterized by shifts in population and power, beginning with pre-colonial migrations and continuing in the years of massive slave-trading along the coast. Scholars estimate that some 13 million people were taken from the Congo River basin during the years of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. The country was further shaped by the influence of its French colonial rulers, who exploited the land’s rich natural resources in addition to its people.

Forced labor depleted the country’s ivory and rubber supplies and killed millions. During World War II thousands of Congolese were deployed to fight in Europe on the French side. After the war, France granted Congo limited self-rule. By the mid-1950s nationalist movements throughout...
Africa had made colonialism excessively costly for France and the other European powers, and Congo achieved its independence in 1960. The discovery of oil off the coast of Congo in the following decade led to many power struggles over the country’s fate, and military coups were more common than free elections.

**The People of Republic of Congo:**

**Bakonga**

(also known as Bakongo, Kongo, Congo)

SEE ANGOLA

**Mbochi**

(also known as Mboshi)

**History:** Little is known about their early history, but it is believed that the Mbochi are descendants of Bantu-speaking groups who migrated to the fluvial basins of the Mossaka, Likouala, and Sangha rivers from the western bank of the Congo River during the middle of the 18th century. They established hereditary fishing rights, controlled trade on the banks of the river, and engaged in fishing, hunting, and boat building. Oral history suggests the Mbochi came from a common ancestor named Ndinga, though today the Mbochi divide themselves into several subgroups, including the Kouyou, Makoua, Likouala, Bangala, and Bonga.

**Culture:** During the Transatlantic Slave Trade as well as during the colonial era, the Mbochi remained relatively isolated in the dense forest of northern Congo, though the French recruited many Mbochi men into the colonial army.

**Téké**

**History:** Historians believe that the Téké probably migrated to the central plateau in the late 15th century and became part of the decentralized Kongo kingdom. With the disintegration of the Kongo kingdom in the 17th century, the vice-royalty of the Anzika, by which name the Téké are also known, established his own decentralized kingdom, known as Tio. The Makoko, or king, ruled from his capital at Mbé through appointed sub-chiefs. But the kingdom’s commercial hub developed in the Pool region farther south, where the Téké exchanged enslaved Africans captured in the interior for goods brought by European merchant ships. By the time the last Makoko died in 1918, the kingdom had been in serious decline for several decades.

**Culture:** Under French colonial rule many Téké migrated south to Brazzaville, capital of the Republic of Congo (not the DRC) for employment. Today they make up a large proportion of the city’s population; many are engaged in mask and religious carving.

Other Ethnic Groups of The Republic of Congo included in the African Lineage Database™: **Sanga**
Overview

Archaeologists have found stone tools indicating a human presence dating back over 10,000 years in Senegambia, a region comprising present-day Senegal and The Gambia. Iron-smelting sites dating to the 4th century C.E. indicate the development of metalworking skills among the region’s people. This may have contributed to the rise of the region’s first centralized state, the Tekrur kingdom in the Senegal River valley. Tekrur drew wealth from the lucrative Trans-Saharan trade, exchanging gold and captives from the south for weapons, salt, and luxury goods from the north. It also had extensive contact with peoples from North Africa, including the Zenaga Berbers. It is from Zenaga that the name Senegal probably derives. After their conversion to Islam beginning in the 8th century C.E., Berbers brought Islam to Senegambia, including a sect called the Almoravids. They swept north and, over the course of the century, conquered Morocco and established a Muslim kingdom in Spain. During the 13th century, as Tekrur fell under the dominance of the Mali empire to the east, the Jolof kingdom arose on the northwestern savanna, conquering the Wolof people.

With their exploration of the lower Senegal River in 1444, Portuguese navigators became the first Europeans known to visit Senegambia. Until the end of the 16th century the Senegambian region was the most important source of enslaved Africans for the Transatlantic Slave Trade. By the late 1600s the strongest European powers on the coast were France and Great Britain, neither of which was strong enough to drive out the other or penetrate the interior, which remained under the control of the indigenous population. Enslaved Africans were the most profitable commodity in the 18th century, and Senegambia exported an average of 2,000 to 3,500 enslaved Africans each year, many of whom ended up in the French colony of Saint-Domingue (present-day Haiti). The eventual colonization of Senegal as French West Africa took hundreds of years, as various antiblack revolts were waged by the area’s kingdoms. Colonial rule was harsh and often repressive, but Senegal was unique among African colonies before World War II in that some of its African residents enjoyed rights as French citizens. In 1890 France extended full citizenship rights to African males living in the Four Communes: Saint-Louis, Dakar, Gorée, and Rufisque. Although these areas contained no more than 5 percent of Senegal’s population, the elite society located there would become extremely influential. After World War II the French government extended the vote to rural Senegal, which gained a seat in the French assembly alongside that of the communes. As demands for independence grew, the Senegalese Progressive Union negotiated with the French government for independence as part of a Mali Federation, combining present-day Senegal and Mali. On April 4, 1960, the federation became independent. However, rivalry between Senegal and Mali broke up the federation in August, and Senegal became an independent state.

Under Léopold Sédar Senghor, Senegal maintained a close relationship to France, and was one of the region’s most politically stable countries. But as the world economy faced recession in the 1970s it became poorer and poorer. Senghor resigned in 1980, and ever since then Senegal has faced increasing disputes with neighbors and internal unrest. Currently the rural Casamance region is the site of fighting between the government and rebel forces.

Senegal Today

Despite the continuing troubles in Casamance, Senegal is one of West Africa’s most popular destinations, known for its food, music and nightlife.

