

# IROHIN

*Taking Africa to the Classroom*



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*Taking Africa to the Classroom*

2010



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A PUBLICATION OF THE

**University of Florida's Center for African Studies**

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# the Center for African Studies at the University of Florida **OUTREACH PROGRAM**

The Center is partially funded under Title VI of the federal Higher Education Act as a National Resource Center on Africa. One of only 12 in the U.S., Florida's is the only Center located in the southeastern United States. The Center directs, develops, and coordinates interdisciplinary instruction, research, and outreach on Africa. The Outreach Program includes a variety of activities whose objective is to improve the teaching of Africa in primary and secondary schools, colleges, universities and local communities. Following are some of the regular activities which fall under the Outreach Program.



Teachers' summer institutes include hands-on activities such as preparing African food.



Students at Eastside High School participating in an African cultural presentation.

## **Teachers' Workshops**

The Center offers in-service workshops for K-12 teachers about instruction on Africa throughout the school year.

## **Summer Institutes**

Each summer, the Center holds teaching institutes for K-12 teachers.

## **Jambo!**

Each summer the Center holds a high school language program to introduce the students to an African language.

## **Library**

Teachers may borrow videotapes and books from the Outreach office.

## **Publications**

The Center publishes and distributes teaching resources including Irohin. In addition, the Center has published a monograph entitled *Lesson Plans on African History and Geography: A Teaching Resource*.

## **Community & School Presentations**

Faculty and graduate students make presentations on Africa to local communities and schools.

# a note from the **EDITOR**

Each summer, the Center for African Studies at the University of Florida hosts a K-12 Teachers Institute. The objective of the institute is to help teachers increase their knowledge about Africa and develop lesson plans to use in their classrooms. The creative lesson plans and articles in this issue of *Irohin* were written by participants in the 2008 & 2009 institutes. Please feel free to use these materials in your teaching and share them with other teachers. Write or call the Center for African Studies for additional copies or download this issue as well as previous ones in PDF format at <http://www.africa.ufl.edu/outreach>.



### ***Participants in the 2008 Summer Institute***

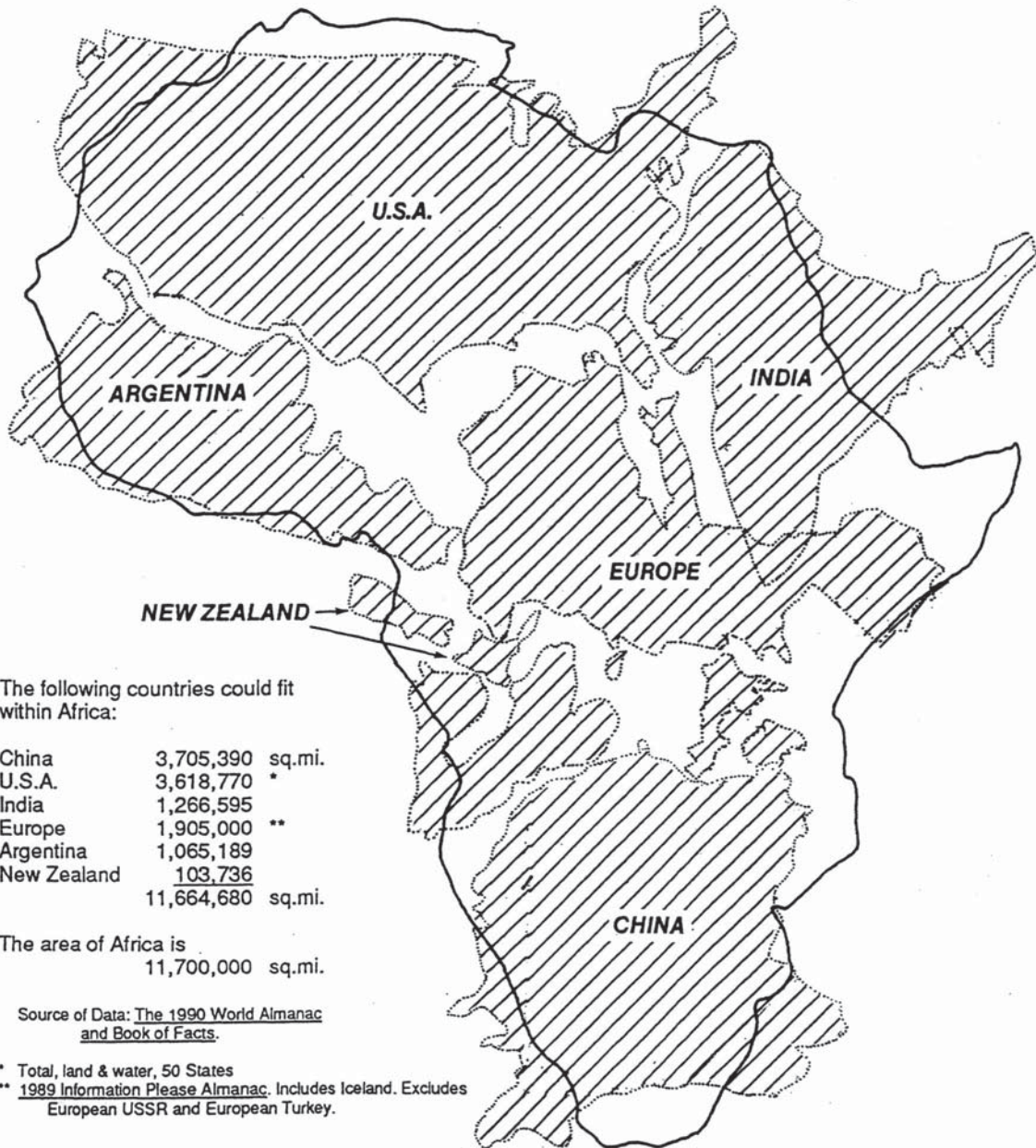
Kyle Konkol, Jennifer Bracken, May Steward, Nella Taylor, Daisy Jasey-Sowa-la, Mary Chiozza, Marianne Medley, Dr. Agnes Leslie.  
**Seated:** Zane Hasan, Lois Kubol, Dr. Rose Lugano, Stephanie Leander



### ***Participants in the 2009 Summer Institute***

Marihelen Wheeler, Timothy S. Hinchman, Miguel Oyenarte, William Jackson, Dr. Agnes Leslie, Byron David Prugh, Donna Reid, Heather E. McKeever, Deidre Houchen. **Seated:** Juanita Nelson, Dr. Rose Lugano, D. Alvarez Caron, and Carol Faas.

# WOULD YOU BELIEVE...



The following countries could fit within Africa:

China	3,705,390	sq.mi.
U.S.A.	3,618,770	*
India	1,266,595	
Europe	1,905,000	**
Argentina	1,065,189	
New Zealand	103,736	
	11,664,680	sq.mi.

The area of Africa is  
11,700,000 sq.mi.

Source of Data: The 1990 World Almanac and Book of Facts.

\* Total, land & water, 50 States  
 \*\* 1989 Information Please Almanac. Includes Iceland. Excludes European USSR and European Turkey.

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# ***IROHIN 2008 ARTICLES***

# CONTEMPORARY MUSIC OF AFRICA

by Jennifer Bracken



Jennifer Bracken, Stephanie Leander-Gionet, Zane Hassan, Lois Kubal and Kyle Konkol playing African music.

## **Introduction**

Africa provides a unique and diverse menu of music. Each genre of music is deeply rooted in the culture and history of each country. There are thousands of languages or dialects and geographical conditions that contribute to African music.

African music as a whole has several common features. The music permeates African life. It is used to provide moral guidance and to narrate history. Artists have long used music as a way to speak out for or against the government. They are concerned that their music makes an impact. African music is also commonly used to mark the stages of life and death and for religious ceremonies and rituals. The instruments used by the musicians are another common attribute of African music. For instance, drums are commonplace in African music and can symbolize power and royalty. The use of rhythm and percussion are highly emphasized. Musicians' voices tend to be loud, open and resonant and can include other sounds such as clicks and grunts. Traditional African music was

orally passed from person to person. African music can be explored by looking at North, South, East and West Africa. These areas of Africa were deeply affected by colonization and that is seen most prevalently in their musical styles.

## **North African Music**

Algeria is a large country and is located in North Africa. Originally Algeria enjoyed Andalusian classical music that eventually grew to include distinct local traditions. Algeria also is home to rural Bedouin music, which contains chanting of epic sagas. Music in Algeria dealt with rural life and was performed with flutes, bagpipes, drums and tambourines. Contemporary Algerian music includes a style known as Kabyle. This style of music includes violin, guitar, banjo and double bass.

One Kabyle style band is Fantazia. This band came about in the late 90's and brought together the musical tradition of North Africa with the vibrant rhythms of dance music.

## **South African Music**

South Africa is also alive with its own musical style. Many musicians started singing in mission schools or in church and then moved onto the recording studio. South Africa has one of the most developed recording industries in Africa. Among others, BMG, an internationally recognized record label, calls South Africa home. Originally, South Africa looked to the eastern world for its musical inspirations. But as time progressed rural musicians made their way to the scene. Musicians used ukupika, a finger style guitar playing as well as the 10-button concertina which produced melodic cycles and call and response singing. Contemporary music of South Africa includes what is commonly referred to as Maskanda. This includes singing, dancing and guitar playing.

The late Miriam Makeba was the best-known artist in South African music until her sudden death in 2008. She was commonly known as "Mama Africa" around the world. Makeba started singing in her



church choir prior to becoming an international singing sensation. She had been all around the world playing her music and even played at President Kennedy's birthday party. Makeba was well known for her pop classic "The Click Song."

Zimbabwe has also become an important part of African music. Their music reflects many foreign music styles such as American and African Jazz. This later progressed to include rock n roll, Congolese rumba and South African township. In the 1970's music revolved more toward its original roots. Musicians tried to meld together local rhythms, moods and melodies with popular sounds from other areas. Very distinct guitar based sounds developed and became popular. However, over the past several years in Zimbabwe music has taken a backseat to AIDS, political upheaval and a failing economy.

The most significant of the musicians in Zimbabwe is Thomas Mapfumo. Mapfumo took western instruments and played the traditional music of Zimbabwe. His words were full of political messages and traditional proverbs that made his style very distinct. Some have described his music as hypnotic. However, the more popular that Mapfumo became the more worried the government became. Eventually Mapfumo was jailed by the government particularly for his song "Hokoyo" which means "watch out" in English. Since being released, Mapfumo and his band tour widely.

"Mama Africa." The late Miriam Makeba was also well known for the Click Song



### **East African Music**

East Africa has a diverse set of music that provides another significant impact on the musical world. East Africa consists of many countries. Ethiopia is in East Africa and is usually associated with its widespread hunger problem. However, it also has a diverse and exciting musical style. With over 75 ethnic groups in Ethiopia it is difficult to list all of the music styles. However, Amharic-speaking people have dominated popular music. The musicians usually recite oral histories of the country. They use varied musical instruments such as the fiddle, flute and lyre.

Mahmoud Ahmed was born in Ethiopia. He worked in a night club as a young man. One night when a band's lead singer did not appear, Ahmed convinced them to let him sing in his place. He wowed the crowd and eventually became part of the band. In the 80's Ahmed recorded hit after hit and became one of the first bands from Ethiopia to play in the US. Ahmed became one of the top musicians in the Diaspora community.

### **West African Music**

Two of the powerhouses of music in West Africa are Cameroon and The Democratic Republic of Congo. Cameroon borders Lake Chad and the Republic of Congo. It has 250 ethnic groups which includes very eclectic music styles. Originally acoustic groups played folkloric music such as as-

siko, mangambe and bikutsi. However, the most popular modern music is makoosa.

One of the most significant Cameroonian musicians is Manu Dibango. Dibango originally enjoyed classical piano but moved quickly to the saxophone. Dibango created his own version of Jazz called Soul Makossa, which was very popular in Europe and America.

The Democratic Republic of Congo has established its own history in West African music. Its music traditionally consisted of lots of drums being played with dancing. The modern approach to music has been called Rumba. It interplayed two or three guitars with some sounds of Cuban rhythms. Congolese musicians became well known in other countries and began to travel abroad where many stayed. Their music has made a strong impression on European, American and Asian music.

### **Conclusion**

The influence and impact of Africa's music transcends its borders and is popular worldwide. It is often heard at many international events. The music of the many different cultures has helped shape music in a way that is immeasurable.

## **CLASS ACTIVITIES**

- Teach traditional music and dance using a member of the community versed in African music.
- Teach modern music and dance.
- Show the different styles of music from different parts of Africa and how they are similar to music in other countries.
- Have lyrics to a popular song that deals with cultural issues and have children come up with their own lyrics that affect them in their towns.

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Additional contemporary musicians can be found at [www.africanmusic.org](http://www.africanmusic.org).

<http://www.griot.de/miriammakeba.html>

# LANGUAGE IN AFRICA

by Zane Hassan



High school students learning Swahili in the Center for African Studies' Jambo! summer institute.

There are over 2,000 indigenous languages spoken all over the continent of Africa. It is difficult to place an exact number on the languages being spoken across the continent of Africa due to extinct languages as well as languages that are being discovered each day. Another difficulty that contributes to exacting this number is how one defines a language from a dialect. Also, besides the indigenous languages, there are also official languages spoken in many of the countries. These official languages were introduced to the continent of Africa during the times of colonialism. After the conference in Berlin in the year 1884, Africa was divided up into regions. The language these regions spoke and taught in schools depended on which European country (as well as the United States) gained ownership rights over the country. These languages include: French, British and American English, and Portuguese. Arabic is a language that is spoken

largely in North Africa due to the influence of Islam.

The indigenous languages are classified under five main language groups: Afro-Asiatic, Nilo-Saharan, Niger-Kordofanian, Khoi-San, and Austronesian. These five major language groups each include many languages. For example, there are 371 Afro-Asiatic languages, 196 Nilo-Saharan, 1,436 Niger-Congo languages, 35 Khoisan languages, and 1,268 Austronesian languages (Joffe 1).

While it is estimated there are over 2,000 languages spoken all over the continent of Africa, this number fluctuates according to your definition of a language and dialect. While it is common to think that many of the indigenous languages in a certain country of Africa are dialects or varieties of one major language, this is actually a fallacy. According to Heine and Nurse, authors of *African Languages: An Introduction*, they define

a language as something having national status, as written, as a standard form of many varieties, not intelligible to speakers of other languages, and possesses a large number of speakers. In contrast, a dialect is local, not written, not a standard form of a language, mutually intelligible, and possesses fewer speakers. However, many of the indigenous languages in Africa are not mutually intelligible; therefore, they would be classified as a language. Also, many linguists define a language as an oral and written form of communication; however, many languages across the continent of Africa lack a written system. For example, Berbers in the Western Sahara emphasize the oral traditions of their languages. They fail to have a set written communication system of their languages; therefore, some linguists classify the types of Berber languages as dialects or varieties of another language. However, these languages are not mutually

intelligible, that is they are not understood from one region to the next. Therefore, they should be classified as languages (Heine and Nurse 10).

The differences in indigenous languages across the countries in Africa makes it difficult to teach students, broadcast, or communicate to the citizens of the country. Therefore, an official language is designated for each country in Africa. These languages are usually the language of their ex-colonial leaders. However, even with this decision there is a problem. For example, in the North African country of Egypt, the official language is Arabic. While this seems simple enough, there are actually problems with this designation. Within the Arabic language there is Modern Standard Arabic, Classical Arabic, and Egyptian dialect; therefore, when Arabic is designated the official language of Egypt...which Arabic is the official language? Also, can this form of Arabic be understood in other Middle Eastern countries? If not, does it mean Arabic spoken in other Arab countries are languages or dialects?

Similarly, children studying in the different countries are taught in the official language of the country; however, they are taught to speak their indigenous language at home. In addition, they learn the language of the neighboring village in order to communicate with their friends. Therefore, many Africans are bilingual and trilingual as a result. What does it mean to be bilingual or trilingual? Does it mean you are two or three monolinguals in one body? Does it mean you know each language as effectively as the next? According to linguists, it is almost impossible to know two or three languages equally.

Languages are used for various reasons. As with many of the languages within Africa, children learn the written system of the official language more than their indigenous language. Children are also able to communicate effectively in an academic setting using the official language rather than their indigenous language(s). Does this still mean they are bilingual or trilingual? Of course.

One type of language often neglected is body language. There are certain ways of communicating besides written or oral communication. For example, Somali Muslims



Learning an African language can be fun as these students found out in the Jambo! summer program at the University of Florida. In two weeks the students mastered the basics of Swahili language

put their head down as a sign of respect when they speak to their elders. However, in the United States and other places around the world, a person that puts their head down when they are interacting with others means they may be hiding something or they are sneaky. While it is a sign of respect in Africa, it is a sign of baseness in other parts of the world. Also, Muslims of North Africa avoid physical contact with the opposite sex. For example, males do not embrace or shake hands with females that are not relatives. This is also a sign of respect. It also has to do with the religion of Islam and the tenets about keeping your distance from women that are of marriageable age to avoid sexual temptation. Similarly, male and female friends hold hands to show their friendship. However, in other parts of the world, this would be considered a sign of homosexuality or lesbianism (Intercultural 1).

When we look at African languages, there are serious implications for teachers. If teachers understand the differences in languages across the continent of Africa, they can pull from the student's background knowledge or pull from the concrete language knowledge the student possesses in order to teach the abstract (Smitherman

41). Also, teachers should understand that African students, like their American counterparts, come to school with the capacity to learn. Many of the students come to American schools with multiple literacies. It is important for teachers to allow students to use their native languages to understand the host language. Finally, it is equally important to be knowledgeable about a student's cultural background because of the body language that is communicated through this. A teacher needs to understand the messages that are being conveyed when a student behaves in a way that is different from what they are used to. It is a teacher's duty to be culturally responsive to the children within the classroom to ensure success for all students.

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# THE ABC<sup>S</sup> OF SOUTH AFRICA



**A / Azania** – Name applied to various parts of sub-Saharan Africa. In the 20th Century the term was used in place of South Africa by opponents of the white-minority ruled South Africa.



**B / Biyela, Ntsiki** - South Africa's first black female winemaker. She graduated in 2004 from Stellenbosch University where she studied winemaking on a scholarship and joined the boutique Stellakaya winery in the Cape Winelands. Stellakaya produces 87,000 bottles of wine a year. The

wines are distributed in California and parts of Europe. Stellakaya and the wines have won gold and silver medals in South Africa.



**C / Cape Town.** Cape Town is located on the southwestern tip of Africa. It is one of the three capitals of South Africa. It is the legislative capital and the location of South Africa's Parliament. One of the world's most beautiful cities, it is one of the oldest cities in South Africa.

**D / The Drakensberg**, which means Dragon's Mountain in Afrikaans is the highest mountain range in Southern Africa, rising to 3,482 meters (11,420 ft) in height. The range is located in the eastern part of South Africa, running for some 1,000 kilometres (620 mi) from south-west to north-east. The mountains have been named a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

**E / Egoli** – Means Place of Gold, which refers to the city of Johannesburg. It is also the name of the long-running South African soap opera "Egoli." It is a daily television drama serial written, directed and produced by South African Franz Marx.

