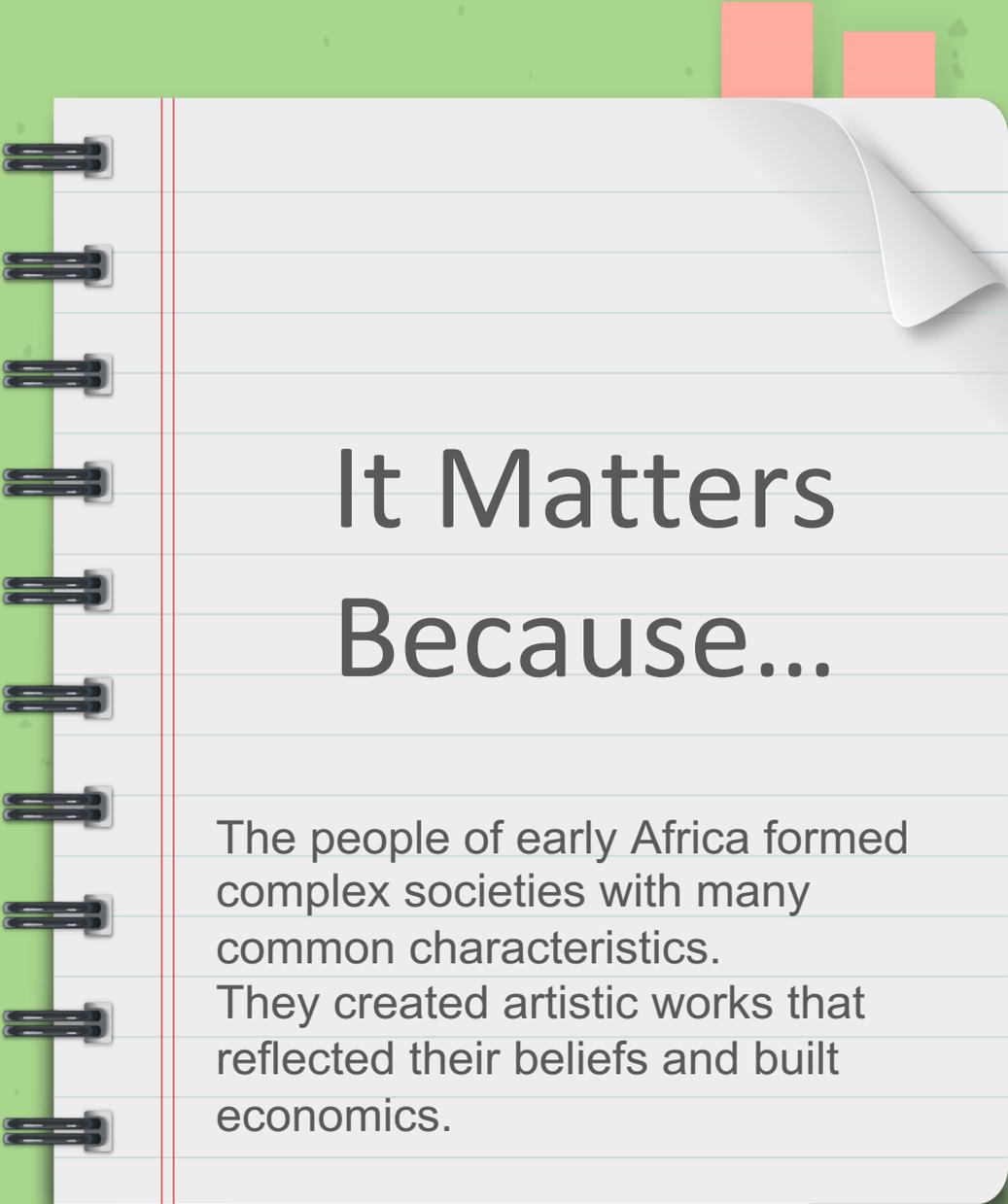


# Lesson 15.3

## African Society and Culture

Discover Our  
Past

World History



# It Matters Because...

The people of early Africa formed complex societies with many common characteristics.

They created artistic works that reflected their beliefs and built economics.

## African Society

- In early Africa, most people lived in rural villages.
- Their homes consisted of small, round dwellings made of packed mud.
- Villagers generally were farmers.
- Africa's urban areas often began as villages with protective walls.
- These villages grew into larger communities.
- African towns and cities were centers of government and trade.

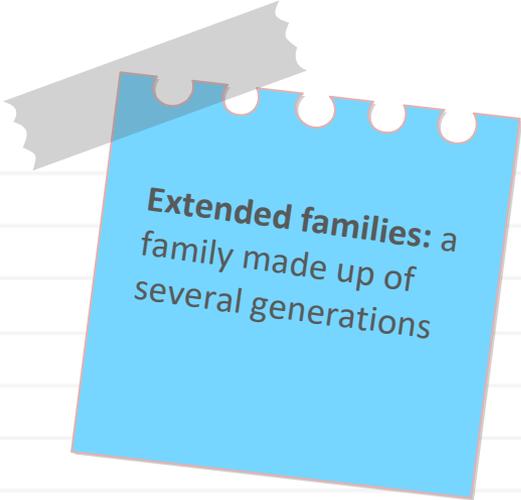


- Traders and artisans thrived in these communities.
- Artisans were skilled in metalworking, woodworking, pottery making, and other crafts.