Museums in Dakar and elsewhere celebrate the country’s ethnic diversity and the arts of its people, while the slave fort on Goree Island
The People of Senegal: Fulani or Fulbe
(also known as Peul, Fula, and Fellata)

SEE NIGERIA

Jola
(also known as Djola)

SEE GAMBIA

Mandinka
(also known as Malinke or Mandingo)

History: The Malinke are well represented in Senegal, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau and Guinea, with smaller clusters in Mali, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Ivory Coast. They are closely related to other Mande-speaking peoples who trace their ancestry to the Mali Empire, which first emerged under the leadership of Sundiata Keita in the 13th century. According to oral traditions, Sundiata sent one of his primary generals, Tiramahkan Traoré, to expand Mali’s domains to the west. As connections with Mali became more tenuous, distinctive Malinke cultures developed in the Senegambia area and in the region of upper Guinea. The term Malinke is widely used to refer to both of these groups of people, and there is little doubt that they speak closely related languages and have similar customs and a shared ancestry in the Mali Empire.

When Tiramakhan Traoré led the ancestors of the Malinke westward, they conquered a large area along both shores of the Gambia River and southeastward toward the highlands of the Foura Djallon. As the kingdom of Mali weakened in the 15th century, the western Malinke states became more autonomous, Wolof and Serer ruling families and became an important influence in the political development of Wolof and Serer coastal states. With the expansion of the Atlantic trading system from the 16th century, Malinke kingdoms along the Gambia River, including Niimi, Barra, and Kombo, became increasingly powerful. With easy access to European musketry, gunpowder and iron, in exchange for enslaved Africans, gold, and ivory, these riverine Malinke states became independent and highly militarized. The Malinke became the primary slave raiders in the region. From the 1870s through the 1890s, the Malinke leader Samory Touré built an empire based in northern Ivory Coast and extending from present-day eastern Guinea to western Ghana. The French did not finally conquer Touré’s Malinke state until 1898.

Culture: Like other Mande groups, the Malinke emphasize patrilineal descent and live in extended family compounds within larger villages. Their traditional social organization included a system of hereditary castes. This included the free-born, who were primarily farmers; slaves, who worked in a variety of capacities; and a cluster of special occupational groups, including metalworkers, griots, potters, and leather workers, among others. Traditionally, marriage outside of one’s caste was forbidden. Each village quarter was dominated by a single patrilineage (an extended-family group recognizing descent along the father’s line) and occupational group, which governed its own affairs and, until the massive conversion of the Malinke to Islam in the late 19th century, its own set of spirit shrines. The senior man from the most senior lineage was the chief of a particular village and served as an intermediary with the regional Malinke officials. Age grades of men who were circumcised and initiated together provided an important source of village unity. Both men and women are circumcised in Malinke society, and the Malinke have introduced these practices to a number of neighboring peoples. Traditionally, gender roles are quite distinct, with women performing the bulk of the agricultural labor, while men dominate long-distance trade, hunting, and warfare.

Serer
(also known as Sarer)

History: The Serer live primarily in Senegal and represent one of the largest ethnic affiliations of Senegalese people. Some also live in Guinea-Bissau and The Gambia. Their language is part of the Niger-Congo language family. Linguistically and culturally, they are related to the neighboring groups Wolof, Fulbe, and Temne. Known in the region as being fiercely independent, for many years the Serer fought against outside influence, including that of Islam. Their resistance made them a target of religious warfare in the late 19th century, a conflict that ended only when French colonizers gained control of Senegal. Eventually more and more Serer converted to Islam.
Culture: Serer social structure remains mostly matriarchal, where descent and inheritance are traced through the mother’s line. Serer tradition permits polygamy, and in such cases each wife has her own thatched building. Most Serer farm millet, rice, and peanuts and raise cattle, while others, especially members of the subgroup known as the Nyominka, work as fishermen.

**Tukulor**

**History:** The Tukulor are a Fulani-speaking ethnic group who, traditionally, are sedentary agricultural farmers of the Futa Toro region in Senegal. Historically, they have a special commitment to Islam: the partly Tukulor ruling classes of the kingdom of Tekrur converted to Islam in the 11th century, and the Tukulor claim with pride to be the first black Africans to embrace Islam.

In the 19th century many Tukulor, inspired by the dynamic religious leader al-Hajj Umar Tal joined the purist Islamic Sufi order, the Tijaniyah. Al-Hajj Umar Tal mobilized his mostly Tukulor followers in a jihad (Islamic holy war) in 1854 against the Bambara states of Ségou and Kaarta. After conquering these states, Umar founded the vast Tukulor empire in 1864, centered at Ségou and encompassing most of present-day Mali. The Bambara of Ségou never completely surrendered to Tukulor rule; Tukulor power was weak and confined mostly to the towns and major villages. Umar died in 1864, leaving his empire to his sons. Mustafa ruled from 1864 until Ahmadu took over in 1870, but under the reign of both sons, the empire slowly disintegrated, as local leaders rebelled against the ruling dynasty. Invading French colonial troops forced Ahmadu to flee, and in 1891 the empire fell to the French.

Because the Torobe control disproportionate amounts of land, and because the lower castes own very little, during the 20th century many lower caste Tukulor have given up agriculture for wage labor in the cities. In 1990 there were roughly 750,000 Tukulor spread across West Africa.

Culture: Despite their conversion, Tukulor traditional religious beliefs in spirits, witches, and ghosts remain powerful. There are five castes in traditional Tukulor society. In descending order by status, they are the Torobe, or aristocratic Islamic scholars and leaders; the Rimbe, or farmers, traders, and administrators who also act as warriors; the Nyanbe, or crafts-workers; the Gallunkobo, meaning freed people or descendants of slaves; and the Matyube, or slaves.

**Wolof**

**History:** The Wolof, numbering approximately three million people, are the largest ethnic group in Senegal and form a minority in The Gambia and in Mauritania. The Wolof language is part of the Atlantic subgroup of the Niger-Congo family of languages. Though the Senegalese scholar Cheikh Anta Diop argues that the Wolof language bears a strong resemblance to ancient Egyptian and that the Wolof are descendants of the ancient Egyptians, oral traditions and linguistic evidence suggest that the people known as Wolof originated in the Senegal River Valley area. They gradually moved south into their present territory. The ancestors of the Wolof were dominated by the kingdoms of Ghana and Mali until the 14th century, when the Djolof kingdom asserted its independence.