**F / Fundi** – teacher, professor, expert. It is taken from the Zulu word: "Umfindisi."

The original Zulu word: umfundi meant 'learner'. Fundi is also the name of some South African wine brands. A number of South African wines will be sold under the Fundi label including premium red blends. Each producer is identified on the back label.

**G / Gugulethu.** - One of South Africa's populous townships. It is located 15 kilometers from Cape Town. "Igugu lethu" in Xhosa, one of the major languages of South Africa means, "our pride."

**H / Hugh Masekela** is a famous South African Musician and one of Africa's best trumpeters. He has performed all over the world. Masekela's music vividly portrayed the struggles and sorrows, as well as the joys and passions of South Africa. In his music he has protested apartheid in his country and injustices against humanity.

**I / Isivivane** - A memorial Park, also known as Freedom Park located in Pretoria. It is perhaps Africa's most ambitious contemporary memorial project. It is due to be built on a 52-hectare site on Salvokop hill outside Pretoria by 2009 and will include a museum, a memorial, a site for gatherings as well as facilities for religious cleansing ceremonies. "Isivivane" is a Zulu word which means collective effort towards a common goal.

**J / Johannesburg.** It is the provincial capital of Gauteng, the wealthiest province in South Africa. Johannesburg is the source of a large-scale gold and diamond trade, due to its location on the mineral-rich Witwatersrand range of hills. Historically, Jo'burg was the destination of large populations who went to work in the mines.

**K / Kwazulu-Natal** – A province of South Africa. It is also the home of the Zulu ethnic group and influential king, Shaka Zulu. During the apartheid era the government declared KwaZulu a Bantustan and a semi-independent homeland for

the Zulu people. In 1994 ZwaZulu was merged with Natal province to become Kwazulu-Natal.

**L / Limpopo** - The Limpopo River is the second largest river in South Africa, after the Orange River, and is about 1,600 km long. It flows through Botswana, Zimbabwe, South Africa and finally Mozambique where it flows into the Indian Ocean. It forms the boarder between South Africa and Zimbabwe on the North for 240 km and South Africa between and Botswana on the Northeast for 400 km. The northernmost province of South Africa is also known as Limpopo Province after the river.

**M / Miriam Makeba.** One of the most distinguished female singers of South Africa and the whole of Africa. She was among the top singers who popularized the click songs, known for their clicking sounds. Among her most popular songs are: "Pata Pata", "The Click Song" ("Qongqothwane" in Xhosa), and "Malaika". Makeba who died in 2008 collapsed during a performance in Italy and later died. She was also known as Mama Africa.

**N / Lillian Ngoyi** was a South African anti-apartheid activist. She was the first woman elected to the executive committee of the African National Congress, and helped to start the Federation of South African Women. She led 20,000 women in a protest march against pass laws.

**O / Orange River.** It is the longest river in South Africa and flows for about 2200 kilometers. It originates from the Drakensberg Mountains in Lesotho, where it is known as the Senqu and flows westward and finally empties into the Atlantic Ocean at Alexander Bay. The river forms the international boundaries between South Africa and Namibia and South Africa and Lesotho.

**P / Pretoria.** Pretoria in the north of South Africa is the executive capital, where the government administration is housed.

**Q / “Qongqothwane”** Known as the Click Song is Miriam Makeba’s famous click song sang in her native Xhosa language. The song is popular for the extensive clicking sounds that she uses in the singing.

**R / Rand.** The official currency of South Africa. The Rand is divided into 100 cents. There about 9 Rands to 1 US dollar (as of April 2009).

**S / Soweto-** This stands for the South-west town of South Africa. It is the biggest township in South Africa with a population of 2-3 million. It has a mixed population of well-to-do middle class and low income residents.

**T / Table Mountain** – is a major tourist attraction in Cape Town. It is a flat-topped

mountain of about 3,563 ft overlooking the city. Thousands of visitors hike to the top of the mountain or take the cableway.

**U / Ubuntu.** Ubuntu is an African philosophy focused on people’s relationships which each other. Archbishop Desmond Tutu is one of the proponents of the philosophy. He emphasizes people’s interconnectedness, generosity and well being of the whole humanity.

**V / “Hottentot Venus .”** Sarah Baartman - who was displayed as a sideshow attraction in Europe in 19th century will be honored by establishing a centre of remembrance, human rights memorial and Khoi-San Heritage Route in the Eastern Cape.

**W / Western Cape.** The Western Cape is a province in the southwest of South Africa. Its capital is Cape Town. It has a diverse climate and topography which includes the Indian and Atlantic oceans, mountain range and semi-dry landscapes.

**X / Xhosa.** It is one of the official languages of South Africa. It belongs to the Bantu/Nguni family of languages and is spoken by about 6.5 million people living in Eastern Cape Province, Orange Free State, Ciskei and Transkei in South Africa.

**Y / The yellowwood tree** is the national tree of South Africa. The yellowwood family is ancient and has grown in this part of Africa for over 100-million years. The real yellowwood (*Podocarpus latifolius*) is found from Table Mountain, along the southern and eastern Cape coast, in the ravines of the Drakensberg up to the Soutpansberg and the Blouberg in Limpopo.

**Z / Zulu,** one of the major ethnic groups in South Africa. Zulu also known as IsiZulu is a Bantu language. The people are known as amaZulu. It is the largest ethnic group in South Africa spoken by an estimated 11 million people. Many of them live in Kwa-zulu-Natal. Small groups of Zulu people are also found in Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

## ACTIVITES

- Make a K-W-L chart for South Africa.
- Show students a map of South Africa and compare its location to other countries in Africa and other continents, distinguishing the difference.
- Share information about South Africa’s history, people and culture.
- Create a word wall with a vocabulary word added each day.
- Assign each student a key term to research before giving definition.
- Have students color a map of Africa.
- Have students keep a journal of vocabulary words and definitions.
- Have students create a vocabulary list about their own heritage.
- Share information about themselves with pen-pals in South Africa.
- Host a festival and have students prepare traditional South African foods.

# UNIVERSAL MORALITY

## As Taught through African Cultures

by Kyle Konkol



The Baobab tree is common in Africa

### *Cultural Diversity*

It is widely believed that the human species began in Africa and spread throughout the world. Therefore, we are all one people. And yet we are different in culture, social organization, spirituality, and so many other ways. African culture demonstrates the diverse ways people come upon their worldviews with numerous languages, politics, and heritage across a varied geography more than three times the size of the United States. Therefore, due to the size and different populations, it is difficult to generalize how Africans' modes of livelihood have shaped their understanding and thinking about the world. Yet, as educators it is our duty to connect students to Africa.

There is a long history of storytelling in African cultures. Folk tales and myths serve as a means of handing down traditions and customs from one generation to the next. This tradition has thrived for generations because of the lack of printed material. There are many thousands of proverbs from African stories. These folk tales prepare young people for life, as there are many lessons to be learned. Because of the history of this large continent, which includes the forceful transplanting of the people into slavery on other continents, many of the same folk tales exist in North America, South America, and many other places.

### *Making Connections*

When we help our students see that we are similar to others, it encourages understanding, tolerance, and promotion of others' well-being. To express this concept, first think of how things have changed from one generation to the next, whether it be the difference between you and your children or you and your parents. However, you and your child or parents do share common beliefs and principles despite generational gaps. Now think of how cultures have changed over thousands of generations,

moving across continents and climates from Africa to North America. Across these generational shifts, there are connections that are inherent to any community, anywhere, at any point in time. Beyond the basic need to survive, communities need to function within values, beliefs, and principles. These morals have been passed on generation to generation just as we have learned them from our parents, families, and communities. These basic principles have evolved through time in the form of spiritual and religious formations, cultural influences, geographic relocation, and so on. Therefore, a way for our students to connect to African cultures is to look at the ways of passing on information and principles that are all ours as a human culture.

As in early African traditions, today's information has been passed on through oral traditions of storytelling, ceremonies, rituals, and proverbs. Some of these stories or sayings may differ in details and description from folk tales or quotes American children have heard. But even though the words may be different, the messages are the same. Proverbs, among other ways of relaying lessons, represent the universality of human thought across cultures. Although it is important to celebrate the diversity of these cultures and embrace how they may differ from our own, it is equally important in this effort to celebrate and embrace what we share together.

**LESSON PLAN ON NEXT PAGE** 

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Education World – [www.education-world.com](http://www.education-world.com)

# LESSON PLAN

## EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

Tell students that the languages of Africa are rich in proverbs. Explain that African proverbs express the wisdom of the African people and are a key to understanding the African way of life.

## HOW TO START

State the following proverbs from Africa. Ask for the meaning and explanation of the proverb and how it could be useful in an individual's life

## EXERCISES

Ask students to write about a situation in which they had a recent conflict with another person, whether it be a friend, another student, teacher, parent, or someone else. Have them describe when, where, why, and how, if possible, it was resolved.

Out of the list provided below, have each student select two proverbs that could be useful in handling the conflict. For each proverb, the student needs to explain what it means to them and why it is helpful and applicable for the conflict.

### Common African Proverbs

**It takes a whole village to raise a child.**

*Everyone in a community should be responsible for helping to raise a child.*

**Rain does not fall on one roof alone.**

*Everyone encounters problems at one time or another.*

**After a foolish deed comes remorse.**

*After you have done something foolish, you feel sorry for doing it.*

**A roaring lion kills no game.**

*You cannot gain anything by sitting around talking about it. You must work for it.*

**Knowledge is like a garden: If it is not cultivated, it cannot be harvested.**

*If you do not use the knowledge that you have, you cannot expect to gain anything from it.*

**Life is like a shadow and a mist; it passes quickly by, and is no more.**

*Life is short, and you only live it once.*

**Only a fool tests the depth of water with both feet.**

*It is not wise to jump into a situation before thinking about it.*

**A person who wants you out of her/his place will not tell you, 'Get out!'**

*This proverb is just a reminder that people's inner feelings are mostly communicated through actions, attitude and behavior, and much less through words.*

**Provocation is not good, you should choose what to say.**

*A warning against those who use their words to incite misunderstanding and chaos between people.*

**Your bad words against me actually benefit me. When you incite others against me, you actually benefit me.**

*When someone goes around spreading bad words against you, she may actually benefit you in a way. For example, the other people will realize that the other person is really bad for what she says about you. Or, the other people will come back to you and tell you what the person is saying against you and you will know that she is a person to avoid - hence a benefit to you.*

**Little and little, fills the measure.**

*Small things, when combined together make up big things.*

**A patient person never misses (a thing).**

*With patience, you always stand to win.*

**A person, who digs a well, gets himself inside (first)**

*A person who sets a trap often times finds himself caught in it. If you have bad intentions against others, chances are, you'll be the first to be affected by those intentions directly or indirectly.*

**You will be troubled with what you have no knowledge of.**

*Normally said to discourage those who are so nosy about the affairs of others.*

**A person missing this has that.**

*There is no useless person. Likewise, there is no person that is absolutely perfect.*

**I have betrayed a toe against a stone, let it be!**

*I am prepared to bear the consequences of my own mistakes.*

### Conflict Proverbs

**A chili pepper on its plant, how could it make you hot?**

*The issue is none of your concern, how could it bother you? In other words, "This is none of your business!"*

**A friend who loves you, you'll always see him/her when you're in need.**

*Compare with the English saying: A friend in need is a friend indeed.*

**If a fish goes bad don't throw it away lest you regret when someone picks it up.**

*It is a caution against making hasty decisions on things that affect us directly.*

**I value not your wallet but your morality.**

*Good moral character is more important than material wealth.*

**An eye is sharper than a razor.**

*A look can be extremely effective in sending a desired message across. It can be a friendly and inviting look or a threatening one.*

**Don't change your mind because of hearsay.**

*People do speak lots of things that are not always the truth. This is a piece of advice not to take hearsay seriously.*

**A single instant of hardship should not make**

**you forget all the favors**

*Any long-term relationship is bound to encounter some displeasing incidents which should just as well be ignored in favor of so many good things rendered over the whole long period of relationship. That is how relationships are sustained.*

**If you offend, ask for a pardon; if offended forgive.**

*If you upset someone, apologize to him or her. If someone upsets you, forgive him or her.*

# MALI WEB QUEST

by Lois Kubal

Storytelling, mythology, exotic locations, and self-discovery. What's not to like? Even though my students are teenagers, they still love hearing a good story. As students of world literature, they are acquainted with many oral traditions. The study of American Indians, Aztecs, Incas, and Mayan – all – lend themselves to proverbs, life lessons, and oral histories. This coming year, Africa will become part of this rich study of how people communicate their norms and mores, histories, and religions via the spoken word. The vehicle for this study will be a WebQuest.

The most difficult part of the teacher's preparation is to select one small area for the students to explore. As Africa is the second largest continent on the planet, it would be unwise to open the whole of the continent to this inquiry. With a little research, this task can be accomplished by isolating a small area of Africa. For me, it was an easy choice. This particular area is rich in historical data, has collected a wealth of oral traditions, and is known as one of the most vibrant cultures in early African civilization – Mali, in western Africa.

Before beginning the study of any piece of literature, the teacher should prepare the students with a strong background of the history and culture on the indigenous people. Most students know very little about Africa, other than the negative stereotypes produced in Hollywood or fictional novels. Because the American educational system ignores Africa, students have little or no genuine knowledge of that continent. Introducing the whole of Africa can take their breath away, but by giving them a brief geography and history lesson, the students are better able to understand the dynamics of this vast area. They will also be able to see how oral traditions play such an important part in the development of the continent. Remember, introducing them to the vocabulary used in the study is essential. "Griot" is a unique word associated with Africa. Homer was a griot. Making connections so that the study becomes



approachable is vital. As the teacher, you can give this information in the form of lecture, handout, or as part of the quest. I use the quest because I call on experts for this information, and the students can have a downloadable file of all these facts.

Next, explain to the students why Mali will be the area of research and study. Students want to know how this information will be relevant to them, or they simply will not engage. Tell them it was known as the Golden Kingdom because of the remarkable amount of gold and precious jewels

mined in that area. There is so much to tell! Who's ever heard of Timbuktu? Was this a real or imagined city? Look it up! Give them their first assignment... get some information about Mali. And by the way, here is a web quest to help you with the research. Come back tomorrow and discuss why this is an area students might want to learn about.

High school students love to investigate and research, especially if they think they have helped to select the topic. The clever teacher can open the door for the stu-



dents to enter into a self-directed learning experience. That is what a web quest does; it opens avenues for investigation, but it creates a safe zone that helps the students complete the task without a lot of wasted time. WebQuests are time consuming for the teacher, but the rewards make the effort worthwhile. Some teachers may not be familiar with electronic field trips or web quests, but technology is not going away. If computers are available in the school, these are a couple of the best tools to engage students. Everything is set up for the students to jump right in! However, in the web quest, the students still have many choices. On a more simplified quest, students in elementary and middle school can have fun and accomplish new levels of learning. Most students really enjoy computer time, and this is a wonderful experience for them.

On the quest, the students will have the opportunity to ask and answer many questions. The students will break into groups and come up with various questions to look up on the quest or in an assortment of books in the classroom. Always have a list of viable questions for the students to examine. Get the Media Specialist to help select and purchase a group of books on Africa. Hav-

ing them available makes the study much easier. If this is an ongoing lesson plan, possibly the administrators and other teachers will want to make this a component of World Literature. Often one teacher can change the way an entire district looks at a small piece of the curricula.

During the Mali WebQuest, students will have become acquainted with several of the stories associate with oral history. A recording / listening device with several headsets is available in the classroom. Many of the stories have been recorded for them. This method of inclusion is important for ESE and ESOL students as well as enjoyable for the majority of the class.

Sundiata, the Epic of Old Mali, is an excellent example of an oral epic story that has been told from generation to generation and has finally been committed to paper. My school has a class set for the students to read, and I shall probably record it so that it can be heard as well as read. If you don't have the resource at your school, many versions are available online. As the students read the story, they will take Cornell notes to help them remember what they read plus make connections to other readings from Africa or the Americas.

The story of Sundiata is full of magic and mystery. Is any of that real? Does all African storytelling draw on the supernatural? Is this part of the religious experience of Mali and maybe Africa? Does this young man fit into the role of super hero by western standards? These will be some of the questions the students will cull from the reading and be able to do additional research to satisfy their curiosity!

The conclusion of the project will be a written paper. Students will be allowed to pick their own topics as long as Mali is the center of the discussion. Choice, even directed choice, is a necessity for real student engagement. Teachers need to know and understand their particular group of students and work with these strengths and weaknesses. However, kids really do want to learn ... find a carrot and use it.

Below are a few resources to get you started. If you are not familiar with WebQuests, there are a couple of sites to help you begin. Of course, you don't have to reinvent the wheel. There are many excellent quests in a huge array of subject matter already written by teachers. Please "google" them and have fun with your students!

### How to create your own web quest?

*Start small and expand! If students can do it, so can you! Go to the Internet and select a couple good web sites for your students to evaluate. Then write the assignment and include the hyperlinks. You can write it as an MS Word word document. Then go to teach-nology and give it try. I have given you my quest as a word doc so that you can change it to suit yourself. Please remember to give credit to the teachers and professors that have given you the information. Cut and paste but also give the URL.*

[http://www.teach-nology.com/web\\_tools/webquest/](http://www.teach-nology.com/web_tools/webquest/)  
<http://www.teachersfirst.com/summer/webquest/quest-a.shtml>  
<http://kathyschrock.net/slideshows/webquests/frame0011.htm>  
 Sunshine State Standards, ESE, and ESOL will vary with the grade.

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF MALI

<http://africa.mrdonn.org/mali.html> has a very simplistic article on the ancient Mali kingdom. This is a fascinating civilization that evolved with the decline of the Ghana Kingdom in the mid-thirteen century. As the European continent was going through the dark ages, Mali was a golden kingdom of rich heritage, and Timbuktu was a university center for world learning. This is not the stereotype of Africa that so many teachers avoid teaching. One of the largest libraries at the time was located in Mali. The great caravans connecting the Orient and the West came through this kingdom. Trade of goods and knowledge were the cornerstones of this civilization. Sundiata, the first king, grew his empire, and in turn Mansa Musa, his grandson, continued to increase the land area and wealth of Mali! Islam was accepted as the religion of the land because of the ability to integrate traditional African religions with teachings of Mohammed. When Mansa Musa made his pilgrimage to Mecca as one of the Five Pillars of Islam, he brought so much gold with him that it took years for the Arab economy to recover. Certainly an empire of such consequences is worthy of inclusion in our curricula. For a more in-depth study, <http://mali.pwnet.org/index.htm> will give you a substantial history and modern connections as well. There are lesson plans and instructional resources from the state of Virginia. However, keep in mind this is only one small area of investigate. The African continent is a vast area with many ancient kingdoms. Mali was my choice. What's yours?

