

Module: Sub-Saharan Africa
Topic Content: Cultural Influences of West and Central Africa

Cultural Influences of West and Central Africa



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Benin Ivory Mask



Photos



Traditional African masks are one of the elements of African art that have greatly influenced European and Western art. The Benin Ivory Mask is an example of a traditional African mask carved from ivory.

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Nok Sculptures



One of the earliest examples of West African art is known as Nok sculptures. These terracotta figures are large humans or animals with elongated heads and exaggerated features. The figures wore jewelry like bracelets, beads, and anklets.

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Griots



Oral tradition is very important in African culture. It ensures cultural practices get passed down from one generation to another. Griots are traditional oral storytellers. They have influenced music for centuries by passing down West African history.

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Traditional Ceremonies



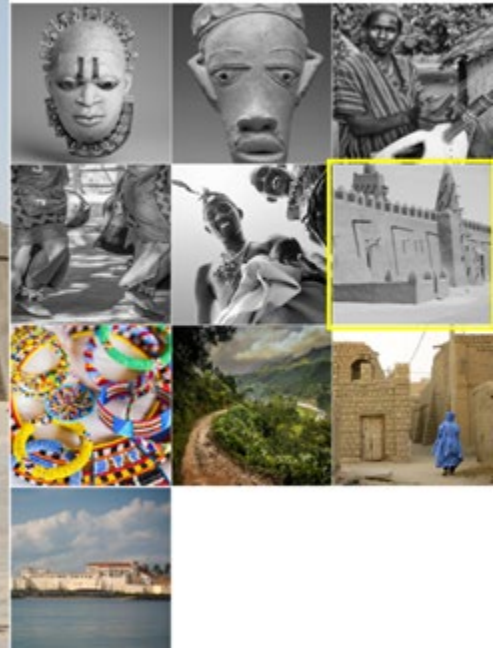
Music, drumming, and dance are all part of traditional African ceremonies. Ceremonies accompany many life events. They include songs, the beating of drums, and different styles of dance.

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Great Mosque of Djenne



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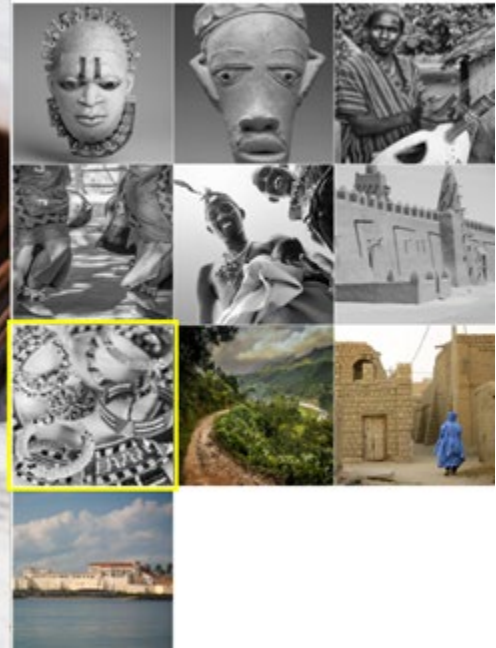
Portions of West Africa where people traditionally practiced Islam still have many mosques and minarets. This includes the Great Mosque of Djenne in Mali.

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Jewelry



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The jewelry in West Africa is known all over the world for its quality and beauty. There are many types of African jewelry such as pendants, bracelets, earrings, and necklaces. Tribal African jewelry and beaded jewelry are also prevalent.

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Congo Rainforest



Photos



Most remaining African rainforests are in the Congo River basin. The Congo rainforest has animals, including chimpanzees, elephants, gorillas, and leopards. Due to hunting, the wildlife is endangered. Rainforests in Central Africa produce valuable woods for exporting. This includes ebony, mahogany, and walnut. Threats to the Congo rainforest include logging, and small-scale and commercial agriculture.

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Timbuktu



Timbuktu is a city located in Mali. It is on the cusp of the Sahara, near the Niger River. Timbuktu's location made it a crossroads for trade, especially of gold and salt. Timbuktu was an important center for Islamic culture. Three mosques still exist today, but they are under threat due to desertification.