**Culture:** Wolof society is divided into separate spheres based on social status, including a class structure that denotes some as noble, some as artisans, and others as lower-class people. Wolof people from all social strata place great importance on honor, dignity and appearance. Wolof women are known for their sophistication and elegance in dress and hairstyle. Wolof cuisine is based on grains such as sorghum and millet, and sauces rich with peanuts, tomatoes, okra and beans. Many Wolof proverbs and folktales have made their way into American culture because of the oral traditions brought by enslaved Africans.
Sierra Leone Today

Today, Sierra Leone is in a tentative state of peace, attempting to rebuild its democratic institutions, economy and infrastructure in the wake of a devastating civil war. It continues to be a regional center for dance and music – from guitar-based “palm wine songs” to the up-tempo highlife and juju beats. A literary renewal is underway in Sierra Leone, thanks in part to the work of black British writer Caryl Phillips, who has brought international attention to the obstacles writers there face. Perhaps the most famous Sierra Leonean is Sengbe Pieh, known as Cinque, who was the leader of the Amistad rebels.

The Peoples of Sierra Leone: Mende

History: There are roughly 1.5 million Mende in Sierra Leone (mainly in the southeast), comprising some 30% of the population, and approximately 30,000 in neighboring Liberia. The Mende probably originated among the Mani peoples, who moved from the West African savanna into coastal and forest regions between the 13th and 16th centuries. The arrival of Mande-speaking invaders from the north, together with an increase in population and the advantages of political and military alliances at the time of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, shaped the emerging Mende state system during the 18th century. Until the British abolished the slave trade in 1807, the Mende engaged in predatory warfare to capture slaves. The Transatlantic Slave Trade became an important source of wealth and power for Mende chiefs. Most of the Amistad captives were Mende, including their leader Sengbe Pieh (known as Cinque in America).

Throughout the 19th century, the Mende were involved in a complex system of war and trade among themselves and with their African and European neighbors. In April 1898, the Mende rose up and killed Europeans (and Africans working for Europeans) throughout their territory. The Mende people were a powerful component in the Sierra Leone People’s Party, which led that country to independence in 1961. After independence, the dominance of Mende politicians contributed to ethnic and political tensions in Sierra Leone.

Culture: Secret societies, called Poro or Wonde for men, Sande or Bundo for women, supported chiefly authority and government. These societies combined training in civic and military matters with religious and initiation rites. Both the Poro and Sande groups operate bush schools that teach adolescents how to assume adult roles – roles that are often strongly based on family lineage. Mende society is polygamous, with strong gender roles for men and women to follow. The Mende are mostly farmers, growing rice, yams, peanuts and cocoa. They practice crop rotation, and are known as excellent agriculturalists.

Overview

One of the smallest West African countries, Sierra Leone has had a history of great influence and conflict. One of the areas most devastated by the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the country was founded in the 18th century by British abolitionists as a home for repatriated enslaved Africans and black freedmen living in England. Those sent to Sierra Leone from London mixed with Europeans and local inhabitants – mostly Mende and Temne people – to create a unique culture. As Britain’s colony for more than 150 years, Sierra Leone was depleted of most of its natural resources. The colonial schools, however, did train a generation of African nationalist leaders, many of whom became influential in the freedom struggles of other countries. Sierra Leone’s own independence came in 1961. In recent decades, Sierra Leone has suffered due to regional instability, especially that of neighboring Liberia.
The Mende are known for powerful, expressive wooden masks. Some of them are used in initiation ceremonies, which illustrate the ideals for male and female beauty in Mende culture. Those who practice traditional religious beliefs pray to ancestors, spirits, and Ngewo, the creator and ruler of the universe. Their art depicts nature spirits and ideal human forms, but never Ngewo. Many of the African elements in South Carolina's Gullah culture – from agricultural to funeral customs – come directly from the Mende people.

**Temne**  
*(also known as Timne or Timmanee)*

**History:** The Temne, who speak a Niger-Congo language, trace their origins to the Fouta Djallon region of Guinea. Some Temne remain in Guinea, but the majority migrated southward into what is now northern Sierra Leone, probably as a result of Fulani invasion into the Fouta Djallon in the 15th century.

In Sierra Leone the Temne encountered Muslim traders, and as a result, many converted to Islam in the following centuries. Historically most Temne have been farmers, raising rice, cassava, and millet and growing peanuts, tobacco, and kola for sale. About one million people in Sierra Leone identify as Temne.

**Culture:** Temne political structure is decentralized. Each village is overseen by a leader, who in turn reports to a higher-level leader of several villages.

Historically such leaders were selected on the basis of their ancestry. After the British colonized Sierra Leone, and they instituted a system of electoral politics in the late 1700s. Alongside their administrative and judicial roles, the village leaders also belong to one of the brotherhood organizations, known as Poro, which play an important part in Temne life. Poro are part religious order, part social and historical brotherhood. Poro members, all male, consider themselves guardians of traditional Temne values. A corresponding women’s movement, known as Bundu, serves similar functions in the lives of Temne girls and women.

Male initiation follows strict rules. Traditionally, the Poro group would take the initiates and keep them from the village for several months. They were returned as adult members of the community – their new status signalled by the wearing of the Poro hat and the adoption of a “bush name.” Girls were similarly taken by the leaders of the Bundu to a place away from the village, where they were taught the rules and roles of women. They returned home as women. Wooden headdresses would mark the women in charge of the initiation rites, and masks were seen as the embodiment of their spirit, and of an idealized femininity. Masks play a large role in traditional Temne political succession as well. When a new chief is chosen, the mask is used as a symbol of the chief, and his family’s, power and importance.
Tanzania is an East African nation sharing borders with eight countries and the Indian Ocean. Tanzania is home to many of the oldest known human settlements. Northern Tanzania’s Great Rift Valley is home to Olduvai Gorge known as the “The Cradle of Mankind”, having fossils over two million years old along with the oldest known footprints. It was not until ten thousand years ago, that human societies began to settle in Tanzania. Khoisan-speaking foragers were the first to establish small villages throughout the eastern Rift Valley. Around the 1st millennium B.C.E. Cushitic speakers migrated along the Rift Valley from Ethiopia into the region. Cushitic peoples introduced basic techniques of agriculture, food production and cattle farming. Nearly two centuries later, Bantu speakers began to arrive in Tanzania, settling in the western mountainous region. These Bantu-speaking groups brought with them ironworking skills and new ideas of social and political organization. In the 10th century, Nilotic pastoralists entered the region and continued to immigrate until the 18th century. The majority of Nilotic speakers settled in villages and many assimilated with Bantu speakers.