### Internet Resources on African Studies:

<http://ancienthistory.pppst.com/africa.html>  
 This site has an assortment of PowerPoint presentations suitable for the classroom. Enjoy!  
<http://www.pppst.com/templates.html>  
 These templates can be used for African studies, but the collection is extensive.  
<http://africa.mrdonn.org/lessonplans.html>  
 This site has an extensive collection of lesson plans on Africa, including several Web Quests. Worth the time.  
<http://www.rockingham.k12.va.us/resources/elementary/3history.htm>  
[http://www.rockingham.k12.va.us/resources/elementary/"](http://www.rockingham.k12.va.us/resources/elementary/) \ "2" 3.2  
 This is a low level study that may help you and your students understand more about Mali. The state of Virginia is very kind to share this resource!

### Interactive Activities

<http://www.chesterfield.k12.va.us/Instruction/SocialStudies/Elemss/Socsci/Third/Assess3/32malist.doc>  
 View Mali SOL Story with Pictures in Word  
<http://www3.hopewell.k12.va.us/techsol/mali.htm>  
 Kid Friendly Mali SOL webpage  
<http://mal.sbo.hampton.k12.va.us/mali/ss.htm>  
 Mali Webquest with good links  
<http://oncampus.richmond.edu/academics/education/projects/webquests/stuckmali/>  
 Mali Webquest 2 Good pictures

<http://www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/ontheonline/schools/magicmali/index.htm>

Excellent Mali Interactive with pictures

<http://www.fcps.edu/KingsParkES/technology/mali/index.htm>

Mali SOL Scavenger Hunt Worksheet to print out is included

<http://www.careusa.org/vft/mali/>

Mali Virtual Field Trip

<http://www.galenfryinger.com/mali.htm>

Mali Pictures

## Study Guides/Research

<http://web.archive.org/web/20070427150112/>

[http://www.campbell.k12.va.us/CES/Third+Grade/mali\\_sol3.2.htm](http://www.campbell.k12.va.us/CES/Third+Grade/mali_sol3.2.htm)

Mali SOL Study Guide 1 Good Overview for 3.4 & 3.2

<http://www.chesterfield.k12.va.us/Instruction/SocialStudies/Elemss/Socsci/Third/Assess3/32malisg.doc>

Mali SOL Study Guide 2 Word Document

## Smartboard Activities

<http://www.rockingham.k12.va.us/resources/elementary/files/malilesson.notebook>

Mali Instructional Smartboard Notebook Lesson

## Powerpoints

<http://www.spsk12.net/schools/nse/documents/MaliMadnessGame.ppt>

Mali Jeopardy SOL Review PowerPoint Game

[http://www.sps.k12.va.us/schools/npe/Grade%20Level%20SOL%20activities/3rd%20Grade/SOL%203.2%20Mali\\_files/frame.htm](http://www.sps.k12.va.us/schools/npe/Grade%20Level%20SOL%20activities/3rd%20Grade/SOL%203.2%20Mali_files/frame.htm)

Watch Mali PowerPoint Online

[http://www.alleghany.k12.va.us/TRT\\_lem/Ppts/Mali/MaliPpt.ppt](http://www.alleghany.k12.va.us/TRT_lem/Ppts/Mali/MaliPpt.ppt)

Excellent Mali Instructional PowerPoint

<http://www.sps.k12.va.us/schools/nse/documents/MaliMadnessGame.ppt>

12 Question Mali Madness Jeopardy SOL PowerPoint Game

## Kidspiration Templates

[http://www.rcs.k12.va.us/CTSOL/ct\\_sol/3\\_5/lessons/sundiata.kid](http://www.rcs.k12.va.us/CTSOL/ct_sol/3_5/lessons/sundiata.kid)

Compare yourself to the Lion King of Mali

[file:///RCPS/resources/elementary/www.united-streaming.com](http://RCPS/resources/elementary/www.united-streaming.com)

United Streaming Movie Clip

Sketches of the World: A Roof Above Our Heads

[http://streaming.discoveryeducation.com/clickDirector.cfm/type/video/action/download/guidAssetID/125a69bf-a153-4505-ab48-519e936db357/strRealname/Housing\\_in\\_Mali.mov](http://streaming.discoveryeducation.com/clickDirector.cfm/type/video/action/download/guidAssetID/125a69bf-a153-4505-ab48-519e936db357/strRealname/Housing_in_Mali.mov)

Housing in Mali 1 min. 35 sec.

<http://streaming.discoveryeducation.com/search/assetDetail.cfm?guidAssetID=7551D786-BB05-45F1-BC16-02ED647F5210> Islam Comes to Timbuktu Excellent overview of Ancient Mali, trading gold and salt, and Mansa Musa. 4 min. 15 sec.

## Assessments & Strategies

<http://www.chesterfield.k12.va.us/Instruction/SocialStudies/Elemss/Socsci/Third/Assess3/32maltst.doc> Mali SOL Test in Word

## Teacher Resources

<http://www.chesterfield.k12.va.us/Instruction/SocialStudies/Elemss/Socsci/Third/Docs3/200304/malisc.doc>

Download and print these Matching Mali Cards

<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/mali.htm>

Print Adobe PDF Mali Maps

[http://www.africa.upenn.edu/K-12/AFR\\_GIDE.html](http://www.africa.upenn.edu/K-12/AFR_GIDE.html)

A huge collection of information available to teachers.

<http://www.isidore-of-seville.com/mansa/5.html>

The lesson plans at this site will help you direct your study to a more manageable level. Don't reinvent the wheel! Also, this has some books you might find useful.

[http://www.vmf.state.va.us/mali\\_arts\\_culture.pdf](http://www.vmf.state.va.us/mali_arts_culture.pdf)

This is an extensive Adobe file that includes history, math, and a good study of Sundiata!

<http://www.worldtrek.org/odyssey/teachers/malilessons.html> also helpful.

<http://www.worldtrek.org/odyssey/teachers/malilessons.html> These are some of the learning achievement that can be accomplished.

<http://www.history.com/classroom/unesco/timbuktu/vocabulary.html>

This site gives an extensive vocabulary and then some fun activities to try with your students.

[http://www.wvpt4learning.org/lessons/pdf\\_svtc04/mali.pdf](http://www.wvpt4learning.org/lessons/pdf_svtc04/mali.pdf)

This is a good example of the oral tradition using United Streaming.

## Literature

Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. Heinemann.

Achebe, Chinua & Innes, C.L., eds *African Short Stories*. Heinemann.

Dangarembga, Tsitsi. *Nervous Conditions*. The Seal Press.

Niane, D. T. Sundiata: *An Epic of Old Mali*. Longman.

## Hard Copies

Imbo, Samuel Oluoch. *Oral Traditions as Philosophy: Okot P'Bitek's Legacy for African Philosophy* Published 2002

Scheub, Harold. *The African Storyteller: Stories from African Oral Traditions* (Paperback). Published by Rowman & Littlefield

Scheub, Harold. *Empire of Mali*. African history on file. Facts on File, 1994, 4.02-4.03.

Brook, Larry. *On the Banks of the Niger*. Daily life in Ancient and Modern Timbuktu. Minneapolis: Runestone Press, Lerner, 1999 : 6-9.

Hamilton, Vicki. *The Birth of Mali*. Footsteps: African American History. Sept/Oct. 1999. Vol.1, No. 4: pg.4-5.

Masoff, Joy. *Mali : Land of Gold and Glory*. Waccabuc, NY: Five Ponds Press, 2002, pg. .8-11.

Bohannon, Paul & Philip Curtin. *Africa and Africans*. Waveland Press.

Clark, Leon E. *Through African Eyes: v.1 - The Past, the Road to Independence*. Center for International Training and Education. (distributed by Apex Press)

Harris, Joseph E. *Africans and Their History*. Mentor.

Northrup, David. *Africa's Discovery of Europe*. Oxford University Press.

Gilbert, Erik & Jonathan Reynolds. *Africa in World History*. Pearson Education Prentice Hall.

Connah, Graham. *African Civilizations: Precolonial Cities and States in Tropical Africa*. Cambridge University Press.

Martin Phyllis M. & Patrick O'Meara. *Africa*. Indiana University Press.

## Assorted readings:

Abrahams, Roger. *African Folktales*. Pantheon Books. 1983.

Arnott, Kathleen. *African Myths and Legends*. Oxford University Press, 1998.

Asante, Kariamu Welsh. *African Dance*. Africa World Press, 1994.

Bennett, Martin. *West African Trickster Tales*. Oxford University Press, 1994.

Collins, John. *West African Pop Roots*. Temple University Press, 1992.

*Gambia and Senegal, The*. APA Publications, 1988.

*Heritage of African Poetry, The*. Longman Group, 1985.

Nketia, J.H. Kwabena. *The Music of Africa*. W.W. Norton & Co., 1974.

Price, Christine. *Talking Drums of Africa*, Scribner, 1973.

Sandler, Bea. *The African Cookbook*. Diane & Leo Dillon. New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1993.

*Selection of African Poetry, A*. Longman Group, 1976.

Senghor, Léopold Sédar. *Nocturnes*, The Third Press, 1971.

Senghor, Léopold Sédar. *The Collected Poetry*, University Press of Virginia, 1991.

Sow Fall, Aminata. *The Begger's Strike or The Dregs of Society*, Longman House, 1981.

Wisniewski, David. Sundiat, *Lion King of Mali*, Clarion Books, 1992.

## Video

*Africa* (by Basil Davidson). RM Arts. A video history in eight 1-hour segments, each segment taking a different historical period. The New York Times called it "a stunning piece of work".

*Keita: The Heritage of the Griot*, 94 minutes.

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*Finally, please take a look at my Mali Web Quest. Dr. Agnes Leslie at the University of Florida will have access to the quest.*

# AVOIDING MISEDUCATION

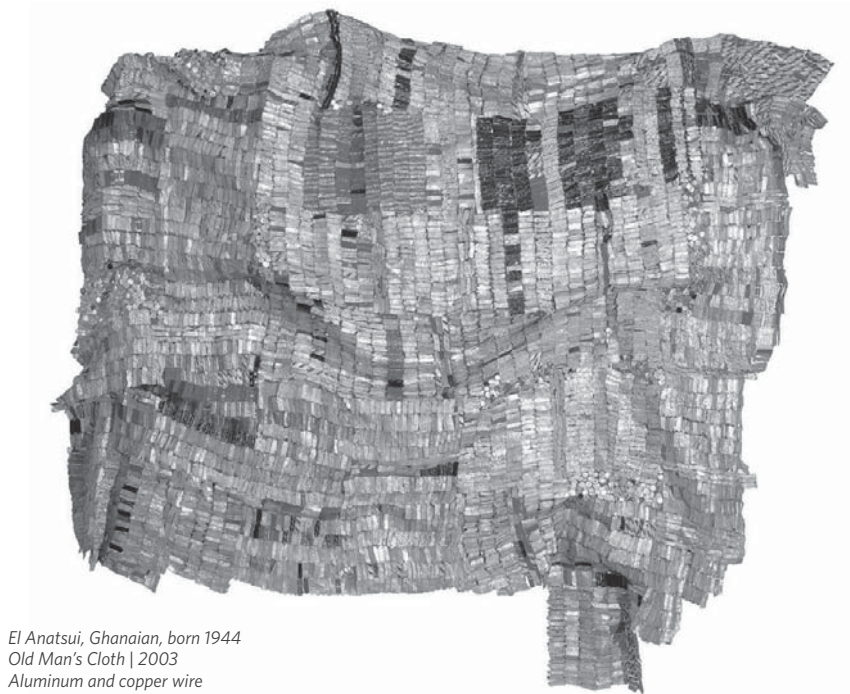
## Teaching Traditional and Contemporary African Culture

by **Stephanie Paige Leander-Gionet**

Exposing students to the true history of various traditional and contemporary African cultures promotes social identity building in all students. In turn, it also challenges students to understand the advanced cultural traditions of African heritage and the impact they make on African-Americans today. Initially assessing what students know should reveal that students of all ages know typically very little about the second largest continent in the world. Notice the number of inaccurate or stereotypical words your students use to identify with Africa. Americans in general remain poorly informed about the cultures and politics of African countries. They often rely on popular stereotypes of the continent to try to explain why certain crisis may be happening instead of trying to understand that situation in depth. The purpose of this research is to implement techniques to avoid stereotypes and miseducation in the classroom while studying the unique cultures of the African lands.

Unfortunately, the miseducation students receive stems directly from the stereotypes that mass media in the United States produces. African history is often disinforming and falsified in translation to the American youth. Occasionally, an article will appear in a newspaper, magazine, or television news program to inform Americans about a crisis in Africa. Rarely, do these pieces take the time to explain the social and historical context in which these crises arise. Little news is ever reported on positive developments in Africa. Africa, a peacefully exotic continent full of staggering beauty will likely be overcast with child soldiers, hunger, and exotic tribes. The diversity among African civilizations will all be cast as a hungry shadow. As educators we must eliminate the stereotypes not representative of the diverse civilizations in traditional and contemporary Africa.

Early history shows the process in which an abundance of misleading images and



*El Anatsui, Ghanaian, born 1944  
Old Man's Cloth | 2003  
Aluminum and copper wire  
Collection of the Harn Museum of Art, University of Florida  
Museum purchase with funds from friends of the Harn Museum*

generalizations century after century, came to deform, invalidate and misconstrue Africa. Burying it under layers of historical fallacies that explorers, missionaries and 18th- and 19th-century scholars and thinkers consecrated as historical truths. One way to foster knowledge is to elicit critical thinking through the use of primary sources in your classroom. Show your students African art from different countries/regions and use these images to explain that African culture is tremendously diverse. Expand on modern vs. traditional ideas about Africa in your classroom. Teach your students to use technology. Explore the many resources available online to learn the true identity of African cultures. Accessing accurate information in your classroom and teaching proper research techniques can transform how students learn about African cultures and history altogether. Traditional and contemporary African civilizations deserve authentic representation in your classroom. Students in turn deserve to learn the proper researching techniques to access the most

comprehensive information.

Teaching with stereotypes can often promote negative connotations for some students. A proper introduction focusing on “ideas to remember when discussing sensitive subjects” should always lead the discussion. Begin class with a very stereotypical media piece to pull your students in and then properly break down the history behind the stereotype. To avoid the media altogether will only promote miseducation. Teaching about the stereotypes fosters a strong desire for students to learn about Africa in general. That desire will hopefully spark interest in the different civilizations in Africa. In order to eliminate the improper use of stereotypes, a good educator should always implement strategies for thinking diversely. Discussion centered around why different stereotypes exist will foster social and academic growth. Eventually, the misconceptions students associate with African culture should diminish.

The 21st century educator has an abundance of resources focusing on African

culture. Remember to advocate a feeling of understanding and appreciation of other cultures and societies. So many people tend to judge other people's actions and ways of life by their own cultural values. Steer away from this ethnocentric view and teach that to your students. When teaching, be aware that stereotypes and biases naturally creep in. Be on guard to not perpetuate the beliefs that "seem to come to mind" and allow them to be interpreted as the truth behind the entire continent.

The following are some wonderful resources to help guide your planning! These websites are full of great lessons, pictures, stories, maps, etc..., everything one needs in order to foster a better understanding of African culture.

#### Further Reading

Cartwright, Marguerite. "Teaching the Africa Unit", *Phylon* (1940-1956), Vol. 13, No. 4, pp. 306-31 (4th Qtr., 1952). Clark Atlanta University.

Murphy, Sheila T. "The Impact of Factual versus Fictional Media Portrayals on Cultural Stereotype," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 560, The Future of Fact (Nov., 1998), pp. 165-178. Sage Publications, Inc.

Rich, Evelyn Jones. "Good News and Bad News: African Studies in American Schools, 1955-1975", *A Journal of Opinion*, Vol 6 No 2/3. African Studies Association.



## LESSON

### 11 Small Tasks Can Equal Big Difference in Students Comprehension of Africa

The purpose of these 11 tasks is to make students aware of the great diversity of countries, peoples and geography that exists on the African continent.

1. Provide each student with a journal to be used during the course of this lesson. (This may be as simple as stapling some pages together.) One section should be reserved for questions they have on the topic of Africa, and another section for what they learned about Africa.
2. Ask students to take a few minutes and write on the first page of their journal what comes into their minds when they think of Africa.
3. As a class, ask students to share what they wrote in their journals, and record students' responses on chart paper. (Save students' responses, as they will be used again in the lesson.)
4. After students have finished responding, go back to each response and ask the question, "Where in Africa?" (For example, if one of the responses is "elephants roaming free" ask "Where in Africa? In what country(s) on the continent of Africa do elephants roam free?")
5. Ask students to give examples of the differences between the state they live in, and other states in the union.
6. Look at a world map to see how large Africa is compared to the area of the United States.
7. Ask students if there is such a difference in environments in the United States, how much diversity must exist on the African continent?
8. Make certain that students are aware that Africa is a continent made up of 54 countries.
9. Initiate a class discussion about the different ethnic groups that make up the United States.
10. Ask the class how much more diversity might exist on a continent the size of Africa.
11. Give the students a few minutes to write in the "What they learned" and "What they want to know" sections of their journals.

### 11 Websites for Teaching Diversity Among African Cultures in the Classroom

[www.africaeducation.org/](http://www.africaeducation.org/)  
[www.foundation-partnership.org/links.php](http://www.foundation-partnership.org/links.php)  
[www.educationatlas.com/education-africa.html](http://www.educationatlas.com/education-africa.html)  
[www.africaeducation.org/adl/](http://www.africaeducation.org/adl/)  
[www.sul.stanford.edu/africa/africaneducation/teaching-africa-K12.html](http://www.sul.stanford.edu/africa/africaneducation/teaching-africa-K12.html)  
[www.sul.stanford.edu/africa/culture.html](http://www.sul.stanford.edu/africa/culture.html)  
[www.pbs.org/teachers/search/results.html?q=africa&x=21&y=2](http://www.pbs.org/teachers/search/results.html?q=africa&x=21&y=2)  
[www.exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/teachers/events/crisis.php](http://www.exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/teachers/events/crisis.php)  
[www.educationworld.com/searchnew/adv\\_results.jsp](http://www.educationworld.com/searchnew/adv_results.jsp)  
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[www.historyforkids.org/teachers/guides/africaguide.htm](http://www.historyforkids.org/teachers/guides/africaguide.htm)

#### Current Events Websites

Current Events in Africa  
<http://exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/teachers/events/>  
 UN Humanitarian News & Analysis  
<http://www.irinnews.org>

*Magdalene Anyango N. Odundo,*  
*British, born Kenya, 1950*  
*Vessel Series I, no. 1 | 2004*  
*Red clay, fired once*  
*Collection of the Harn Museum of Art,*  
*University of Florida Museum purchase,*  
*funds provided by friends of the Harn Museum*

# HEALING WOMEN OF AFRICA:

## Past and Present

by Marianne Medley

From the dawning of time, there have been those who are the healers, the counselors, the keepers of traditional methods of healing and maintaining harmony in society. They are known by various names: shaman, medicine man, witchdoctor, herbalist, and wise ones. While one often thinks of these as important men in a particular ethnic group, they are very often women.