Since the Second Century, merchant and travelers from the Persian Gulf and western India conducted trade along Tanzania’s coast. Coastal towns began springing up known as “Swahili Towns”. From the 11th to the 16th century, Kilwa was run by Africans then the Persians and finally the Portuguese. By the 18th century, Arab slave and ivory traders were able to penetrate the interior of present-day Tanzania. The enslaved people from the interior were sold on the spice island of Zanzibar and were taken to Persia, India, Reunion, Mauritania and Arab countries.

Like many African Nations, Tanzania has had many names over time; from German East Africa to Tanganyika and ultimately Tanzania. During the scramble for Africa, in the 1880s, the Germans took control of the mainland, while the island of Zanzibar became a British colony. German colonizers disregarded local political structures and traditions. The German administration brought cash crops, railroads and roads to the land. Several African communities organized a rebellion known as the Maji Maji War, which took over 120,000 African lives. After the war, Germans took control over the colony, instituted public education, and provided basic services. After WWI, the League of Nations gave Great Britain control over the German territory also and it was renamed Tanganyika.
After WWII, the British Governor created a self-governed council, which required equal representation for European and Asian minorities as the 99 percent African majority. The Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), along with other African reform groups, was outraged at this uneven representation.

TANU was established in 1954 and led by an outspoken schoolteacher, Julius Kambarage Nyerere. It launched a massive recruitment campaign with a mission for self-governance without ethnic or racial division. In 1961, Nyerere was elected prime minister of an independent Tanganyika. As Prime Minister, Nyerere restructured the government to a one-party republic. Three years later, he united with the economically troubled island of Zanzibar establishing the United Republic of Tanzania. Nyerere attempted to build a self-sufficient national economy based on his vision of African Socialism, which combined Maoist principles of rural mobilization with traditional African values and social structures. He established over eight thousand Ujamaa villages, based on the principle of ‘familyhood,’ which housed eighty percent of the Tanzanian population. Rural collectivization improved access to clean water, schools and health care, but failed to increase agricultural productivity. By the late 1970s, Ujamaa failed to create a sustainable economy and Tanzania was forced to take loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Subsequently, Julius Nyerere stepped down from office and Alis Hassan Mwinyi was elected president in 1985.

**Tanzania Today**

Tanzania has a current population of 42 million with over three million living in the capital of Dar es Salaam. Its economy has averaged an annual seven percent GDP growth for the past decade. Over half of the economy is based on agriculture, which also accounts for 80 percent of the workforce. Known for having some of the worlds best safari, tourism is another booming industry that accounts for a significant part of the economy. Tanzania is also known for infamous places such as: Mount Kilimanjaro, Lake Victoria, Serengeti National Park, the Ngorongoro Crater and Lake Tanganyika.

**The People of Tanzania: Sandawe**

The Sandawe are an agricultural ethnic group that resides in central Tanzania, with a population of 40,000. Sandawe is a tonal Khoisan language, using clicks in their dialect. Sandawe people are known for having a small frame, thin lips and light skin. Historically, they had a stateless cattle herding society. The staple foods are: millet, milk, and butter. Meat is rarely eaten.
Archaeologists link human remains in the area dating back 50,000 years. A gradual shift from hunting and gathering to agriculture began about 5000 years ago with the cultivation of yams in the forest zone surrounding the Togo Mountains and millet in the savanna to the north and south. The area of present-day Togo never developed the strong state structures characteristic of Asante to the west or Dahomey to the east. Although some of its peoples repeatedly fell under the domination of neighboring kingdoms, the southern Ewe region as well as the territories in the north remained divided among numerous small chieftdoms. While the neighboring kingdoms participated in the export of gold and slaves, the Togolese peoples retained a subsistence economy.

The Portuguese first visited the Togo coast during the late 15th century. Other Europeans, including the Dutch, English, French, and Danish, arrived by the 17th century, when the demand for enslaved Africans in the Americas began to dominate commercial relations. Soon, the southern and central parts of Togo fell prey to slave raiders from the neighboring Asante and Dahomey states, and northern regions fell under the domination of the kingdoms of Mamprusi and Dagomba, centered in what is today northern Ghana. Meanwhile, the region attracted missionaries. In the 1880s, Togo came under the control of Germany, but after Germany lost World War I, France and Great Britain took over the region, dividing it into present-day Togo and Ghana. The French administered Togo jointly with Dahomey from 1934 to 1936 and as a subunit of French West Africa from 1936 to 1946. In 1946 Togo became a United Nations trust territory, separate from the rest of French West Africa, with representation in the French parliament and an eventual goal of independence. British Togoland merged with the Gold Coast and in 1957 gained independence under Kwame Nkrumah as Ghana. Formerly French Togo proclaimed full independence on April 27, 1960.

Gnassingbé Eyadéma came to power in a 1963 coup, and is still in power. Following the pattern of his idol, General Mobutu, Sese Seko of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (later Zaire), Eyadéma has built a cult of personality and despotic state.

**Togo Today**

Among the most popular West African destinations for visitors, Togo boasts beautiful beaches, a fascinating history, and a spicy cuisine. Like many countries in the region, soccer is the national sport, and many of the top Togolese soccer stars play in elite European leagues. Among the Kabye people of northern Togo, wrestling is part sport and a cultural heritage. Textiles, iron-work, and wood-burning are among the country’s most popular arts.

**The People of Togo**

**Ewe**

**History:** The early history of the Ewe is little known. According to oral tradition, they began a gradual westward migration from Oyo, in the Yoruba region of modern Nigeria, in the 13th century C.E. However, archaeological evidence suggests a longer continuous presence in the Ewe heartland of southern Togo. One theory suggests that this tradition may have arisen during the 18th century, when Oyo dominated Dahomey and neighboring parts of present-day Togo. Another theory proposes that Yoruba migrants may have at one point achieved cultural hegemony over the indigenous population of the Ewe region.

Oral tradition tells of the Ewe’s flight from a brutal 17th-century tyrant, King Agokoli of Notsé. This experience may have shaped the Ewe group’s long-standing opposition to strong leaders, and hindered state formation. Although the pre-colonial Anlo Ewe of present-day Ghana
formed a regional confederacy of kinship groups, all acknowledging the primacy of a chief priest, most Ewe remained in small local polities. In these polities the power of hereditary chiefs was tempered by the authority of lineage patriarchs, and by local assemblies of male and female elders. Lacking a centralized state, the pre-colonial Ewe also lacked a strong sense of group identity. Instead, Ewe territory provided a place of refuge from the neighboring kingdoms of Dahomey and Asante. Ga-speaking and Fanti-speaking peoples such as the Mina settled among the Ewe as refugees from Asante hegemony, and gradually adopted Ewe language and customs. On the other hand, the Ewe’s lack of a strong state structure left them prone to frequent slave raiding from the 17th to the 19th century.

Culture: The broad Ewe grouping comprises a number of ‘clans’ or ethnic subgroups, all speaking languages of the Niger-Congo family, but each with its own history and specific customs. These subgroups include the Anlo of Ghana, and in Togo the Ouatchi, Mina, Adja, and so-called Brazilians, a group with diverse origins (including freed enslaved africans) who settled on the coast as traders during the early 19th century. The Ewe are the largest ethnic group in Togo, and they dominate the country economically. They are closely related to the Fon of Benin, but are distinguished by their historical resistance to states such as the Fon-dominated kingdom of Dahomey. In addition to sharing a language and certain historical experiences, pre-colonial Ewe communities were linked by trade. Market women exchanged fish and imported European goods for the agricultural produce of interior groups.

Mina
(also known as the Popo)

The Mina primarily inhabit southern Togo and southern Benin. They speak a dialect of Ewe, a Niger-Congo language and are sometimes considered an Ewe subgroup. The Mina are the descendants of Ga and Fante migrants. Approximately 400,000 people consider themselves Mina.
Uganda is a landlocked East African country in the heart of the Great Lakes region, with neighboring countries of: the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Kenya. During the 1st century B.C.E., Bantu speakers migrated to the region displacing the Khoisan-speaking foragers that inhabited the area to the North. Bantu speakers brought their ironworking skills, along with different ideas of political organization. As the Bantu speakers moved east into the savannah they encountered Nilo-Saharan speaking pastoralists. From the Nilo-Saharan speakers, Bantu speakers learned how to cultivate arid-climate grains.

Bantu speakers created sophisticated political structures and centralized kingdoms. In 1200, the first kingdom Bunyoro-Kitara was established. Over the centuries, royal dynasties arose controlling and expanding the kingdom of Bunyoro-Kitara. At the height of the empire, the kingdom was 3,241 square miles with a population of over 1.4 million people. In the late 18th century, the empire collapsed due to internal division and British infiltration. The empire did not decline until the late 18th century. Smaller empires around this time included the Ankole, Busoga, and Toro.

One of the most famous kingdoms was the Baganda Baganda, which played a major in the history of modern-day Uganda. Baganda, the kingdom of the Ganda people, was the largest of all the kingdoms with a population of over 5.5 million inhabitance. The economy was based on agriculture and trade, primarily with merchants from Egypt and Zanzibar. The Bagandan Rulers traded ivory and enslaved people for firearms and cloth. The height of the empire was during the 18th and 19th century. During the mid-19th century European explorers, John Hanning Speke and Henry Morton Stanley, came to the region of Uganda, as they searched for the source of the Nile River. Both Britain and Germany wanted possession of Baganda; in 1890, they signed a treaty giving Britain control of it. Britain used indirect rule to control the Kingdom, as well as the rest of Uganda. Although people rebelled, any conflict was quickly suppressed.
During colonialism, the British encouraged an African agricultural economy, instead of bringing in white settlers. By the 1950s, young students began to organize anti-colonialist organizations like the Young Baganda Association. Most organizations were based on ethnicity, including the Ugandan National Congress, which primarily had Bagandan members. In 1962, Uganda became independent nation. Four years later, Prime Minister Milton Obote abolished the Kingdom of Baganda. Obote wrote a new constitution dissolving traditional kingdoms and customs, and granted himself executive power. Obote also expanded the military, and sought to make it the strongest in Africa. He relied on the military to display his power, and developed a close relationship with officer Idi Amin. In 1971, Idi Amin led the military on a coup and kicked Obote out of office. Amin declared himself President of Uganda and instantly dissolved parliament. Amin stayed in office until the Tanzanian army, along with Libyan soldiers, invaded Uganda and forced him out in 1979.

Uganda Today

Uganda has a population of over 35 million. Since 1987, the Lord's Resistance Army, a religious military group, has led an armed rebellion against the government. The rebellion has not affected the economy because of Uganda's abundant resources. Since 1986, President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni has ruled Uganda. His reputation has been marred, however, with the abolition of presidential term limits and the invasion and occupation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Uganda has a growing tourist industry based on having: the highest mountain range in Africa, the source of the Nile, as well as the largest concentration of primates.