In South Africa, the San women and their ancestors have been healers for more than 10,000 years. There are women all over who are stronger healers than men. She indicated that the spirits will be happy if the women sing passionately, and the illnesses will be kept away.

As the article will show, there are various reasons why many women are healers in Africa. They are an integral part of traditional, indigenous life. Some work in conjunction with other forms of medicine, while others act more in the role of intermediaries between two worlds; the visible world we constantly encounter, and the invisible world, where ancestors and spirits dwell.

Teachers owe it to their students to share with them the wonders of cultural heritage, and the different ways groups of people have to comprehend their worlds and themselves.

According to *The New Encyclopedia of Africa*, (Middleton, J. & Miller, J Eds. 2008), there are five prevailing ideas of health, sickness, and healing in Africa. There include those based upon observation, with appropriate applications made to cure; ritualized therapies that use words in song, chant, blessings, or curses, kin or communities who heal afflicted, divination practices that work within certain rubrics or systems, and general cultural concepts that promote health. Since historically, many African people have past community experiences as hunter gatherers, most healers past and present have collected materials for medicinal purposes.



PHOTO © LEO VILLALON 2009  
*Traditional women headers are common in africa*

There is a prevalent idea in African medicine that all should be in harmony, and that sickness occurs when one is out of balance with the physical world, or with the spiritual realm. There is a widespread notion of the importance of purity in ritual, and of contagions that result from impurities of body, mind, or actions. Also important is the idea of cause. Illnesses may be caused by God (this would be karmic in nature, such as one who fails to keep certain rules of etiquette in marriage rules, as in waiting a proper time for consummation, thus resulting in an afflicted child), or the cause could be from some outside agency, such as an angry ancestor or another person, like a witch. For each cause, there are appropriate healing techniques. Although a cause may be known for an illness, such as malaria through the bite of an insect, a true diviner may be able to further discern why one person would be afflicted and not another.

The importance of earth cannot be overlooked to the African healer. As traditional agricultural societies, Africans in all areas of the continent are aware of their connections to the land. Women, in their roles as mothers and keepers of the home, are especially aware of this. Chemme

Nwaye writes in "The Image of a Healthy Woman in African Religion" (in Chepkwong, Ed. 2007) that one key spiritual characteristic is that the earth has the capacity to serve as a source of strength and support to humans, animals, and plants. In order for this to happen, we must obey its laws. When we are out of harmony with the earth, the result is illness to self, community, and planet.

Traditional medicine remains the first and last line of defense for many Africans. In between, there are local clinics, larger treatment facilities, and hospitals. In this organizational structure, there are differing degrees of skill. So, if a patient is considered hopeless, or if the ill person has less money, a local healer may be chosen.

### ***Women and their Societal Roles***

Historically, women in Africa have been caretakers of the home and its permutations. Early women were shamans, priestesses, and healers, as well as mothers and community leaders. As interviewed by Dr. Susan Rasmussen, medicine women from the Air region tell of their lives as healers who were taught by their mothers and aunts, who were also healers. While the modern healers may obtain some of their medicinal herbs from the local market, their methods have been passed down through generations. Herbalists from this region lament the advent of processed foods, which they consider causal in maladies. These are women of touch, who work on the patient's body by touching the stomach to determine what areas are affected and what are the specific causes for illnesses. Traditionally, they would have treated entire villages, whereas now, their patients are mainly women and children. This is due to the availability of local healers to their clients and also to the new roles of women in society in general (Rasmussen, 2006).

Prior to colonialism, women in African countries or states had relevant roles

in religion, medicine, and governmental organizations. In the Roho religion of western Kenya, for example, women had historically been pastors and elders in church rule. Since the early twentieth century, however, the effects of colonialism have become embedded in the Kenyan culture, and only certain elderly women are considered laktars, or doctors. While this is an important function in the Roho religion, elderly women were originally attracted to the religion in the hope of preaching. Men now perform this, in addition to managing administration and direction services (Hoeler-Fulton, 1996).



PHOTO © STEPHANIE TYLER 2009  
Contemporary medicine and traditional healing co-exist

This dichotomy is also apparent in traditional religion. Here, the household was of paramount importance prior to colonialism. Since the invasion of outsiders, respect for household members has dwindled, and the family structure has been disrupted. With men often working outside the home and traveling distances, as well as with the growth of polygamy (official or not), the importance of woman as soul nurturer and healer has diminished. Imposed organizational structures have also created new forms of patriarchal governments. Under these constraints and those of warring factions over resources, women as healers suffer.

#### **Traditional Women Healers Today**

While there are many changes and constraints on the power of women and their places in society as healers, there are active healers in Africa today. Many continue to be

trained for their roles as healers. In Zimbabwe, for example, healers are trained from childhood, or have close relationships from that tie with other healers. The learning process is long, complex, and cannot be replicated. The end result is a deeper knowledge than that of pharmaceutical. Spiritual guidance and power are important.

Some work from a traditional, ritualistic place in the Vodun religion. This religion has spread across the Atlantic to become known as voodoo in the Caribbean. In it, the priestess still wields much power as bringer of health or harbinger of doom. There is great emphasis on ritual and traditional words, sounds, and actions. She is a practiced ventriloquist, as well as an entertainer and spiritual conduit.

Sangomas are healers that are in touch with the spirits in an important way. Often, they are consulted concerning illnesses that are associated with witchcraft, or those illnesses that cannot be explained. The healer treats maladies with traditional cures based on colors. The use of colors, first black, which stands for the imbalance, root cause of the illness, then red, which is transitional during the healing phase, to white, which stands for purity.

Traditional ceremonies, heretofore extensive, are lessened now, due to the danger to sangomas. Since the advent of colonialism, Muslim and Christian missionaries have impacted sangomas' reputations. In South Africa, for example, many medicine women and men have been accused of witchcraft. However, they still continue to hold an important place in traditional societies.

It is difficult to delineate all the roles of the woman healer. She represents Mother Earth in her role as midwife, and healer using herbs for curing. She is counselor to those afflicted with mental and physical problems. She is the voice that bridges the gap between worlds. She helps loved ones and community in times of crisis. She is many in one.

#### **Implications for Teaching**

How do we share knowledge about African women healers? As a teacher, I want to work from a place where my students will want to know more, to seek more. I would suggest a lesson plan as seen to the left:

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## **LESSON**

### **OBJECTIVE**

Students will be able to relate information concerning African healers and the roles of women in different African societies upon completion of lessons with 80% proficiency. This will be determined by a short project from each student or from small groups of students.

### **ACTIVITY**

Relate background knowledge about a relative or woman or acquaintance who helps others. She may help in physical, spiritual, or mental ways. Students choose and read about a specific woman or group of women healers in African societies. Students use information to create a collage, poem, profile, or story. Students share or publish information in class. Students begin and keep a journal about healing the planet.

# KENTE CLOTH & ADINKRA SYMBOLS

Ghana

by Daisy Ayoka Jasey Sowa-la, D. Min.



*Bark cloth, one of the first cloths to be made, consists of the inner bark of a tree.*

## Introduction

This paper focuses on kente cloth and adinkra symbols of the Akan people of Ghana. It will include a brief discussion of the history of Ghana, kente cloth, adinkra Symbols and their correlation to proverbs.

The objective of this research is to provide the teacher or facilitator with information and resources for aiding the students in becoming familiar with some examples of kente cloth, adinkra symbols and their meaning.

In this highly technological world of advertisement, many symbols known and unknown can be observed on clothing and other objects. Observe how many symbols can be seen right now in your immediate environment.

This information is important for students in that it helps them to realize that clothing with their symbols are more than just covering for the body. Many symbols can hold valuable information in their meanings that can inform and stimulate the mind of the wearer and observers.

One example of the importance of knowing the meaning behind a symbol is an oral story told about the “Nike” sports symbol seen on shoes and caps throughout the American culture. It is said that the symbol was discovered in the trash of a female worker. Also in the book, *Western Humanities*, (Mathews and Platt, 2004) said that this symbol was first found in the Greek culture. “Nike” was the name of the Greek goddess of victory sent to aid Zeus in his battle against the Titans. Today, it conveys the meaning of “Just Do It”.

Symbols and colors can convey meanings without the wearer’s awareness. Therefore, it is important for students to become more consciously aware that symbols, colors and cloths have meaning in certain African cultures such as Ghana. They represent more than just something to cover the body or designs on an object or added beautiful color.

## *Africa: Cloth and Body Adornment*

Africa, the second largest continent in the world has many different ethnic groups and just as many different styles of clothing. Generally, “people in Africa seem to have started wearing clothing around 75,000 years ago.

The first clothing was made out of animal skins into leather, fur shawls, and lion cloths. After many thousands of years, people began to make lighter, less sweaty kinds of clothes. Probably the first kind of cloth made in Africa was pounded bark fibers. You peel the bark off trees and pound it with a rock until the fibers get soft and the hard part breaks off. Raffia palm and fig trees were used. This kind of bark fabric may be related to the development of Egyptian papyrus.”

Creative adornment of the body, can be observed throughout Africa. Items such as textiles, cosmetics, scars, jewelry, coiffures, and various accessories are seen.

## *Textiles*

In most of Africa the weavers were men while the women spun the thread. The weavers in many of the countries were part of a caste-like group and sometimes worked for noble families. Compounds were used where master weavers would teach all the boys weaving and all the girls would learn to spin and dye the yarn. Culturally, textiles were used as a form of identity with each ethnic group having their own unique patterns which also made it easy to spot outsiders. Many different types of patterns were formed in places that specialized in weaving. Kings would request several types of cloth to show their prestige and importance. Kings would even compare themselves by how many robes they had and what they were made of.

In Ghana, the cultural significance of textile is highly important. The textile in Ghana was associated with the Akan ethnic people is known as kente. Although

beautiful serve as gifts at important social functions and as emblems of rank for title-holders, most of all they were given to the deceased on their final journey.

Weaving and the textiles are very important to every African culture. The textiles include both men and women and the cloths made are unique to each ethnic group through the patterns and spiritual meanings behind them.

### **Ghana: Some Historical Facts**

Ghana, the area the British formerly called the Gold Coast, is located on the west coast of Africa housed between Togo on the east, Cote D'Ivoire on the west, and Burkina Faso to the north. Its major city and capital is Accra. The name Ghana was taken from the empire of Ghana, a great ancient civilization that arose in West Africa. The Gold Coast took the name when it became the first African country to gain its independence in 1957. Osagefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah became its first president in 1960. The Akan states (includes many sub-ethnic groups i.e. Ashanti) were created in the central area. The Nzema, Ahanta, Fante, Ga, and Ewe people occupy the costal area.

Arthur and Rowe, 1998-2003 in speaking of the adinkra symbols, says that "The Akan make extensive use of a system of ideographic and pictographic symbols. Individually each symbol is associated with a specific proverb or saying rooted in the Akan experience."

The "kente cloth" is of the Asante people. Kente Cloth." African Journey. webmaster@projectexploration.org. 25 Sep 2007 reports that, "It was a royal and sacred cloth worn only in times of extreme importance. Adinkra was traditionally worn for funerals, ceremonial occasions, and times for special dress. Kente was the cloth of kings. Over time, the use of Kente became more widespread, however its importance has remained and it is held in high esteem in the Akan family and the entire country of Ghana. Kente comes from the word kenten, which means 'basket.' The Asante peoples also refer to kente as "nwentoma" or 'woven cloth.' The icons of African cultural heritage around the world, are the cowry shell and the Asante kente. The Asante kente is identified by its dazzling, multicolored patterns of bright colors, geometric

shapes and bold designs of silk and cotton narrow –band cloth often colored in blue and gold to symbolize power and traditionally restricted to royalty and court officials. Kente characterized by weft designs woven into every available block of plain weave is called "adweneasa". The Asante peoples of Ghana choose kente cloths as much for their names as their colors and patterns. Although the cloths are identified primarily by the patterns found in the lengthwise (warp) threads, there is often little correlation between appearance and name. Names are derived from several sources, including proverbs, historical events, important chiefs, queen mothers, and plants." Webster's New World Dictionary (1982) alludes that, Proverbs are wise sayings commonly understood by many in a group, use to portray a truth or experience or event. An example of kente with a proverbial meaning commonly seen in Ghanaian history is the Mmeeda (MEE-dah), which translates to "something that has not happened before." was worn by Kwame Nkrumah at the time he became the first president of Ghana in 1960.

### **Akan Cultural Symbol**

Adinkra, a white commercial cloth was traditionally dyed red, russet, or black, but, now is dyed blue, green, yellow, and purple, stamped with motifs (symbols).. There are some 700 adinkra symbols recorded with meanings according to Philadelphia Museum. Bruce Willis in The Adinkra Dictionary, 1998 records that Adinkra symbols have been in use for about two hundred years or so. There are about seventy to eighty symbols that are sometimes referred to as the core symbols. These core adinkra symbols reflect the philosophy, religious beliefs, social values, and political history of the Akan people. Willis provides examples of some core adinkra symbols. Adinkra is an Akan word. Akan is the language of the Akan people, who comprise about one-half of the population of Ghana. Adinkra literally means "saying good-bye (farewell) to the dead."



*Kente cloth is woven in strips*

### **Symbolic meanings of the colors in Kente cloth:**

- black** - maturation, intensified spiritual energy you know
- blue** - peacefulness, harmony and love
- green** - vegetation, planting, harvesting, growth, spiritual renewal
- gold** - royalty, wealth, high status, glory, spiritual purity
- grey** - healing and cleansing rituals; associated with ash
- maroon** - the color of mother earth; associated with healing
- pink** - assoc. with the female essence of life; a mild, gentle aspect of red
- purple** - associated with feminine aspects of life; usually worn by women
- red** - political and spiritual moods; bloodshed; sacrificial rites
- silver** - serenity, purity, joy; associated with the moon
- white** - purification, sanctification rites and festive occasions
- yellow** - preciousness, royalty, wealth, fertility

Examples: Akofena, interprets as, "The retiring great warrior always has a royal sword of rest; Gye Nyame interprets as, "This great panorama of creation dates back to time immemorial, no one lives who saw its beginning and no one will live to see its end, except God; Another popular adinkra is the Sankofa interprets as, "It is not a taboo to return and fetch it when you forget."



## ACTIVITIES

### WHAT'S YOUR CHOICE?

#### OBJECTIVES

To help students become aware that African cultural symbols and colors have meaning. To help students become aware of the inter-relatedness between cloths, symbols, and proverbs in the Ghanaian culture.

To help students recognize some Ghanaian kente cloths, colors, adinkra symbols, and their meanings.

To help students become more consciously aware of their choices of colors and designs in clothing as they choose for themselves.

#### ACTIVITY

1. Have students help prepare flash cards (one kente cloth, or color or adinkra symbol on each card) with its name, meaning, or related proverb on the back.
2. Discuss the various adinkra symbols and kente cloths and their interpretations with the students.
3. Have the students select choices as it relates to them; and learn ten related proverbs.
4. Have each student explain their choice(s) and reasons for choice(s).

#### SUMMARY

Although the adinkra symbols, kente cloth with their beautiful colors and the proverbial meanings associated with each, kente cloth and adinkra symbol were traditional in their uses. Today, many use them as casual dress and have little knowledge of their past meanings. However, they continue to provide all with an understanding of the proverbial literature and a historical reflection of past, present and future events of the Akan people of Ghana and Africans in general. Although the Akans have been credited with developing this art form, the historical basis for symbols and cloths extend back to the time when language was reduced to symbols as found with the hieroglyphs (an ancient form of Egyptian writing). Therefore, as an ever developing form of art they are worthy of continued study and reflection by students all over. They can aide students educationally, artistically, socially, morally, spiritually, and culturally connecting them to meanings of the past for the present and the future.

## ADINKRA SYMBOLS



LEADERSHIP



STRENGTH



ADAPTABILITY



ENERGY



FREEDOM AND EMANCIPATION



COURAGE



SUPREMACY OF GOD



HARMONY



INTELLIGENCE



POWER OF LOVE



WISDOM



PEACE



TRANSFORMATION



UNITY IN DIVERSITY



UNIVERSE

# IS SCIENCE FOSTERED IN AFRICAN SCHOOLS FOR WOMEN?

by May Steward

## *Background*

The colonial system was often validated in terms of its “civilizing mission,” however few colonists were willing or able to provide the Western education believed necessary to transform the African citizens into “refined” people (Martin and O’Meara 142). By the end of WWII, education was only made available to less than five percent of the school-age population in Africa; most girls were excluded (142). During the initial phase of colonial rule, Catholic and Protestant missions provided the main schooling opportunities. In school, children learned that European culture was “superior and were taught to reject their former religious practices and cultural traditions” (142). Education prepared the people to take up subordinate positions within the colonial system. While Euro-Africans and educated elites sought equality, they often regarded the indigenous people as “backward and not ready for full political and civil rights until they acquired a modicum of Western education and values” (142).

During colonialism, African women created “bonds of solidarity” (Roberts 254). In an effort to escape the economic dependence associated with Christian monogamous marriage, the women of the elite opened a girls’ school in 1907 (Mann 54). The elite were educated African assistants to the imperialists, who held positions as clerks, interpreters, storekeepers, trading agents, teachers, and clergymen (Roberts 19-20). The goal of the school was to offer “a sound moral, literary and industrial education.” The building was donated by Mrs. Sisi Obasa, who established the city’s first motor transport company in 1913. “She was also a moving spirit in the Lagos Women’s League, which between the wars pressed the government on a variety of issues, including women’s education, public health and prostitution” (254). Very few women could write, while some composed songs and hymns (254). Few books by black women



*Attempts are being made to reduce the gender gap in all fields.*

were published. In 1935, schoolgirls aspired to be teachers or nurses (Gaitskell). In the same year, the first black woman barrister in West Africa was called to the bar in Nigeria, while another Nigerian woman graduated from Oxford the prior year.

Institutions for secondary and higher education were significant in widening African perspectives. Few schools for Africans provided classes beyond eighth or ninth grade (Zezele 227). In 1938 there were about 5,500 Africans receiving secondary education in South Africa and probably about the same in tropical Africa (228). The Union, the Gold Coast, and Sierra Leone approached “one-tenth of one percent of the total population” (228). Access to all kinds of education was biased towards certain areas. Schools that offered post-primary instruction were likely to attract Africans for farther away (228).

The development of higher education for South Africa and British colonial Africa was intended to halt study abroad. By the late 1920’s, there were 60 African lawyers in the Gold Coast and 60 more in Nigeria. Both countries had several lawyers from Sierra Leone (229). In 1913, there were seven African doctors in Nigeria. Hardly any West

Africans obtained British degrees in arts or sciences by 1920, however between 1930 and 1937 there was an annual average of 53 West Africans at British Universities other than law students. The average rose to 71 between 1938 and 1940, which reflects Nigeria’s provision in 1937 of scholarships for study in Britain (229). By 1939 there were also about 12 students from East Africa in Britain—though few were black (229). It is unknown if these statistics include African women.