The People of Uganda:

**Dodos**

*Karimojong, Dodoth, Doth*

The Dodos live in the semi-arid plateau in northern Uganda. They migrated from Ethiopia to this area around 1600 CE. The Dodos have a population of 385,000 and speak Karimojong, which is in the Nilotic language family. The men are fierce cattle-herders and the women grow sorghum and millet. They have a patriarchal, democratic, age-based society. The leaders are warrior known as gazelles (ngigetei) and the elders are known as mountains (ngimoru). They are divided into territorial groups with three main subgroups: the Bokora, Pian and Matheniko. The government is currently trying to force the Karimojong to disarm and abandon their culture; they are struggling to adapt to a technological world.
Facts and Figures

Area: 290,585 Square Miles
Comparative Area: Slightly larger than Texas
Population: 13,881,336
Religions: Christian 90-75%, Muslim and Hindu 24-49%, indigenous beliefs 1%
Languages: English (official), Bemba (official), Nyanja (official), Tonga (official), Lozi (official), Luwale (official), Lunda (official), Kaoende (official), Chewa, Nsenga, Tumbuka, Lala, other languages
Literacy: 80%
Life Expectancy: 52.36 years
Capital: Lusaka
National Holiday: Independence Day, October 24 (1964)
Agricultural: Corn, sorghum, rice, peanuts, sunflower seed, vegetables, flowers, tobacco, cotton, sugarcane, cassava (tapioca), coffee, cattle, goats, pigs, poultry, milk, eggs, hides
Major Industries: Copper mining and processing, construction, foodstuffs, beverages, chemicals, textiles, fertilizer, horticulture
GDP Per Capita: $1,500

Overview

The landlocked country of Zambia is located in Central Africa; bordering: Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia. Humanity has occupied this land for over a million years. The earliest inhabitants were Khoisan speaking hunters and gatherers. Major waves of Bantu speakers arrived in Zambia beginning in the 4th Century. Wanting to protect their way of life, Khoisan speakers left Zambia and headed towards Southwestern Africa. Bantu speakers introduced iron working, the domestication of sheep and the cultivation of cereal grains. Among them were the Tonga people, who smelted and traded glass beads and seashells as early as the 7th Century. Arab and Indian traders came into the region along the Zambezi River exchanging cloth, guns and Chinese porcelain for ivory, cotton weaving, and gold. During the 12th Century, Shona people arrived in the area eventually establishing the Mwene Mutapa Empire. Numerous ethnic groups immigrated to Zambia during the 19th Century to flee from the expanding Zulu empire.

By the year 1500, numerous centralized kingdoms were well established. Chewa In the east, Lozi in the west, Bemba and Lunda were in the north. Lunda was the largest kingdom, around 300,000 sq km. In 1514, Explorer Antonio Fernandez visited the region; his documentation of the Zambezi Trade sparked Portuguese interest in the region. Missionaries from Portugal built churches and introduced Christianity to Zambian people. The Portuguese introduced new foods from the Americas such as maize and cassava. The Portuguese also brought the slave trade. They traded firearms with local kingdoms and Arabs for enslaved people.

In order to control the region’s lush resources, the British government gave Cecil Rhodes’s British South Africa Company (BSAC) a mandate to take possession of region. In 1889, BSAC established itself in the area. Numerous chiefs signed agreements with SBAC to exchange mineral rights for weapons. The Ngoni people constantly resisted the British military but were finally defeated in 1898. Since many ethnic groups and kingdoms were fighting amongst each other, the British were able to conquer the entire region. In 1911, the region was officially named Northern Rhodesia. By the next decade Northern Rhodesia was an official Protectorate of the British Empire. The discovery of copper brought an influx of European technicians, administrators and businessmen. So much copper was discovered that the region became known as “the Copperbelt”. By the end of the economic boom from copper, in 1956, many Africans were laid off while European wealth remained prosperous. The significant economic and social divide caused resentment and tension between Africans and European Settlers. Young nationalists, including Kenneth Kaunda created the Zambia National Congress (ZANC). After returning home from attending the All-African Peoples’ Conference in Accra, ZANC leaders were imprisoned and officially banned.

In 1964, the Republic of Zambia declared itself independent and Kaunda became president.

Zambia Today

Zambia is one of the mostly highly urbanized countries in Africa with half of its population living in cities. It has a population of over nearly 14 million. According to the 1996 constitution, Zambia is a Christian Nation. But, half of the population are Muslim or Hindu. Many Zambians still practice their traditional religions as well.

Zambia’s economy has experienced significant growth, in the past five years the GDP growth has been consistent at 6%. It has a growing tourist market claiming to have some of the best wildlife parks in the world. Other tourist sites include: Nambezi National Park, Victoria Falls and Lake Kariba. Zambia has 72 ethnic groups but 90% of the population belongs...
to the nine main ethnic groups: Nyanja-Chewa, Bemba, Tonga, Tumuka, Lunda, Luvale, Kaonde, Nkoya and Lozi.

The People of Zambia: Luyana

The Luyana or Lui people have a population of nearly 160,000 people. Luyana history is rather elusive. In the late 17th century, they migrated south from the Luba-Lunda Empire in the Katanga area of the Congo River basin. They settled in the floodplains of the Zambezi River and developed the Kingdom of Baroseland. In the 1830's, the Luyana were conquered by the Kololo people after the Kololo were driven out of their Sotholand by Shaka Zulu. With the mixture of Luyana and Kololo came a new language and culture called Lozi.

The Luyana presently live throughout Angola, Namibia, Botswana and the western Province of Zambia.

Tonga

The Tonga have a population of 1.3 million people, which makes up 15 percent of Zambia's population. They live along the Kafue River and Zambezi River in southern Zambia. The word Tonga means “independent” in the Shona language. The Tonga were politically decentralized, therefore there was no monarchy. Since the land they settled had poor soil and irregular rainfall, they only created small villages. The man who settled their village was called ‘Ulanyiika’ meaning ‘owner of the land’.

The Tonga’s language is called ‘Chitonga’. They have a rich history of folklore and oral tradition. Also, they are believed to be the oldest group to have arrived in present day Zambia. Many Tongans work as subsistence farmers, primarily growing corn (maize).

Nkoya

Nkoya people reside in central and western Zambia. Their land is extremely fertile. They are a small group of people, with a population of 87,000. They hold a long lineage of kingship; Mwene Kahane and Mwene Muondo were recognized as senior members of the Lozi aristocracy. Throughout the 1800s, the Nkoya had centralized kingdoms with Kahare and Mutondo as its political and cultural capitals. Kahare and Mutondo not only had royal courts, but also held highly articulate ceremonial culture involving the royal family, judges and musicians.