According to Martin and O’Meara, education systems are often still preoccupied with producing “government civil servants” (327). From the 1960s to the 1980s, reforms were established in several countries to make education more suited to African conditions and expressive of African cultures. However, this progress has been slow because of lack of funds. Education has shifted off of theoretical European tradition and is transiting to improving agriculture. Unfortunately, there is a persistent discrimination against women, especially in acquiring higher education (Martin and O’Meara 327).

## *Education for All*

According to the New Encyclopedia of Africa, in 1960, there was an estimated 120,000 students in African universities. By 1995, there were 3,461,822 students. The number of universities grew from less than 36 in 1960 to more than 400 in the 90s (Zezele 229). By the early 2000s, tertiary education existed in all African countries, although the education systems varied in size and development levels (229). However, there were still gender differences in terms of access to higher education. “While several countries had managed to attain gender parity at the primary and secondary levels by 2000, very few had managed to do so at the tertiary level” (229). The exceptions were Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Namibia, and South Africa. Females made

up 34 percent in primary schools, 22 percent in secondary schools, and 12 percent in tertiary schools (229).

The gender gap is also apparent in fields of study and faculty distribution. Gender imbalance is affected by culture, sociology, economics, psychology, history, and political factors. Women were concentrated in the humanities and social sciences and largely under-respected in the sciences and most of the professional fields (Zezeza 229). Various attempts and initiatives have been made to increase the participation of female students in postsecondary institutions (Teferra and Altbach 9). Universities in Ethiopia, Malawi, Tanzania, and Uganda are giving privileged treatment to female students. In Ethiopia, the female enrollment rate has been only about 15 percent for the past several years (9). Efforts have been made to increase enrollment by lowering the cutoff of the grade point average required for admission. In Malawi, where an affirmative action policy has also been incorporated, only 25 percent of the student population is female (9). In Mozambique, private higher education institutions have been opened, increasing female student enrollment to 43 percent, whereas female student enrollment in public schools was 25 percent in 1999 (9). In Tanzania, female students currently make up between 25 and 30 percent. The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Dar es Salaam registered 49 percent females in the first year (2000-2001) (9). The criteria used for admission was the same as that of Ethiopia--a lowered grade point average. In Uganda, women made up 27 percent of the University of Makerere's total student population in 1990-1991 but today women make up 34 percent of enrollment (9). Females being awarded additional points at the University of Makerere has increased female enrollment. Zimbabwe has also altered university entry qualifications to increase female enrollment (9).

Substantial gender disproportions still remain in hard sciences and more competitive faculties and departments (9). For instance in Kenya, female students make up about 30 percent of total enrollments in public universities with only 10 percent of enrollment being in engineering and technically based professional programs (9). In ad-



About 100 girls attended the Women in Mathematics Conference hosted by the University of the Western Cape in South Africa in 2010. The annual event is intended to inspire female students to take up careers in the sciences.

dition, the female population in the natural sciences is constantly lower than that of male students. Mauritius is an exception because female enrollment is 47 percent, yet male students make up 76 percent in the Faculty of Engineering and female students account for 68 percent in the Faculty of Social Studies and Humanities (9). In Lesotho, which has managed to attain gender parity at not only the primary and secondary levels but also at the tertiary level by 2000 (Zezeza 229), more females than males are enrolled in education, social sciences, and humanities programs (Teferra and Altbach 9). They represent about 56 percent of all enrollments at the University of Lesotho (9). Ugandan universities, as stated previously are giving preferential treatment to female students, have reported female student enrollments of over 50 percent at the private university of Uganda Martyrs and over 56 percent at the private university of Nkumba (9).

Female faculties are even smaller in comparison to female students in African institutions. In Guinea only 2.5 percent of faculty members are female; in Ethiopia 6 percent of the faculty is female; in Congo, Nigeria, and Zambia no more than 15 percent of all university faculty is female; in Uganda females represent fewer than 20 percent of the faculty; in Morocco, Tunisia, and South Africa females occupy 24, 33,

and 36 percents respectively (9).

Gender inequality is a common trend in Africa's higher education institutions, with increased disparity the further up in education (9). As Teferra and Altbach state, granted a few of the initiatives have been productive, "The gravity of the disparity is most severe in the faculty ranks with some variations in different fields and disciplines." The initiatives remain to be troubled by "subtle resistance, implicit and explicit oversight, a lack of serious recognition, and ignorance." They conclude that gender issues in African higher education are complex and require and deserve additional study.

In an article about women in universities, Eva Rathgeber writes, "Women are under-represented in African universities, and those who are able to pursue higher education concentrate in traditional "female" fields such as education, arts and humanities, and social sciences" (Rathgeber 82). She says that female students are constantly subjected to sexual harassment or faint downplaying of their skills and potential and are discouraged from entering fields dominated by men. When females graduate, they usually have poor employment opportunities and receive lower salaries and fewer chances for advancement (82). In the past, many African women accepted this discrimination (at universities or in the workplace) as "normal" but women's groups and civic

groups are now fighting against this discrimination (Nare). Rathgeber says that the issue that has to be addressed is how to change the entire culture of university learning to make it more women-friendly, especially in the natural and physical sciences (83). She says that evidence exists that says that African men and women enrolled in the sciences may have very different university experiences. In an interview conducted in the 1980s with female medical students in Kenya, the success of women who performed better than their male colleagues was attributed by the males to their alleged unfair advantage in dealing with medical school teachers (who were primarily males and were thought to be sexually attracted to the females) (Rathgeber). Research conducted in Cameroon suggested that women scientists pursued careers in science in spite of opposition from schools, universities, and bureaucracies (Woodhouse and Ndonko). Not only were women discouraged from studying science but they were also indirectly—and sometimes very directly—told time and time again that science was not a suitable area of study for them. Few African women hold senior academic positions in science-related subjects, which mean that young girls who want to pursue science will have few mentors and role models (83).

Even though women are still focusing on the traditional fields of education, humanities, and social sciences, they are increasingly well represented in medical sciences (83). Entry standards for admission into medical studies for most African universities are among the most rigorous of all disciplines. While the number of women in health sciences is high in several countries, the number of students in medicine still tends to be low (83). “Medical sciences include nursing and probably a high proportion of women students in this field are actually enrolled in nursing programs (83-84). Health sciences are often known as “soft” sciences because human interaction is a strong component. Data collected in the 1980s showed that women enrolled in higher education tended to concentrate in non-scientific subject areas and that they were more likely to attend nursing schools, teacher-training colleges, or business education colleges than universities (Rathgeber). To some extent they were

guided in these choices by preexistent social expectations.

Some researchers have found a correlation between social class origins and field of study. In Egypt middle- and upper-class women are more likely to study scientific and professional subjects, while lower-middle-class women enter humanities, social sciences, education, agriculture, and nursing (Cochran). Recent work in Tanzania, Botswana, and Malawi showed that the number of women enrolled in agriculture diploma and degree courses were slowly increasing and that institutions of higher education were making efforts to encourage women to study science (Rathgeber 84). Soikoine University of Agriculture in Tanzania has a group of women researchers and academics that encourage young women at the secondary and tertiary levels to study agriculture and forestry related disciplines (Acker, McBreen, and Taylor).

In conclusion, science and technology are extremely important to African development, and a shortage of scientists exists. “Their skills are central in enabling the continent to participate in the ongoing information technology revolution and in other aspects of globalization” (Rathgeber 85). There has been much discussion lately about the low numbers of women engaged in science and technology. Attempts are being made by African university administrators to examine how to include more women in the sciences. Many universities have introduced programs to encourage girls to take up science subjects at an early age. Instead of assuming that girls are not interested in the sciences, governments are finding ways of making the sciences appealing to them. It is publicly assumed that women are just “not interested” in these areas of study and that the fault lies with the women as opposed to the way these subjects are taught from secondary school onward or with the type of institutional environment where these subjects are taught (ie with very few female professors (85).

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# AFRICAN LITERATURE

## The Impact of Colonialism on Traditional African Societies

by Nella F. Taylor

### *Purpose*

Africa is the most stable of the Earth's continental landmasses - the most ancient rocks, a fount of life itself, the cradle of humanity - and, yet it is, also, the most divided continent on Earth. Today Africa is divided into fifty-four states, more than three times the number in Asia (whose whole land-surface is almost fifty percent larger) and nearly four times the number in South America.

Also, no country in Africa today is free from problems of access, security, economic stability, and interrupted cultural traditions that are directly attributable to the boundaries (and results thereof) that they inherited from the colonial era.

My purpose for writing this short paper is to provide a brief sketch of how African literature can be used as a hook for helping young people (grades 8 and above) better understand the European colonial period and its impact on Africa's history and culture. I will place the literature in its context by highlighting such issues as how Africa became so randomly fragmented, describing some changes brought about by alien rule and, more specifically, focusing on how Chinua Achebe's literary classic, *Things Fall Apart*, can be used in the classroom to achieve my teaching goals.

### *Beginnings of Colonial Rule*

Colonial rule can be defined as the official occupation of a territory by a foreign power. In Africa, European powers ruled most of the continent from the late nineteenth century until the 1970s.

European colonization of Africa followed a long history between the two continents. Ancient Egyptian trade in the Mediterranean predated recorded history and contact between Europe and other parts of North Africa dates back to the Greco-Roman period. Not until the fifteenth century, however, did the Portuguese establish

trading posts on the sub-Saharan African shoreline. And, though a few ports became permanent settlements, most served as little more than entrepôts for the exchange of goods between the two continents. Over the next four hundred years Europeans acquired ivory, slaves, gold, and agriculture commodities from African rulers and coastal traders. With the exception of South Africa and a handful of Portuguese holdings, they made few attempts to settle or otherwise control the interior.

By the second half of the nineteenth century, however, the rapidly industrialized countries of Europe demanded reliable access to natural resources, new markets for their manufactured goods, and new sites for investing their financial capital. The vast, mineral-rich African continent had the potential to offer all three (1, thus, was in a very vulnerable position for being colonized by the 'more predatory' Europeans who could make wise use of these resources. Other motives for colonizing Africa, such as philanthropic intentions and evangelization provided a moral rationale for European political and economic ambitions. These ambitions were officially legitimized at the Berlin Conference of 1884-85 when European leaders agreed to partition the African continent. Africa's colonial boundaries were decided upon in Europe by negotiators (who included no Africans) with little consideration for local conditions. The boundaries cut through at least 177 ethnic culture areas, dividing pre-existing economic and social units and destroying the development of entire regions.

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least 177 ethnic culture areas, dividing pre-existing economic and social units and destroying the development of entire regions.

### *Result of Colonial Rule on Africa*

The transition from self to colonial rule brought dramatic change - often at considerable cost to human lives and, certainly, to African traditional culture. In several instances individuals and groups found themselves obliged to neglect or forfeit their language, accept a new religion, desert long-held traditions, accede to government demands for labor, adopt European forms of education, and submit to the rule of foreign law. In other words, colonialism challenged or disrupted all the major categories of social life on the continent, from religious and metaphysics to the institutions of socialization such as education, work, and marriage.

### *Pre-colonial African Literature & Changes That Came About Due to Colonialism*

Pre-colonial literature was primarily oral (consisting of proverbs, riddles, tales, taboos, legends, etc.), and it was valued as one of the major means by which societies educated, instructed, and socialized their younger members.

The introduction of formal education during the colonial period emphasized written literature as mature, civilized, and conscious of its art whereas it considered oral literature as juvenile, primitive, and lacking in technique. Therefore, instead of fostering Africa's oral traditions, the European interlopers introduced literature to children and young people that was alien to their experience, inappropriate to the African context, and, in some cases, harmful to the psychology of the young population. Books (which were often paraphrased and abridged versions of the original) were

imported from imperial nations and, written from a colonial perspective, served the purpose of advancing the colonial agenda through stereotypical plots, characterization, and themes. Furthermore, since these books were in the language of the colonizing power, the language itself became an instrument of subjugation that fostered a sense of inferiority and lack of pride in African language, culture, and history.

### **Literature in the Post-Colonial Periods**

It was only after the colonial ideology had been weakened and colonialism was no longer seen as the horizon of expectation that African literature emerged out of the shadows of the colonial library. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*; Camara Laye's *The Dark Child*; Yacine Kateb's *Nedjama*; Assia Djebar's *La Soif*; and Naguib Mahfouz's *The Cairo Trilogy* are examples of classic Afro-centric African literature produced during the period of transition from colonial to self-rule.

After independence African authors were naturally deeply concerned about providing the continent's youth with books written especially for them, reflecting their experiences, sociocultural environment and worldview with the purpose of inculcating in them pride in their culture and heritage. Therefore, two very popular genres for the young in the post-independent period included retellings of folktales and narrative fiction such as D.T. Niane's triumphant story of *Sundiata*. Also, easily recognizable and globally celebrated forms of African writing, associated with the works of Nobel Prize winners such as Nadine Gordimer, Wole Soyinka, and I.M. Coetzee emerged only after decolonization.

### **Using African Literature as a Tool for Teaching**

Chinua Achebe's groundbreaking work, *Things Fall Apart*, is only one of many examples of African literature that is particularly good for introducing young people (8th grade and above) to the changes that have been brought about in African history and culture through the process of European colonization. This is particularly true since, writing from an Afro-centric perspective, Achebe makes no attempt

to romanticize African culture as perfect or to vilify European cultures as entirely corrupt. Furthermore, Achebe's work was published during the flailing colonial period in 1958, and it would be interesting to do research on what changes have taken place in that part of the world during these last fifty years.

The events in Achebe's book take place in Nigeria (the most populous country in Africa) among the Igbo people, a large ethnic group located in the eastern section of the country. (More than two hundred ethnic groups live in present-day Nigeria, each with its own language, beliefs, and culture.). Some of the themes explored by Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* include the complexity of Igbo society before the arrival of the Europeans, the clash of cultures at both a personal and a societal level, the universality of human motives and emotions across cultures and time, and the need for balance between individual and community needs.



### **SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR TEACHING THINGS FALL APART**

1. Have students think of a culture and language that is distinctly different from theirs. Brainstorm and list how their lives would change if people representing this culture were to take control of their community and nation.
2. Use a map to locate Nigeria and Igbo peoples.
3. Use the internet to research facts about Nigeria and the Igbo at the time of colonialism. Write facts or draw images to explain the findings.
4. Why may Okonkwo not be a typical Igbo?
5. At what stage in the novel can you see that Umuofia is doomed to fall apart?
6. Describe the British's gradual takeover of the village.
7. Ask students, as they read, to think of ways in which *Things Fall Apart* is a universal story.
8. Discuss the readers' reaction to the role and treatment of women in Igbo society and how their perception contributes to the final tragedy of Okonkwo.
9. Inquire as to which characters and events should be included in a subsequent book on this topic.
10. Have students work with partners to discuss the character with whom they are the most sympathetic. Why?
11. Do research to compare how different aspects of the Nigeria (Igbo) society has changed during the past fifty years.

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# *IROHIN 2009 ARTICLES*

# HOW CAN WE DEACTIVATE OUR OWN COLONIAL MINDSETS AS TEACHERS?

by D. Alvarez Caron



Perhaps you are looking at the title of this article and thinking any number of things that may include, but certainly is not limited to: “She isn’t talking to me.” “What does she mean ‘colonial’? I’m no colonizer!” “This lady doesn’t even know me; how can she speak on my ‘mindset’?!” These are all very acceptable (and understandable) responses. No one, especially teachers who give to the children through their hearts as well as their minds, would want to accept that they (no one is immune) participate in a relationship of colonizer/colonized. But we do. Renowned Kenyan philosopher Ngugi Wa Thiong’o states:

*“The real aim of colonialism was to control people’s wealth...but its most important area of domination was the mental universe of the colonized, the control, through culture, of how people perceived themselves and their their relationship to the world (16).”*

He further explicates that colonialism does its work by, “...imposing a foreign language, and suppressing the native language as spoken and written...”

The role of education in a culture is, simply, to acculturate the people. In the U.S., specifically, “The idea that education for all should extend beyond elementary school came not from an egalitarian effort...but as a response to the immigration,

urbanization, and industrialization that changed the face of the United States in the last decade of the 19th century.” (DuFour et al. 17). This push for a particular acculturation was in no way hidden or under the radar. Ellwood Cubberly, Dean of Stanford University and NEA president, stated in 1909 that “illiterate immigrants” were deficient in, “self-reliance and initiative” and so the educational system’s priority should be to:

*“...assimilate and amalgamate these people as part of our American race and to implant in their children so far as can be done, the Anglo-Saxon conception of righteousness, law and order, and popular government and to awaken in them a reverence for democratic institutions (15).”*

Though the overt mission statements of contemporary school systems have certainly changed and the persons who are responsible for educating our society’s children would find the aforementioned antiquated “priority” problematic, the contemporary educational system unequivocally lies upon this “assimilationist” bedrock. Paradoxically, as educators, we can be far more effective in our deactivation process by accepting this fact rather than denying its correctness. It is so deeply embedded in the creation of our role as

teachers that it acts as a virtually inaudible background noise that informs and constructs our paradigmatic understandings of the world. of the United States in the last decade of the 19th century.” (DuFour et al. 17). This push for a particular acculturation was in no way hidden or under the radar. Ellwood Cubberly, Dean of Stanford University and NEA president, stated in 1909 that “illiterate immigrants” were deficient in, “self-reliance and initiative” and so the educational system’s priority should be to:

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than denying its correctness. It is so deeply embedded in the creation of our role as teachers that it acts as a virtually inaudible background noise that informs and constructs our paradigmatic understandings of the world. Consider for a moment you are doing a unit on “Great Leaders of Africa’s Independence.” You are teaching your students about Patrice Lumumba, the first Prime Minister of independent Congo, as they read the following powerful quote in his last message to his wife:

“No brutality, no agony, no torture has ever driven me to beg for mercy, for I would rather die with my head high, my faith unshaken, and a profound trust in the destiny of my country, than live in subjection.

Seeing principles that are sacred to me laughed to scorn. History will have its say one day—not the history they teach in Brussels, Paris, Washington or the United Nations, but the history taught in countries set free from colonialism and its puppet rulers. Africa will write her own history, and both north and south of the Sahara it will be a history of glory and dignity.”

You might feel obligated to inform them that this was his last message because he was swiftly removed from power due to his immediate nationalization of the Congo’s mineral wealth. He did this so that Western multinational corporations (US included) would not take this precious resource from its citizens. It is not certain exactly how he was assassinated but the various means that were considered among the imperial powers was slipping a disease that is native to central Africa into his toothpaste. The United States CIA has been implicated through investigative documentation as the agent of this assassination.

How might you reconcile this factual history with the “righteousness” of our “democratic institution” for your students? What does your role become in that moment as their teacher? How does the presence of the American flag in your classroom open up the possibility of a teachable moment? Are you willing to risk comfort and dive into an embodiment of paradox or irony? What research or personal and professional work is necessary for you to carry out this task in a responsible and

learned manner?

Dr. Jacob Gordon in an African history lecture emphasized that paramount to the delivery of any content is the mindset of she/he who delivers it. This falls neatly into the category of non-verbal communication—what we are communicating in the spaces between and around our words. Perhaps, discussing Kente cloth or yams and how we can see their existence in the diaspora falls well within our comfort zone. But what of the history of how these items made their way to the South/ North American continent or the Caribbean Islands? Can we narrate to our students in an honest, informed, and cognizant manner how Africans, First Americans, and Europeans first came into contact? That it was violent? Could we compare it to terrorism? Could it be called Europeans terrorizing African people and Native Americans? Might this have been traumatizing for all involved?

Should we choose to teach them this content, what are we communicating as we teach? Are we a person-of-color feeling strong emotions rising and feeling we should “hold back”? Are we not a person-of-color and feeling fear or shame because we may share an ancestral background with the colonizers of which we speak? The possibilities of our internal reflection on this matter is, I imagine, infinite and very rich in what it can teach us about ourselves as educators.

These questions are not a mere “self-indulgence” but rather an imperative first step of a three-step process I propose for engaging a life-long (generations-long) process for “decolonizing” our minds: self reflection; de-centering the self; repeat. I purposefully call it a “possibility” with a lowercase “p” to denote its non-almighty stance. For to suggest a “program” or a conclusive answer to mental decolonization is to replicate the very thing we seek to destabilize.

The bulk of this paper has focused on the first step, self-reflection. My hope is that its rigorous application (see above pedagogical example with Patrice Lumumba) will organically lead into the second step which is the realization that there is much as teachers we simply do not know.

Our sense of being ill-equipped, however, should motivate us to learn, critically examine what we “know”, and in turn teach this process to our students. Concurrently, my hope is that we recognize what a rich resource our students are for us as we continually take the risks necessary to deactivate our own minds from the colonial mindset. Perhaps the greatest gift we can give them is the sweet fruit of critical inquiry: What we know to be “true” may be wrong.

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# SUGAR, CHOCOLATE & PEANUTS

## Three Crops that Changed African History

by Carol B. Faas



Various spices and sugars

Carol Faas is a media specialist at Eastside High School in Gainesville, Florida. She developed a reading program specifically for the students in the EHS Institute of Culinary Arts magnet school. This program was recognized at the 2008 American Library Association convention for the 100% graduation rate, and won the Gale TEAMS Award for collaboration between teachers and media specialists.

An old Spiritual song has the refrain “He’s got the whole world in His hands, the whole wide world, in His hands.” A microcosm of the world that can be held in a person’s hand is the candy bar. The chocolate, sugar and peanuts combine to tell a story of adventure, tragedy and treasure that had an irrevocable effect on world history.

**Sugar cane**, *Saccharum officinarum*, is a member of the grass family. Native to Southeast Asia, sugar cane was brought to the Mediterranean area by Alexander the Great from India in 327 BCE. The juice from these “reeds which produce honey without bees” was originally used like honey. By 300 CE the reeds were being pressed and boiled to create sugar.

By the 13th century CE sugar was widely available in England, France, Spain, and Italy. Sugar was grown and exported from West Africa and the Canary Islands. In 1493, on Columbus’s second trip to the New World, sugar cane plants were carried from the Canary Islands to Santo Domingo and the first sugar cane plantations were established in the Americas. By the mid 1500s, sugar cane manufacture was widespread, and the demand for laborers stimulated the African slave trade. The first slave ships arrived in 1505, and the ships kept coming for 300 years. The British colonists called sugar “white gold.” Sugar slavery was the key element in the Trade Triangle, where Africans were enslaved and sent to work on New World plantations. The products of their labor were shipped to Europe to be sold, and then other goods were brought to Africa to buy more slaves.

The sugar plantations usually had processing plants on site. The harvested cane was pressed and the juices boiled into sugar crystals. The cane fibers were used to fuel the boilers. The cane fields would

be burned after harvest, and the new crop would grow from the underground roots. Several harvests can be made from a field before it needs to be replanted.

While sugar moved from east to west, a myriad of New World foods were being transported east to Europe and Africa. Peppers, peanuts, corn, chocolate, beans, and manioc transformed the cuisines of Africa and Asia—indeed it is hard to imagine what the typical foods were before the introduction of these New World staples.

**Chocolate** is made from the fruit seeds of the *Theobroma cacao* tree, which thrives in tropical climates within 20 degrees north and south of the equator. The cacao tree originated between southern Mexico and the Amazon River basin, but most of the world’s cacao beans now come from the west coast of Africa. In 2006, the world production of cocoa was 3.5 million tons (International Cocoa Organization). The leading cocoa producing countries include: Ivory Coast 1.3 million tons (37% of the world total); Ghana 720 thousand tons (20.7%); Cameroon 175 thousand tons (5%); and Nigeria 160 thousand tons (4.6%).

The export price of cocoa beans has declined in the past several years, adversely affecting the economies of the cocoa producing countries. Cocoa beans are sent to Europe and the United States to be processed into intermediate products such as cocoa butter, cocoa cake and cocoa powder.

Cocoa was consumed as a drink for hundreds of years. Hot chocolate, coffee and tea, all sweetened with sugar, became wildly popular in Europe immediately upon being introduced in the 1500s. By the 1600s, the British were so addicted to sugary drinks that their rotted teeth were discussed in the



Cocoa beans



Peanuts

literature of other countries!

The machinery to make chocolate candy was developed in Holland and Switzerland in the early 1800s. In the 1870s the Tobler and Nestle firms in Switzerland perfected a process for manufacturing milk chocolate (Sonnenfeld). Developments in food packaging made the sale of individual candy bars possible in 1910. However, chocolate was usually only available during cooler parts of the year until air conditioning and superior food packaging methods were developed.

The **peanut**, *Arachis hypogaea*, is a member of the legume family (Fabaceae), native to South America, Central America, and Mexico. The peanut is an annual plant that produces pods in the underground root system. Each pod usually contains two seeds, which are rich in protein and oils. Peanut plants fix nitrogen into the soil, and do not have the depleting effect on soil nutrients that many other crops have.

Like chocolate, peanuts were brought to the Old World by European explorers. The plants were then brought to European-controlled colonies in Africa, where vast land areas became plantations, and the local ethnic groups were used as farm laborers. Peanuts in Europe were used mainly as animal feeds until the late 19th century. But

the peanuts were incorporated into African and Asian recipes upon the crop's introduction in the 1600s.

In 2008 the leading peanut producing countries included: China, 13 million tons (37% of world production); Nigeria, 3.8 million tons (11%); United States 1.7 million tons; Sudan 460 thousand tons; and Chad 450 thousand tons (Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations: the Statistical Division).

The candy bar, marketed as a small treat, is a microcosm of world history and trade. Today, a single candy bar can encompass products from around the globe. For example, the outer paper wrapper can be made from paper produced in Canada (although paper was invented by the ancient Egyptians, who made paper from papyrus reeds). The ink to print the logos can be made from soybeans grown in the USA. The inner foil wrapper can include metal ores from African and Asian mines. The chocolate itself can be from Africa, the sugar from Latin America, the peanuts and raisins from the USA.

Thus, common food products embody the complex legacy of exploration, trade routes, colonization, land use, politics and economics.

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# THE TRICKSTER AS SCIENTIST

## The Scientific Method and Western African Folktales

by Timothy S. Hinchman

*If at first an idea does not sound absurd, then there is no hope for it. — Albert Einstein*

### INTRODUCTION

This is a simple story and as simple stories go, one has to have the right frame of mind. You are first going to need to be a comfortable place, maybe your favorite comfy chair, linen dressed bed, island resort or backyard under a nice tall Oak. Next you will have to be dressed casually without any cloth restrictions that might negate the necessary elements to your brain. The final stage is always the most difficult to achieve and that is a free mind. A mind free, not shackled, that will allow the images, the feelings and the spirits to take their rightful place in your head. You will have to fulfill all the requirements before you continue with this article, so as any good storyteller I will allow time for you to do so (now put the article down, take your shoes off, shower and get into that comfortable spot that makes your mind melt away to oblivion.)

I am not completely convinced that you have completed the mood requirement, but this story must be told and as you are my only audience it all starts at the beginning. I am not talking about the beginning of all, nor the beginning of time, but the beginning of this article. It all starts with the scientific process which as the American Heritage Dictionary describes as:

- *the observation, identification, description, experimental investigation, and theoretical explanation of phenomena.*
- *Such activities restricted to a class of natural phenomena.*
- *Such activities applied to an object of inquiry or study.*

This science has a lot to do with West African Folk Tales and scientists are a close cousin to the character described as the “trickster” in our case, Ananse the spider.

### ORAL TRADITIONS

Ananse’s biography is too long to tell in the short time we have so I will keep the back-story of oral traditions to a minimum. Africa is the cradle to civilization and as such the history pre-dates written language. Africans did not invent an alphabet for reading or writing and as such do not have a written history. They passed on information from one generation to another through oral traditions. Special people were assigned to keep these oral traditions in some societies. Their role was to memorize these tales and perform historical and moral events to future generations (Mbiti). These organic performances were the only method that observations and recommendations could be delivered. For the younger generations to remember the vital information the tales were exotic, vibrant and organic and could be altered as new observations were made. These folk tales were meant for the folk. They shed light on life, thought patterns and were extremely entertaining. As we can all attest, a story is much easier to remember than list of steps which leads us to our protagonist, the “trickster.” One thing I may have forgotten, folk tales were often told at night and it would be unfair for me to continue the tale until you are neatly tucked under your covers.

### TRICKSTER IN WEST AFRICA

I hope that you are warm and settled because our protagonist is Kweku Ananse :the spider-man from Ghana. He is the son of the Asanti Supreme Being called Nyame (the sky-god.) Nyame is also known by many other names: as Oboadee (the creator), Odomankoma (the Infinite), he created life and death. The spider’s mother is Asase Ya, the goddess of the Earth and of fertility. Kweku means Wednes-

day and it symbolizes his soul’s first appearance on this earth. Kweku was turned into a spider because of all his mischief and constant aggravation of his father. This mischief made him very headstrong and determined and had to rely solely on his mental facilities in life. This change in form and function allowed Kweku to transform from mischievous man to a spider “Keeper of All Stories.” The keeper has many forms including a tortoise and rabbit when he travels the oceans.

Ananse’s role was that of a “trickster” which is vitally essential in the method of oral tradition. The trickster can be described as trivial and lawless which can arouse warmth and value but defies typical social logic. Ananse is truthful and always speaks by dissembling the complex relationship of his father Nyame and his mother Asase Ya. His elusiveness fulfils a balance between the heaven (invisible, unknown and ambiguous) and the earth (visible, tangible and known.) Without Ananse our world would be out of balance and we would lose our coherence (Pelton.)

The trickster is the quintessential scientist. He takes bits and pieces of information and uses his experience to draw conclusions. Ananse takes the chaos of the universe and makes order. This task requires an incredible amount of patience and effort. The result is a complex web of many layers. Ananse uses symbolism and transforms the power of imagination, makes fun of the universe, interacts with it, delights in his achievements and “shatters what seems to be until it becomes what is.” (Pelton) He rejects the cultural norms and shapes the future by acting out against rigid boundaries of society. Ananse is an eight-legged rebel

with a very important cause: making sense of the world around him.

### ANANSE AND THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD

The trickster utilizes a methodology when he encounters a problem. This method can be characterized by the steps we identify as the Scientific Method. The scientific method is generally described as a series of steps; you will find that different sources list slightly different steps (as with most folk tales), though they all turn out to mean precisely the same thing:

- Observation
- Questioning
- Hypothesis
- Testing
- Explanation

Ananse was a wise man and utilized this method before it had a name and I will walk you through on his most legendary and significant tales. Dear reader I will not let decipher this tale on your own as I will go through the method with you so you will remember each step before the weight of your eyelids close shut.

### ANANSE AND THE CALABASH OF KNOWLEDGE

The simple story I promised is coming, so be patient reader. We will begin with the beginning the Observation. Observation comes in many different forms, but are all related to senses. Scientists can observe with their six senses. In case you are wondering besides the original five senses, we are given a sixth sense called reason. It is with this sixth sense that Ananse uses to observe in the story.

At one time, Ananse decided that wisdom was the most valuable item in the world because with wisdom all other precious commodities would be within his grasp. He took it from everybody he met. He swept from the floor and caught it as it fell from trees. Each time he found a piece of wisdom he put it in a large pot. For days and years he collected until his pot was full of wisdom.

The simple story is about to take a little turn and go from observation to the questioning stage. This is step where problems occur. One has to remember that the method is also organic in nature and may pose multiple observations and multiple problems.

Ananse wondered aloud, “what should I do with this knowledge?” After several seconds of deliberation, Ananse decided that the wisdom belonged to him and him alone. Ananse was very afraid that someone or something would try to steal his pot. “What should I do?” he asked himself. “Where shall I hide my pot?” He thought and thought and at last...

When one asks questions, it is only natural for one to come up with possible solutions. In science those possible solutions are given the name “hypothesis”. A hypothesis is a prediction on an outcome to the questions that was raised before. As with the previous step, hypotheses flow and can change when new information and new problems arise.

I know. I shall climb a tree and hide my pot among its branches, then no one will find it.” Ananse lifted his pot up into his arms and tried to climb the tree. He tried to hold the pot in his left arm, but could not climb the tree. He tried to hold the pot in his right arm and could not climb the tree.

Before you start grow tired, I almost forgot the fourth step in the scientific method; testing. The experimentation that Ananse does is testing his possible solutions to the problem known now as the hypothesis. This testing allows Ananse and any scientist to adjust his experiment at any point during his quest.

All the time Ananse was attempting to climb the tree, his son had been watching him. “Papa,” said the child, “why don’t you tie the pot to your back and then you would be able to climb the tree?” Ananse laughed at his son briefly and then rethought his dilemma. He tied the pot to his back and, he was able to climb the tree very easily. Ananse sat on the branch of the tree, holding his pot of wisdom. He felt...

The final step of the method is the explanation of the experiment. This is the final reveal and an essential part of the method. Ananse is about to reveal to the whole world what he learned from his observation, questions, hypothesis and experimentation. This is why Ananse is not only a keeper of stories, but a teller of stories as well.

“Sad. “Just think,” he said to himself, “I thought I had collected all wisdom in my pot and yet my child possessed some wisdom that I did not know

about.” Ananse just sat there for awhile and thought. Then he pushed his pot off the branch. The pot smashed on the ground below and his wisdom scattered all over the world.

Ananse completed the scientific method and through a burst of a pot shared his conclusions with the world. It is through Ananse’s methodology that we can repeat, verify or vilify his results. In science and in life, if you do not have the steps to repeat the action than the results may be a fluke. Ananse’s hard work, determination and insight have allowed those giant shoulders that have allowed Newton, Einstein and Hawking to see into the future.

### FAREWELL

Our time is up and our simple story is complete. We learned many the role and importance of oral traditions in West Africa and beyond. Introductions were made Ananse, the trickster spider-son of the heaven of earth who was responsible for all the stories in the world. The trickster’s task explained the previously unexplainable by a technique that we now call the scientific method. This scientific method is a division of natural steps that each of use encounter through the process of life. I now bid you good night as your lids are closing shut and your imagination is opening up.

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# UNEASY JUSTICE

## Apartheid, Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa

by **Diedre Houchen**

*In 1994, South Africans of all different ethnic groups, legacies and political affiliations took part in the country's first full participatory election, liberating itself from the grips of the political strategy of Apartheid. Nelson Mandela, leader of the ANC, was elected president by an overwhelming majority toppling a century old regime of hatred and hoarding. This article will provide background information on the history of South Africa before colonial rule, Apartheid in South Africa, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.*

### SOUTHERN AFRICA PRE-COLONIZATION

According to the history reported by colonizers, archeologists, and linguists, the earliest modern inhabitants of the land mass we now call South Africa are the Khoikhoi and San ethnic groups. The San or Sonqua were hunter-gatherers and the Khoikhoi were herders. The name KhoiK- hoi can be translated as 'the real people' or 'men of men', meaning 'we people with domestic animals' as opposed to the Sonqua who had none (The Future Perfect Corporation). Thought to have migrated from the central part of Africa, KhoiKhoi villages can be found along the western coast of South Africa and at the Cape. Later inhabitants, characterized by linguists in terms of their similarities in language, are the Nguni, Sotho, Venda and Tsonga. Collectively, these people, who also arrived from central region of Africa, are described by linguists as Bantu-speaking ethnic groups. The term Bantu, originally meaning simply people, became racially charged during the Colonial regime when Afrikaners began using it to describe all black citizens of South Africa. Today it is considered a racist term.

Contact between Africans and Europeans in South Africa in the late 1500's and early 1600's began. Dutch and English sailors frequently traded with the KhoiKhoi people and left postage for other travelers soon to be arriving. Attempts at settlement occurred throughout the 1600's with the first serious attempt occurring in 1652 with the arrival of the Dutch East India Company. By the end of the 18th Century this settlement had

expanded to 15,000 people and the Dutch moved further inland. They became known as Trekboers, Dutch for wandering farmers, which was often subsequently shortened to Boers. They call themselves, Afrikaners, proudly emphasizing their birth in Africa. In 1948, the Afrikaner National Party, running on a platform of racial segregation and suppression of the black majority known as apartheid ("separateness"), came to power in a whites-only election.



### APARTHEID

The system of Apartheid was an obsessive and oppressive ideology of separation. Racial classifications of all South Africans were fixed and registered, marriage between the groups become a criminal offense. The country was segregated into zones where ownership of property and all economic activity were limited to specific racial groups. Black Africans were required to carry a pass when traveling into white areas. Education was separated along color lines with universities being reserved for only whites. White collar jobs, industry, political representation and voice were reserved for whites only.

"Homelands" were established as independent states for Black South Africans. Blacks could vote within their own homeland but not on national policies. Supposedly Africans were assigned to homelands according to their ethnic heritage, but this information was often inaccurate, and individuals were placed in homelands that held no cultural meaning or cohesion. Blacks were not allowed to take part in the South African Parliament which held complete rule over the homelands. From 1976 to 1981, four of these homelands were created, denationalizing nine million South Africans. The homeland administrations refused the nominal independence, maintaining pressure for political rights within the country as a whole. Nevertheless, Africans living in the homelands needed passports to enter South Africa: aliens in their own country.

Apartheid was widely protested by Black South Africans. In 1912, the African National Congress was created with the purpose of creating national unity and defending the rights and privileges of South Africans. One of the early leaders of the ANC was Nelson Mandela. Through the ANC and other political organizations the people of South Africa began a systematic, strategic campaign of protest and resistance against Apartheid.