The annual Kazanga Cultural Festival is so popular in Zambia it is nationally televised. The festival is a source of Nkoya pride and even ministerial officials are in attendance.

Bemba

There are over 3.1 million Bemba people. They live in the northeastern high plateau of Zambia. They are a maternal society with strong family ties. Although most Bemba people are Christian, polygamy is still practiced in rural areas. Traditional Bemba religion is monotheistic, like most African religions. Its single high god Leza is all-powerful and omniscient. Bemba culture also highly respects and admires nature. Every clan is named after an animal or a natural organism. For example, Bena Ng'andu means “the people of the crocodile” and Bena Bowa means “Mushroom Clan”.

Nyanja-Chewa

There are presently over 1.5 million Chewa people living throughout Zambia and Malawi. This Bantu language family lived in kingdoms that established politically centralized governments; the first kingdom was established in 1480. The Chewa also participated in the Maravi Kingdom, a multiethnic decentralized society that stretched from eastern Zambia to Mozambique. Since the Chewa have a matrilineal society, all property and land rights are inherited through the mother.

Lozi

The Lozi people are primarily in Zambia but are also found in Namibia, Angola and Botswana. They have lived in Barotseland in the western part of Zambia for centuries. In the Makololo language the word Lozi means ‘plain’, referring to the Barotse Floodplain. Lozi culture is significantly influenced by the flood cycle of the Zambezi River. In fact, people migrate during the start of the wet season to higher ground.

The Lozi political structure is highly stratified, with its’ culture centered around its’ monarchy. The king is known as ‘Litunga’ which means ‘keeper of the earth’. The Lozi were able to sign treaties with the British, which allowed them to remain autonomous until 1924, when they were absorbed into northern Rhodesia.
Resource Index:

African History & Cultures
Resources

African Ancestry has made this resource list available for the benefit of our readers. The views in these materials do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of African Ancestry.

Angola

Books

Internet
www.loc.gov/frd/cs/aotoc.html

Musicians
Carlos Vieira Dias, Andre Mingas

Bakonga

Internet
www.p4a.com/itemsummary/149719.htm

Mbundu/Kimbundu

Internet
www.travelscience.com/Framed_Pages/Main_Frame/World_Links/Languages/kimbundu.htm

Contact
Embassy of Angola
1615 M Street, NW, Suite 900
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 785-1156
www.angola.org

Benin

Books

Internet
www.africa.upenn.edu/Country_Specific/Benin.html
www.afropop.org/explore/country_info/d/15/Benin/
www.state.gov/fr/pa/ei/bgn/6761.htm

Musicians
Angelique Kidjo, Pedro Gnonnas

Contact
Embassy of Benin
2124 Kalorama Road
NW, Washington, DC 20008
(202) 232-6656
www.beninembassy.us/

Burkina Faso

Books

Internet
www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107369.html
library.stanford.edu/depts/ssrg/africa/burkina.html
www.state.gov/fr/pa/ei/bgn/2834.htm
news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1032616.stm

Musicians
George Ouédraogo, Farafina

Contact
Embassy of Burkina Faso
2360 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008
(202) 332-5577
www.burkinaembassy-usa.org

Cameroon

Books

Internet
www.africa.upenn.edu/Country_Specific/Cameroon.html
www.cameroon.net/
www.lonelyplanet.com/cameroon

Musicians
Yves Ndjock, Claude Di Bongue, Bachot Muna

Bamileke

Internet
www.uiowa.edu/~africart/toc/people/Bamileke.html
www.everyculture.com/Africa-Middle-East/Bamil-k.html

Tikar

Internet
www.mississippitoofrica.com/blackrootseeker/tikar.htm
www.genuineafrica.com/Masks_of_the_Tikar.htm

Contact
Embassy of the Republic of Cameroon
2349 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008
(202) 265-8790
www.ambacam-usa.org/
Central African Republic

Books


Internet
www.sas.upenn.edu/African_Studies/Country_Specific/CAR.html
library.stanford.edu/depts/ssrg/africa/centralafr.html
www.weyanoke.org/hc-clicks.html

Musicians
Dendi, Nkzakara, Banda-Linda Ngbaka

Contact
Embassy of Central African Republic
1618 22nd Street, NW
Washington, DC 20008
(202) 483-7800

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Books

Internet
www.sas.upenn.edu/African_Studies/Country_Specific/Zaire.html
www.africaguide.com/country/zaire/?
news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1076399.stm

Musicians
Wenge Maison Mere, J. B. Mpiana

Contact
Embassy of Democratic Republic of the Congo
1800 New Hampshire Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20009
(202) 234-7690
www.ambardcusa.org

Equatorial Guinea

Books

Internet
www.sas.upenn.edu/African_Studies/Country_Specific/Eq_Guinea.html
allafrica.com/equatorialguinea/
www-sul.stanford.edu/depts/ssrg/africa/eqg.html

Contact
Embassy of Equatorial Guinea
2020 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20009
(202) 518-5700

Gambian

Books

Internet
www.sas.upenn.edu/African_Studies/Country_Specific/Gambia.html
www.africanculture.dk/gambia/history.htm
www.gambia.dk/gam.html

Musicians
Foday Musa Suso, Ifang Bondi

Contact
Embassy of the Gambia
1155 15th Street, NW
Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 785-1399
www.gambiaembassy.us

Ghana

Books

Internet
www.ghanaweb.com
www.ghanaco.uk/history
www.worldbank.org/gh

Musicians
Rhian Benson, Osuani Afrifa, Terry Bonchaka

Ashante/Akan

Books
Guinea-Bissau

Books

Internet
www.sas.upenn.edu/African_Studies/Country_Specific/G_Bissau.html
www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5454.htm
www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107718.html
news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1043500.stm