Many violent and tragic events occurred during this time. The Sharpeville Massacre, in 1960 when South African police began shooting on a crowd of black protesters, the Soweto Uprising- where youth protesters were met with force and brutality by the South African Police, and the murder of Steve Biko in 1976 while in police custody are all examples of oppressive violence used by the South African government in order to keep the system of Apartheid active and in control. During this time the ANC created, Umkhonto we Sizwe (or MK), translated "Spear of the Nation," an active military wing that sought to use sabotage

and guerilla warfare to topple the ruling paradigm. More violence ensued and the ANC was banned in South Africa.

The South African Struggle was now being played out on the world's stage. Increasing opposition to Apartheid in the form of international economic sanctions, pressure from the anti apartheid movement abroad caused F.W. de Klerk, president of the ruling National Party to announce the unbanning of the African National Congress and the release of Nelson Mandela on 2 February 1990. In 1992, a referendum passed that called for the dismantling of apartheid through negotiations. In 1994, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela was elected president.

## TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

On July 1995, the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act was signed into law by President Nelson Mandela. Within this legislation was the call for the formation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which was to, "provide for the investigation and the establishment of as complete a picture as possible of the nature, causes and extent of gross violations of human rights committed...emanating from the conflicts of the past, and the fate or whereabouts of the victims of such violations; the granting of amnesty to persons who make full disclosure of all the relevant facts relating to acts associated with a political objective committed...(p.1).

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa is not the first truth commission to be used by a government to redress its past failures. Even still the organization and administration of this one was unique. Delegates from Chile, Argentina, eastern and central Europe came together to share their countries struggles with truth commissions. South Africa used this information to set up debates and discussions that were open to all of its citizens. Representative parliaments were used to garner input on the makeup of the commission and in late July the search for commissioners began.

The goal of the TRC was, "develop a complete picture of the gross violations of human rights that took place in and came

through the conflicts of the past; to restore to victims their human and civil dignity by letting them tell their stories and recommending how they could be assisted; and to consider granting amnesty to those perpetrators who carried out their abuses for political reasons and who gave full accountings of their actions to the commission (The Department of Justice and Constitution Development South Africa 1)." This was by no means a small task and the commission took two full years to hear the stories, create reports, grant amnesty and close the doors on the TRC.

The work of the TRC was carried out by three committees: the committee on Human Rights Violations (HRV), the Committee on Amnesty, and the Committee on Reparation and Rehabilitation. A total of seventeen commissioners and two judges worked on behalf of this monumental project.

## THE STORIES

Approximately 22,000 victim statements were processed covering 37,000 violations (Graybill). Over two years hearing in the Human Rights Violation committee were held in tall halls, hospitals, and churches around the country. The stories that were told by survivors of the worst kinds of abuses are startling and chilling. However, in the telling, many victims felt as though they were beginning to heal as their stories were being heard. One thought that underpins the philosophy of the TRC is that as a people South Africans needed to face the unwelcome truths in order to create a common memory of its dark past in order to move forward. For once, "the marginalized voice speaks to the public ear; the unspeakable is spoken (Graybill 17)."

Along with individual stories, political parties were invited to make submissions to the TRC. Many, including former President F. W. De Klerk were less than thrilled to cooperate. Thus, the National Party effectively denied authorizing any human rights violations against political opponents. The ANC, as well as other liberation organizations were a little more forthcoming regarding their violations but still, a cloak of secrecy clung to all of the parties involved in the struggle.

## AFTERMATH AND RAMIFICATIONS

Over 800 people were granted amnesty as a result of the TRC (Ntsebeza). Over 5000 people applied. Many people in South Africa were disheartened by the lack of culpability by the national Police, and the apathy with which whites viewed the process as a whole. Some individuals to whom grievous harm had been done felt as though the TRC usurped the pursuit of justice by giving amnesty to their perpetrators. There are those who feel that individuals effectively "milked" the system by simply giving an account of the crimes they had done; without remorse, emotion or apology. All these are serious claims and weaknesses implicit in the TRC's makeup. However, no one can deny that this mighty undertaking, the first ever of its magnitude and duration, help a nation to confront its past and begin the long journey toward healing and justice.

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# THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE AFRICAN ECONOMY

Past to the Present

by Heather McKeever



It is important to look back at the history of African women. Women empowerment in Africa is nothing new to them, women have always been a key element in Africa's economic system. Many western views on the "African world" presented in the media and literature is quite misleading. Many of the pre-colonial African societies were matrilineal. Most women lost their prestige because of colonialism which gave men the upper hand in their daily affairs. Prior to colonialism women's activities were not limited to the domestic lifestyle. Women were very prominent in the market place, as sellers and buyers that enabled them to acquire control over important sectors of the local economy. This control is so central to production and exchange that it provides considerable power and influence for women. Women in Africa have played and continue to play vital roles both in the domestic and economic worlds.

## ***Pre-Colonialism***

Women made up 70% of agricultural workers in Africa yet they were very limited to land ownership. In food farming or shifting the hoe culture, women were responsible for breaking the soil up, planting, weeding, and harvesting with little male assistance. The men's role in this culture was heavy land

clearing and military duty to defend the land they acquired. In a few of these societies they participated in an intensive form of hoe agriculture where the women and men combined their efforts. Employment for women in Africa is characterized by small-scale farming, and their participation in informal trade is connected to agriculture, as opposed to what might be normally understood as paid labor. This "unpaid" work is typically tied to women's duties as mothers and wives, and to their community and their extended family relationships.

In Yoruba culture, women in many cases worked in food processing, trade, and handicrafts. In Ethiopia, men took over most of the agricultural labor because of the invention of the oxen-plow. Common in Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Africa women's farming system dominated. In these areas farming was combined with cattle keeping. For example in the Congo women took the entire responsibility of agricultural development, while the men herded the cattle and cleared the land. In many nomadic societies like the Masai of East Africa men herded and the women milked and produced butter. In hunting and gathering peoples such as those in the forest dwellings, men hunted and women collected roots, berries, and fruit for their regular diet. Among the

pastoral and agricultural groups women's work included food production, storage, and preparation. They also manufactured pottery, baskets, mats, clothing, and other household goods.

Women's economic roles became more complex in state societies because the household duties intersected with the different classes within these societies. Women's economic roles varied with the class position of their husbands. Among the Tutsi in Rwanda, if the wife was considered of the noble class she merely supervised the agricultural labor. If the woman was of the commoner class the wife had to clean the cattle kraal, make butter, and participate in the farming. In many patrilineal societies women's economic security was unstable because the wife farmed her husband's land and did not have firm rights regarding land ownership. On the other side of the coin, matrilineal societies gave women economic and social security and were usually able to access land through male relatives. These land rights could be exercised when they were single, during marriage, upon divorce or widowhood and women could inherit land and pass it on to their children. Married women whose husbands stayed in the wife's village were able to acquire land over which their husbands had no rights. They



did not have to leave their maternal village and if a divorce should occur the children would stay with their mother. Among the pastoral societies that were mostly patrilineal groups, each wife had her own one room house inside the village compound. In this particular society the women were responsible for house building and the men built the fences that surrounded the compound and kept the cattle safe.

### ***Colonial Period***

Colonial conquest dramatically changed the pre-colonial economies. Under the colonial rule many Africans were forced to produce raw materials that the Europeans wanted peanuts, cocoa, palm kernels, cotton, and coffee. The Europeans ideas about the appropriate economic and domestic roles for women basically destroyed the economic independence and the traditional form of social authority they exercised prior to colonialism. Not only did African women lose their economic independence their workloads increased tremendously. The colonial extraction of economic surpluses from Africa and removal of men to work at European plantations or as forced laborers in mines was the main reason for the women's rising labor burdens. Everyone's labor was diverted from food and craft labor to colonial crops. The colonial powers recognized the role of patriarchal power over women for the sake of colonial profits. The production of export crops completely altered the sexual division of labor. Many men found themselves leaving their households to search for wage work, leaving the wives with the care for the children, the cattle, and the farming with little or no male help. Although the women were left to manage household economy they rarely could make decisions regarding sales, loans, and gifts of economic resources.

### ***Post-Colonialism***

The past is still present in the contemporary lives of African women. The patriarchal dominance can still be seen in the household economy. Landownership is still an issue today. Women in some countries suffer from the insecurity in land since they do not have a secure title to land under customary tenure. Some women were allocated

land through cooperation with traditional leaders especially single women, divorcees, and widows. Women's economic problems are directly related to the changes that took place in their nations, and are struggling with the strongly rooted socioeconomic traditions pre-colonialism. Women have several challenges to overcome, their family burdens which limit opportunities and time for women to do business, thereby causing most women to go into micro-businesses as opposed to larger or more complex businesses, property laws which make it more difficult for women to own property than men in Africa.

There are future development programs in rural areas to make investments to benefit women and children equally with men, and have the delicate process of removing the patriarchal constraints on women without demolishing their traditional community. Education will be a major factor for women pursuing new employment opportunities. There are also new opportunities for women to produce vegetables for urban markets on the fringe land using intensive labor practice. In some locations like Nigeria and Ethiopia, women are in seclusion which prevents them from working outside the home, they engage in food processing and trade with the assistance of young girls. Some make a profit by using their time to establish businesses in their homes, using their children as retail agents. Technological advances in food processing such as cassava processors, fish smokers and oil pressers have benefitted women greatly. Through these advancements women's incomes have increased. Women living in towns participate in retail trade, market cooking from street corner sellers to prosperous restaurant owners with many employees. One of the concepts that advocates women economic empowerment is the Pan African Women in Business (PAWIB), which formed out of a need for African women to have a common voice of representation on matters pertaining to women economic development. Wangari Maathai has stated that "African women in general need to know that it's OK for them to be the way they are - to see the way they are as a strength, and to be liberated from fear and from silence."

### ***African Women Success Stories***

Recently an African woman was appointed as the first female ambassador to the African Union. Amina Salum Ali, a lifelong Tanzanian civil servant and politician, was born and raised on the island of Zanzibar. She was educated in India where she earned a bachelor's degree in economics, and within two years a master's in business administration and marketing. She also held the position of minister of the state for the chief's minister's office in Zanzibar.

Another recent appointment is Elizabeth Mataka as United Nation Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's new Special Envoy for AIDS in Africa. She is the first African appointed as a special envoy. She is the first woman to be appointed at such a high level to respond to the challenge of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa. She is also the first national of Botswana to be called to such a high post.

The founder of the handicraft company Gahaya Links, Janet Nkubana, has an annual revenue of \$300,000 dollars. She has over 3,000 employees. Her business spans Africa and the United States. Rwanda was the first African country to enter the top ten reformers' list in the Doing Business project. This incorporates the Hutu and Tutsi women sitting under one roof creating peace baskets and earning an income.

The owner of Uganda's largest juice processing factory, Julian Omalla, is known as "Moma Cheers" after her fruit drink brand Cheers which has 45% of the local market. Annually the company makes over 4 million US dollars. She employs 450 Ugandans. She has diversified into a range of other business ventures including coordinating women's farmer cooperatives that provide food aid to Sudan.

## SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

1. Before the class reads the materials relating to women in the African economy, ask them what they think African women do as means of income in the past and in the present?
2. Then ask them to explain what type of gender roles did women have in Africa's economic system?
3. Why would women have different roles in the economy in different regions of Africa?
4. After they have read the material provided ask them what roles did women control in the economy?
5. What changes had taken place over the years during colonialism?
6. What kind of future do you see for African women in the economy system?
7. Do you think African women will encounter any economic challenges as they progress in the future?

### SUNSHINE STATE STANDARDS:

**SS.A.3.4.3** Understands the significant economic, political, and cultural interactions among the peoples of Africa, Europe, Asia, and the Americas during the Age of Discovery and the European expansion.

**SS.A.1.4.2** Identifies and understands themes in history that cross scientific, economic, and cultural boundaries.

**SS.A.1.4.4** Uses chronology, sequencing, patterns, and periodization to examine interpretations of an event.

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### Online Resources

The Washington Diplomat [http://www.washdiplomat.com/August%202007/a4\\_08\\_07.html](http://www.washdiplomat.com/August%202007/a4_08_07.html)

Harvard Human Rights Journal <http://www.law.harvard.edu/students/orgs/hrj/iss19/rebouche.shtml#Heading72>

Eastern Africa Social Science Research Review, Volume 18, Number 1, January 2002, pp. 35-61 (Article) <http://muse.jhu.edu/search/results>

Foundation for the Development of Africa [www.pawib.com](http://www.pawib.com)

Doing Business: Women in Africa [www.doing-business.org](http://www.doing-business.org)

[www.ccic.ca/e/docs/004\\_news\\_African\\_Women\\_and\\_the\\_WTO.pdf](http://www.ccic.ca/e/docs/004_news_African_Women_and_the_WTO.pdf)

<http://www0.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/afrec/bpaper/maineng.html>

# THE IMPACT OF AFRICAN CULTURES ON THE MUSIC OF THE CARIBBEAN, CUBA & LATIN AMERICA

by **Juanita Nelson**

## SOMOS UNA GENTE ...

(excerpt by *Sherehe Yamaisha Roze* March 15, 2007)

Why should Cinco de Mayo and Mexican History matter to me?  
Porque somos una gente,. Whose blood has been shared and shed  
In the name of sisterhood and brotherhood  
Once before,there existed no borders between us  
Somos Familia\*, and I seek to reclaim the parts of me  
They tried to divide and conquer  
Hermanos\*,stand with me, united and remember  
That we are one ...

Sherehe Yamaisha Roze, recites “Somos Una Gente,” [We are One People] and “Somos familia” [We are Family] signifying that we are all closely related either through our heritage or simply through the African influence of the music. To fathom the impact of African culture on Caribbean, Cuban, and Latin American regions the importance migration of African slaves as a whole, has to be considered. Diaspora is defined as “the movement, migration or scattering of people away from an established or ancestral homeland.”

Throughout the entire transatlantic slave trade era, Africans were forced to adapt to foreign environments as well as give up their autonomy and identity. Some Africans were allowed to maintain a few culturist traits, one of them being music. This liberty allowed them to continue to practice a portion of their religious ceremonies which incorporated music and expression of dance.

African slaves were transported to the different countries in North and South Americas. The regions populated comprised of Brazil, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Panama, Uruguay and Puerto Rico, which allowed the music to transcend and take root of new lands creating a niche for new genre’s to grow. It is believed that the influence of the African culture on the music originated from the

religious ceremonies done in the homeland. Brazil, although in South America, holds the second largest population of Africans other than Africa itself.

For this author, exposure to the Afro-Latin music came naturally growing up in a Hispanic home. Music was as much apart of the culture as your lineage was. From a young age we were taught that dancing was mandatory at cultural events and facilitated when family members visited for a celebration as common as a birthday. The music gave room for expression of sentiments and happiness through the movement of the body and transposing that into a welcoming gesture for guests. Ironically, as children we didn’t know where the music originated from. Music and dance became second nature and was assumed that all cultures did the same.

There is an apparent connection of the music to each genre and although the sound may be similar, the dance has a meaning of its own as well its location of origin influenced by the African slaves.

Regarding the instruments used in the genres of Afro-Latino music, the commonality and impact of African Culture is evident in each type of instruments used. Normally in Latin music there is a precision in playing and having multiple rhythms playing simultaneously. This is similar to the



*Maracas (top) have a similar sound to the axatse (bottom). The major difference between the axatse and the maraca is that the maracas do not have any type of covering on the outside, while an axatse consists of a gourd covered with a net*

African culture, polyrhythmic sound, especially with the drums, because it was also a form of communication for the Africans slaves. Many times the music wasn’t just for total enjoyment it was a ritual that was started and that had meaning and purpose to the people.

The instruments that have popularity in Latin music are the timbales, a wooden drum played with sticks. Congas are tall Cuban drums that originated in Africa, primarily from the *Atsimevu*. Bongos are smaller drums paired together but played with fingers, similar to the *sogo*, and the *kagan* from Africa, but not played with sticks. The nine-string guitar originated in Cuba, and has replaced the traditional guitar in Latin

# AFRICA'S INFLUENCES ON VARIOUS MUSICAL GENRES

GENRE	COUNTRY/CITY
CONGA	Cuba
MERENGUE	Dominican Republic
REGGAETON	Cuba/Puerto Rico/Panama
RUMBA	Cuba
SALSA	Cuba/Puerto Rico/New York
SAMBA	Brazil

music. Percussion and wind instruments are the primary instruments played and are the most popular.

The maracas have a similar sound to the *axatse*, although the *axatse* is a gourd or pumpkin covered with a net made of beads and has pebbles or seeds in them. The major difference between the *axatse* and maracas is that the maracas are plain and don't have any type of covering on the outside of it.

Some of the pioneers that have had an impact in exposing the Afro-Latin sounds to the world are stars like Joe Cuba, Celia Cruz, and Willie Bobo. These are just some of the various artists that took advantage of their African heritage and shared the culture through the music. Daddy Yankee and Don Omar are two contemporary and well-respected artists that are continuing the tradition of the influence of the African culture through reggaeton, a dance popular in Cuba, Panama and Puerto Rico. This genre entails hip-hop and rap along with the rhythmic sound of the drums.

In doing this study, I thought it would be an issue of understanding the impact African Culture made on Music of the Caribbean, Cuba and Latin America, however what I found to be most interesting to me is not only does a link exist between the impact music of the slave migration, but by a common bond from the origination of mankind. In our cultural defense sometimes we only acknowledge what we want to accept, but in teaching society about the impact that the African slave migration had on our culture it becomes something that is often not addressed or plainly dispelled.

The Afro-Cuban, Afro-Caribbean, and Afro-Latino are all descendents of African lineage and although these people are not established in one land, the music and the memory of our ancestors gives them support as a people. This connection allows them to keep their individuality within their own communities. The influence of the African culture is spirited through the music and it is the very same music that can tear down barriers of isolation. In addition, although looks may have changed, the fact remains that we are all inter-connected not merely through acquaintances but through our heritage.

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# IGBO ULI ART IN NIGERIA

by **Mike Oyenarte**

Nigeria is a country located in West Africa. It shares a border with the Republic of Benin in the west, Chad and Cameroon in the east, and Niger in the north. In the south, Nigeria's coast lies on the Gulf of Guinea. Nigeria has a population of over 148 million, making it the most populous country in Africa and is about twice the size of California. There are 36 states and some 250 ethnic groups with varying languages and customs. It is a former British colony.

The largest and most influential ethnic groups in Nigeria are the Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. The journey begins in 1909 when the British colonial government took control of formal education. Aian Onabolu is associated with the beginnings of formal art education in Nigeria. After receiving training at St. Johns Woods, London, he returned with acquired knowledge in European art education. He in turn began to introduce his students to the world of perspective, drawing, human proportion and the techniques associated with watercolor painting. He eventually began teaching in Lagos, King's College. During this time he encouraged the hiring of European art teachers. Kenneth Murray was among the group and he led a reawaking of traditional handicrafts and art. This produced a number of Nigerian art instructors who taught traditional African art alongside traditional Western art.