Contact
Embassy of Guinea-Bissau
15929 Yukon Lane, Rockville, MD 20855
(301) 947-3958

Ivory Coast

Books

Internet
www.countrystudies.us/ivorycoast/
www.geographia.com/ivory/2Dcoast/

Musicians
Alpha Blondy, Serge Kassy

Contact
Embassy of the Ivory Coast
2424 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008
(202) 797-0300

Liberia

Books

Internet
www.members.tripod.com/iberian/Post7.html
www.allafrica.com
www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107718.html
news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1043500.stm

Contact
Embassy of Liberia
5201 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20011
(202) 723-0437
www.embassyofliberia.org
Mali

Books

Internet
www.sas.upenn.edu/African_Studies/Country_Specific/Mali.html
www.lonelyplanet.com/mali

Musicians
Oumou Sangare, Salif Keita

Bambara

Books

Internet
www.africaguide.com/country/mali/culture.htm
www.galenfrysinger.com/dogon_region.htm

Fulani: See Nigeria

Mande: See Nigeria

Songhai

Books

Internet
www.learner.org/exhibits/collapse/mali.html

Tuareg: See Nigeria

Contact
Embassy of the Republic of Mali
2130 R Street, NW
Washington, DC 20008
(202) 332-2249
www.maliembassy.us/

Mozambique

Books

Internet
www.travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_976.html
www.allafrica.com/mozambique

Musicians
Lizha James, Stewart Sukuma, Fany Pfumo

Contact
Embassy of the Republic of Mozambique
1525 New Hampshire Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 293-7146
www.embamoc-usa.org/

Niger

Books
Hill, K. *Still Waters in Niger*. Triquarterly Books, 1999

Internet
www.sas.upenn.edu/African_Studies/country_Specific/Niger.html

Musicians
Bori Saadou, Mamar Kassey

Kanuri

Internet
www.lucy.uk.ac.uk/ethnoatlas/hmar/cult_dir/culture.7850

Songhai: See Nigeria

Tuareg

Books

Internet
www.africaguide.com/culture/tribes/tuareg.htm

Contact
Embassy of the Republic of Niger
2204 R Street, NW
Washington, DC 20008
(202) 483-4224

Nigeria

Books

Internet
www.culturalexpressions.com/ifa/ifahistory.htm
www.countrystudies.us/nigeria/ http://nigeriaworld.com/
www.nigeriaworld.com/

Musicians
Fela Kuti, Femi Kuti, Oliver de Coque

Fulani

Books
**Fulbe**

**Books**

**Internet**
www.mandaras.info/Fulbe.html

**Hausa**

**Books**

**Internet**
www.humnet.ucla.edu/humnet/aflang/hausa/

**Ibo**

**Books**

**Internet**
www.africaguide.com/culture/tribes/ibo.htm
www.omniglot.com/writing/igbo.htm

**Yoruba**

**Books**

**Internet**
www.yoruba.org
www.yorubanation.org

**Contact**
Embassy of Nigeria
1333 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 986-8400
www.nigeriaembassyusa.org

**Republic of Congo**

**Books**

**Internet**
www.sas.upenn.edu/African_Studies/Country_Specific/Congo.html
www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2825.htm allafrica.com/congo_brazzaville/

**Musicians**
Extra Musica, Yolou Mabiala

**Bakongo**: See Angola

**Contact**
Embassy of the Republic of Congo
4891 Colorado Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20011
(202) 726-5500
www.embassy.org/embassies/cg.html

**Senegal**

**Books**

**Internet**
www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107951.html
www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/senegal.htm

**Fulani**: See Nigeria

**Mandinka**

**Books**

**Internet**
www.africaguide.com/culture/tribes/mandinka.htm

**Musicians**
Youssou N'dour, Baaba Maal, Ismael Lo

**Contact**
Embassy of the Republic of Senegal
2112 Wyoming Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008
(202) 234-0540
www.senegalembassy.co.uk/

**Sierra Leone**

**Books**
Uganda

Books


Contact
Embassy of the Republic of Uganda
5911 16th Street NW
Washington, District of Columbia 20011
(202) 726-7100
www.ugandaembassy.com/

Musicians
Jimmy Katumba, Jose Chameleon, Philly Lutaaya

Tanzania

Books


Contact
Embassy of the United Republic of Tanzania
1232 22nd Street NW
Washington, District of Columbia 20037
(202) 939-6125
www.tanzaniaembassy-us.org

Musicians
Saida Karoli, Bi Kidude, Ray C, Hukwe Zawose

Togo

Books


Contact
Embassy of the Republic of Togo
2208 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008
(202) 265-9717
www.zambiaembassy.org/

Musicians
MC Wabwino

Zambia

Books


Contact
Embassy of the Republic of Zambia
2419 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008
(202) 265-9717
www.zambiaembassy.org/

Musicians
Menisa Ayaovi, Afiia Mala
Genealogy

www.aahgs.org

The Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society, Inc. (AAHGS) strives to preserve African-ancestord family history, genealogy, and cultural diversity by teaching research techniques and disseminating information throughout the community. Their primary goals are to promote scholarly research, provide resources for historical and genealogical studies, create a network of persons with similar interests, and assist members in documenting their histories. AAHGS has chapters throughout the United States.

Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society,
P.O. Box 73067,
Washington, DC 20056

www.AfriGeneas.com

AfriGeneas is a website devoted to African American genealogy, to researching African Ancestry in the Americas in particular and to genealogical research and resources in general.

Photography and Artifacts

www.burchcom.com

Robert Burch Communications has an extensive collection of photographs from throughout West Africa.

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- **The Honorable Andrew Young**, Statesman, Businessman, Humanitarian

The images of Africa that we receive are often limited and negative. So it is not surprising that African Americans don't have a positive connection to the continent. Now thanks to DNA, African Americans can finally find out what region of Africa their ancestors were from. It was a revelation for me and my family to finally discover part of our ancestry.

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This African Ancestry service has given me a missing bookend on a long shelf of literature on Africa. I now have a sense of closure and a new meaning for the term African-American.