The work associated with European art is called easel art with emphasis on naturalistic subject matter, portraits, landscapes, or as we know it two-dimensional art, work produced on a flat surface. Traditional African art is associated with visual abstraction and is usually found in museum collections. In Africa, these forms might be used in their original context such as celebrations, initiations, crop harvesting and war preparation.

The University of Nigeria-Nsukka appointed Uche Okeke acting head and lecturer in the Fine Arts Department in the early 1970's. The Fine Arts Department was transformed under his leadership he added new courses and research into Igbo

Uli art tradition. Before the Nsukka years during his training years he created works with Christian themes, one such work was based on his father's funeral in which the boy Uche, wears black clothes as a sign of mourning, carries a cross, and is surrounded by his mother, family members and their friends. His catholic religious background is not the main catalyst in his later years. Much of his work exemplified the sparse use of the elements, some time only giving us a glimpse of color.

*Uli* is the name given to the traditional designs drawn by the Igbo People of Nigeria. Uli drawings are strongly linear and lack perspective; they do, however, balance positive and negative space. Designs are frequently asymmetrical, and are often painted spontaneously. Uli generally is not sacred, apart from those images painted on the walls of shrines and created in conjunction with some community rituals.

The drawing of uli was once practiced throughout most of Igboland although by 1970 it had lost much of its popularity, and was being kept alive by a handful of contemporary artists. It was usually practiced by women, who would decorate each other's bodies with dark dyes to prepare for village events, such as marriage title taking, and funerals; designs would sometimes be produced for the most important market days as well. Designs would last about a week.

Most uli designs were named, and many differed among various Igbo regions. Some were abstract, using patterns such as zigzags and concentric circles while others stood for household objects like stools and pots. Some represented animals such as pythons and lizards; others showed plants, like yam leaves, or heavenly bodies, including a crescent moon and stars. Still other designs depicted cutting and other actions.

The use of uli was not limited to the human body. Igbo women would also paint murals of designs on the walls of compounds and houses. These generally used four colors which could be created from natural bases easily found in the area; black

was made from charcoal, reddish brown from the camwood tree, yellow from either soil or tree bark, and white from clay. When the British arrived in the area at the turn of the twentieth century, they brought with them a commercial laundry additive which some painters used to create blue pigment. Uli was not meant to express a specific message; instead, it was meant to beautify the female body and buildings to which it was applied, as beauty is equated with morality in Igbo culture.

Today the practice of uli is being kept alive by, among others, the artists of the Nsukka group who have appropriated its designs and incorporated them into other media.

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# THE BRITISH ASKARI OF WWII

by Byron David Prugh

*It would be fallacious to describe the “common” experiences of any soldier from any country in any war, and so I will not claim that the British askari soldier is unique; the experiences of all soldiers are unique. Rather, I will focus on some of the British askari contributions to the British war effort during World War II with the understanding that I am only showing small facets of the complex roles these colonial soldiers played in the eventual Allied victory.*

Even in a simple definition, the askari reveal their complexity. According to the Kamusi Project, the Swahili definitions for askari (same either in singular and plural form) are mercenary; plainclothesman; Home Guard; soldier; or police. Wikipedia.org, attempts to simplify matters, with a definition that defines askari as: “an Arabic, Turkish, Somali, Persian, and Swahili word meaning “soldier” (Arabic: *يُرْكَس* ‘askari). It was normally used to describe local troops in East Africa, Northeast Africa, and Central Africa serving in the armies of European colonial powers. The designation can however also describe police, gendarmerie and security guards.”

In both cases, the definitions underscore the incredible diversity of the askari in both their origins and their roles. The fact that the word exists in so many languages shows that the askari come from various ethnic, linguistic, and cultural groups, they had different colonial experiences, and they held different jobs.

The askari were an incredibly diverse corps of soldiers. In Kenya alone, British troop data from the Spring of 1942, identified the following percentages of ethnic groups serving in various military capacities. The Luo (28%), Luhya (15%), Kalenjin (7%), Kikuyu, Embu, and Meru (18%), Kamba (25%), Mijikenda (2%), and Other (5%). (Parsons 72).

As for positions within the military itself, askari served in a wide range of roles: as signalers, porters, drivers, infantrymen, clerks, dock workers, and prison guards. Just about any and all positions necessary to support the British war machine were filled by askari; however, unlike

their French peers, other than NCOs (Non-Commissioned Officers), the British military promoted whites to fill positions as officers. As David Killingray points out in *Time to Kill*, “Race was a point of conflict, and it was recognised(sic) early on in the war that it was vital, as far as it was possible, to employ officers who would work within the acknowledged racial notions that underpinned the colonial order but without descending to the kind of over racist behaviour(sic) widely seen in South African troops and the white settler colonies.” (Killingray, 103)

Under the British system, askari could expect to have white British commanding officers, but it did not mean that askari were passive soldiers who did not resist the status quo. “Black and coloured(sic) South African troops resented racial abuse from officers and responded by deserting, strikes, and more violent forms of protests. A few unpopular officers were murdered by their own men (called fragging in the US), something that was NOT peculiar to African colonial armies.” (Killingray, 103)

Therefore, when defining askari, it is important to remember that each individual soldier had a unique ethnic identity, a colonial national identity, a professional identity, and their own personal identity; therefore, the askari experience in World War II is as unique as each person.

## **World War II and Africa**

When the British government planned the 50th anniversary commemoration of VE (Victory in Europe) Day, it neglected to invite African (askari) troops. This oversight was rectified because “African troops had fought in Europe during the Second World War, most notably in Italy; also, they made a major contribution to the important victories over the Italians.” (Killingray, 93) This is a good example of the complexity in describing the role British Askari during World War II. As the name implies, World War II was fought in various locales around the Earth, not just in Europe and



*Photo of an askari taken sometime between 1914 and 1918*

Asia. One of the Axis powers, the Italians, invaded Ethiopia in 1935. When the United States joined the Allies, one of the first theaters of operation for the US, outside of the Pacific Ocean, was North Africa. The continent of Africa was, in fact, fought over; although the Germans “lost” their colonial possessions after their defeat in World War One, Africa (and its abundant resources) was still considered a prize.

By June of 1940, a memo had been produced in Germany by Admiral Raeder’s office stating “a colonial empire should be fashioned in central Africa stretching from the Atlantic coast to the Indian Ocean, with overseas bases acquired in North and South America, Asia, and Australia. A world map produced by the naval staff at this time shows the great German empire, including part of Africa, in blue opposing the remnants of the British empire in red now controlled from Washington.” (Padfield 309). It’s interesting to note that dividing a map into red and blue “spheres of influence” is not unique the American news media, but more importantly, it emphasizes the importance of the continent of Africa, and her peoples, in a world at war. The European Axis powers merely intended to

replace British, French, Belgian, Portuguese, and independent Ethiopian rulers with their own colonial governments; British askari soldiers, though, successfully thwarted the plans of the Germans and Italians.

### **Joining the askari**

Just as each askari had his own personal identity, so too did each soldier have a reason for being in the British army in the first place. One reason for volunteering to become a soldier in the British Army was, in effect, to have some more control over one's own life. Conscription was used across the continent as a means providing a workforce to supply raw materials for the war effort and as such, a soldier would receive better pay and potentially avoid working on large European farms or in mines if he enlisted.

Africa's wealth of natural resources needed a labor force to extract it, either on the ground in the form of crops, or below it, in mineral form. Enlisting in the army, then, not prevented conscription into forced labor, but it also provided higher wages. For those Africans forced into labor, however, resistance was possible. Desertion was the most common way for conscripts to fight back.

Money was a powerful motivator for joining the askari as well. Timothy Parsons writes in *The African Rank and File* that:

Army clerks earned up to 150 shillings per month, as compared to their civilian counterparts, whose wages usually topped out at 90 shillings. The military also offered uniforms, housing, full rations, medical care, and rapid promotion. A trained African artisan in the Kenyan Public Works Department would have had to work for seven to ten years to earn the same pay as an army tradesman with the rank of corporal. It would have taken twenty or thirty years to qualify for a sergeant's pay. (Parsons 75).

So, the army, as a career, was quite lucrative for an askari volunteer. Whether an askari joined to avoid conscription or to receive a higher wage, they were valuable and vital members of the British military.

### **Askari at War**

During World War Two, the askari served in many types of operations. The Kenya African Rifles, alone, served in campaigns against the Italians in Ethiopia, against the Vichy French in Madagascar, and against the Japanese in Burma. During the Burma campaign alone, several askari demonstrated heroism in battle and were awarded medals for their efforts. "Warrant officer Platoon Commander Salika of 2 KAR won the Distinguished Conduct Medal for directing three consecutive assaults at Longstop Hill in spite of being badly wounded; Sergeant Jowana Odinga of 4 KAR earned



a Military Medal for leading an attack on a Japanese bunker. Sergeant Mwanza Kimanzi of 5 KAR died while protecting his British Lieutenant from shell fire with his own body." (Parsons 34) British askari were also present in the Italian campaign of 1943, fighting against the Italians and Germans on European soil, while their French counterparts landed in Provence to liberate France from German control.

### **Aftermath**

O. J. Shiroya, in his book *Kenya and World War II: African Soldiers* in the European War, concluded that "soldiers in World War II were impressed by what the Germans, Italians, and Japanese had done to the British power and prestige. Above all, they were proud of themselves because they had enabled the British to defeat their enemies. They began to feel that they had proved themselves by defending the British Empire. In short, the African soldier began to question the whole idea of the British, or any other European, deciding for him what kind of life he should lead. He searched for but did not find any special qualification that gave the Mzungu European the right to rule over him." (Shiroya 49) He uses the case of Waruhiu Itote, who served in Asia.

Itote remembers important conversations he had with foreigners during the war, including an Indian and African-American. The words of the Indian, which Itote remembered years later, and had a lasting impression on his life, were "You were colonized because you had no education and no weapons to match the Europeans. Now some of you have got education and some of you know how to use European weapons – is there anything else you have got to wait for?" (Shiroya 56) How many more askari were to ask themselves the same sort of question in fighting for the British during World War II?

Individual soldiers, such as those mentioned previously – Kimanzi, Odinga, Salika, Itote, Masego, and Masaki – all have unique contributions to the story of the British askari experience during World War II. Their accomplishments, as well as those of thousands of other British askari, played an important, nay vital, role in helping the Allies to defeat the Axis powers during World War II.

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# SPORTSMEN OF AFRICA

by Donna M. Reid



*John Ngugi crossed the finish line to win the 5,000 meter gold medal at the 1988 Seoul Olympics. Hakeem Olajuwon is the “only player in National Basketball Association (NBA) history to rank among the top ten in scoring, rebounding, blocked shots and steals for three seasons.” (Brockman) In 2006, Roger Federer, one of the top tennis players in the world whose mother is South African and who maintains South African citizenship, raised the Wimbledon trophy, his fourth consecutive win at one of the game’s premier events. These are only a few of the sportsmen of African descent who have impacted the world sports scene.*

## BASKETBALL

Although “little evidence of competitive ball play can be found in traditional Africa”, Africans have excelled in a variety of sport using some type of ball. (Levinson & Christenson) One of these sports is basketball. Hakeem Olajuwon is considered one of the most outstanding African basketball players. Originally from Nigeria, Hakeem played for the University of Houston and was later recruited by the Houston Rockets in 1984. In 1994, he was chosen the NBA’s most valuable player with the New York Times calling him “the dominant player of his era.”

Manute Bol was born in the Sudan, the son of a Dinka ethnic chief. At 7 feet 7 inches, he is one of the tallest players in basketball history. With his imposing presence and long limbs he was a formidable defender. His career statistics include 1559 points, over 2,600 rebounds, and 2,086 blocks. He played for ten years with the NBA. Luol Dong, also of Sudan, was a prodigy of Bol.

He is now 24 years of age and plays for the Phoenix Suns. Joaquin Noah, son of the great tennis player Yannick Noah (who is of French and Cameroonian descent) was the ninth overall pick in the NBA draft in 2007. He now plays for the Chicago Bulls. Noah played for the University of Florida basketball team and was a member of the national championship winning teams in 2006 and 2007. In 2006, he was named the Most Outstanding Player of the NCAA Tournament’s Minneapolis Regional and the Most Outstanding Player of the Final Four.

## BOXING

Samuel Peter, of Nigerian descent, was the fourth boxer from Africa to win the light heavyweight title. He is considered one of the strongest punchers in the division. He defeated Yanqui Diaz in 2005 to win the USBA heavyweight title. He later defeated Oleg Maskeo to again win the title. Other notable boxers include David Kotey of

Ghana who became the first Ghanaian world boxing champion (featherweight division) in 1975, when he defeated Ruben Olivares.

## CRICKET

Along with India and the West Indies, South Africa has an extremely strong post-colonial history of Cricket. Basil “Dolly” D’Oliveira is regarded as one of the premier cricket players of all time. Born bi-racial in South Africa he was unable to play in South Africa under the apartheid regime. He emigrated to Great Britain in 1966 where he joined the English National team as an all-rounder.

## RUNNING

Africa has a long tradition of long-distance running in the world of sports, dominating the field in the 1970’s and 1980’s. Kipchoge Keino of Kenya won gold medals at the 1968 Tokyo Olympics and again in 1972. He also held records in the 3000 meter and



5000 meter races. John Ngugi of Kenya won the world cross-country championships in 1986 and again for three consecutive years.

Kenenisa Bekele from the Arsi highlands near Addis Ababa in Ethiopia took gold in the 10,000 meter race during the 2004 Olympic games in Athens, Greece. He also distinguished himself by winning the silver in the 5,000 meter. That same year he took the World Championships in both the indoor and outdoor 5000 meter and 10,000 meter events. "Before 1964, black Africans had won only 20 Olympic gold medals, but since that year, the first in which independent nations from Africa competed, there have been 70 gold medals, 23 of which have been awarded to Kenyans in track and field." (Levinson & Christenson)

## SOCCER

Eusebio da Silva Ferreira, a native of Mozambique, was the first African soccer player to achieve international status. He was known as "The Black Panther" by his fans. Eusebio was an impressive striker for the Portugal national team. His record of 44 goals remained a national record for Portugal until 2005. He was elected to FIFA's Football Hall of Fame in 1998 and was the first person to receive the Golden Boot Award in 1968. The great soccer legend Pele of Brazil, described Eusebio as "one of the top greatest living soccer players."

George Weah played soccer in Liberia and Cameroon before beginning his international career with Monaco. He is regarded as being at his best between 1995 and 2000 while playing with A C Milan. He played for a short time for Chelsea and Manchester City in England. For three years he was named African Player of the Year and in 1998, was named African Player of the Century.

## TENNIS

Africa has produced two significant tennis players in the last 30 years. They are Roger Federer and Yannick Noah. Both Federer and Noah are biracial. Yannick Noah was discovered in Cameroon at a young age by the Tennis Hall of Famer Arthur Ashe. Ashe saw potential in Yannick and recommended that the French Federation provide him with opportunities for development.

Yannick Noah went on to win men's singles title at the French Open in 1983 and was ranked number one in the world in the men's doubles category in 1986. He was inducted into the Tennis Hall of Fame in 2005.

Federer is arguably the greatest tennis player of all time, having won 14 Grand Slam events. He has won at Wimbledon and the U.S. Open for 5 consecutive years each. He hoisted the champion's trophy three times in Australia and won the French Open in 2009 to complete the career Grand Slam. He ties with Pete Sampras of the USA for winning the most Grand Slams. He is an active player and competed at Wimbledon in July 2010 for a record 15th Grand Slam title. Federer is known for his court sense, the versatility of his strokes, his graceful athletic movements on court and for his ability to produce a service ace at critical points in a match.

## WRESTLING

Julius Donald Ngbarato, a notable West African wrestler, won Nigeria's national wrestling championship in 1990. Kofi Sarkodie-Mensa, better known as Kofi Kingston, was born in Ghana in 1981. He is currently signed to World Wrestling Entertainment and is the current WWE Unites States Champion. Some of his unique moves are the dropkick, the fake suicide dive, the high-angle back elbow strike and the jumping corkscrew roundhouse kick.

## SPORTSMEN AND PHILANTHROPY IN AFRICA

In addition to their excellence and commitment to various sports, African athletes have distinguished themselves through their philanthropic endeavors. George Weah worked with the Liberian National team and founded a junior team to develop potential professionals in soccer. Kipchoge Keino and his wife cared for homeless and abandoned children after his retirement in 1980. The Roger Federer Foundation was established in South Africa to provide financial support to the impoverished. Manuel Bol displays strong and consistent philanthropic interest in his home in Africa and frequently visits refugee camps in the Sudan. He has also been active in working to find a solution for

the genocide in Darfur. He started the Ring True Foundation to provide financial support to refugees in the Sudan. He is also the brand ambassador for Ethiopian Airlines. Roger Federer and Edward Weir were both named goodwill ambassadors at large by the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

## CONCLUSION

This article is by no means exhaustive. There are many other notable athletes of African descent that have not been mentioned due to time and space constraints. On the following page are teaching activities related to sports in Africa.

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## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES FOR LESSON PLANS



1. Compare and contrast the biography of one of the sportsmen named in the article with a sportsman of your choice. You may wish to consider Yao Ming or Michael Jordan, both of basketball fame, Tim Tebow the American football player, or Andy Roddick the number one ranked tennis player in the US. In the comparison you may wish to consider the athlete's ethnic heritage, their history in the sport, their greatest achievements and their impact on the sport both nationally and internationally. Prepare a presentation for the class.
2. Consider the making of an international athlete. Look at what is involved in becoming a professional athlete. Choose one athlete and follow his growth and development from the beginning of training for the sport to the present. You could follow him/her as he trains and plays for a memorable year in his career. See if it possible to obtain a primary source by actually writing to the athlete and explaining to him what you are trying to achieve. Prepare a paper on your findings and make a presentation to the class.
3. Write your own autobiography. Compare it to the autobiography of another student in your class or a personality of your choice. Prepare a report for presentation to the class.
4. Choose one of the sports discussed in the article. Research the rules and guidelines. Prepare a report, including illustrations of the court and other related items, and present it to the class. Use the report as a tool to convince your classmates to try to learn the sport if they are not already familiar with it.
5. Identify an interesting African sportsman not mentioned in this article and prepare a biography. Present to the class.

## TEACHING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

1. After reading and discussing this article, work with the Social Studies teacher to place the athletes in their countries of origin. Students could have their own maps as well as keeping a large map with the faces of the athletes in their African countries of origin.
2. Consider the making of an international athlete. Look at what is involved in becoming a professional athlete. Choose one athlete and follow his growth and development from the beginning of training for the sport to the present. You could follow him/her as he trains and plays for a memorable year in his career. See if it possible to obtain a primary source by actually writing to the athlete and explaining to him what you are trying to achieve. Prepare a paper on your findings and make a presentation to the class.
3. Look at some of the terms used in this article like apartheid, Sudan, and Wimbledon and suggest to the Language Arts teacher that students be assigned to research and write about the topics related to these terms.
4. Work with the Physical Education teacher to relate activities in PE class to sports played by Africans.



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