## African Society

### Family Ties

- The family formed the basis of African society.
- People often lived in extended families, or families made up of several generations.
- **Extended families** included parents, children, grandparents, and other relatives.
- These families ranged in size from a few individuals to hundreds of members.
- Extended families were part of a larger social group known as a *lineage groups*.



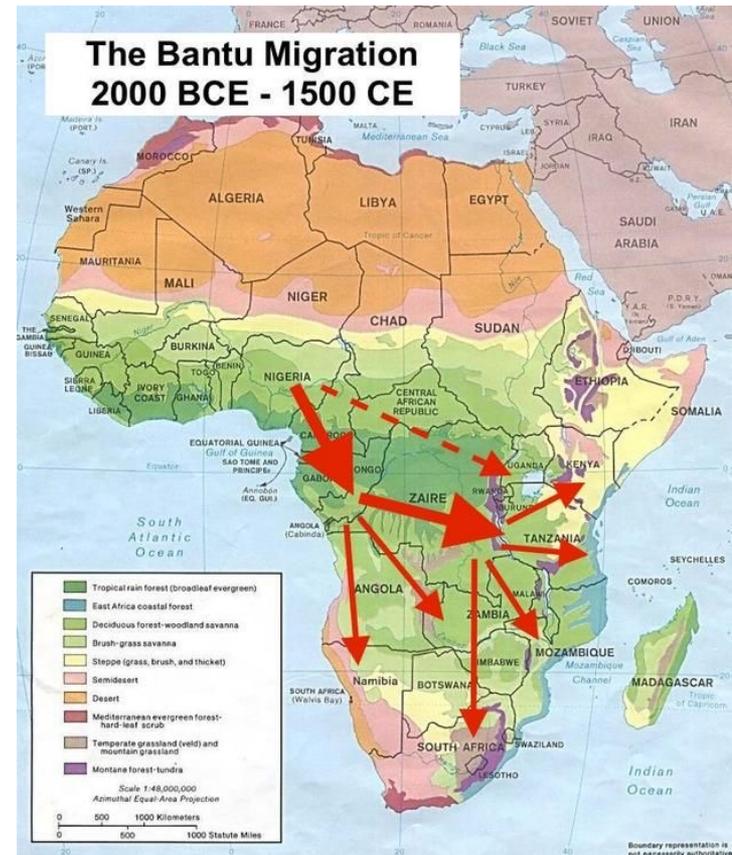
**Extended families:** a family made up of several generations

- Members of a lineage group could trace their family histories to a common ancestor.
- As in many other ancient societies, older members had more power than younger people.
- Members of a lineage group were expected to support and care for each other.

# African Society

## Bantu Migrations

- Many of Africa's social practices are a result of migrations that began in West Africa about 3000 B.C. and lasted hundreds of years.
- The migrants, known as the Bantu (BAN-too), shared similar languages, cultures, and technologies.
- The Bantu migrated from West Africa to the south and east.
- They spread their farming and iron-working skills, along with their languages.



# African Society

## Bantu Migrations

- Bantu villages were also **matrilineal**.
- They traced their descent, or ancestry, through mothers, not fathers.
- When a woman married, however, she joined her husband's family.
- To make up for the loss, her family received presents from the husband's family.
- These gifts might include cattle, goats, cloth, or metal tools.



**matrilineal:** tracing family descent through mothers rather than fathers

# African Society

## How African Children Learned

- In African villages, education was the duty of both the family and other villagers.
- Children learned the history of their people and the basic skills they would need as adults.
- In West Africa, griots helped to teach the children.
- They vividly told their village's oral history.
- These stories were told and retold, and people passed them down for generation to generation.



In Mali, as in other countries of western Africa, griots have long played an important role as storytellers, historians, and musicians.

- Many stories included a lesson about life.
- Lessons also were given through short proverbs.
- One Bantu proverb stated, “Patience is the mother of a beautiful child.”

# African Society

## African Women

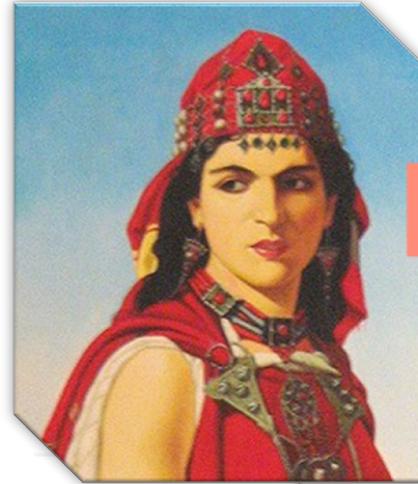
- As in most other early societies, women in Africa acted mostly as wives and mothers.
- Men had more rights and supervised much of what women did.
- Visitors to Africa, however, noticed some exceptions.
- European explorers were amazed to learn that women served as soldiers in some African armies.



# African Society

## African Women

- African women also served as rulers.
- In the A.D. 600s, Queen Dahia al-Kahina (dah-HEE-uh ahl-kah-HEE-nah) led an army against Arab invaders, who attacked her kingdom.
- Another women ruler was Queen Nzinga (ehn-ZIHN-gah), who governed lands in southwestern Africa.
- She spent almost 30 years fighting Portuguese invaders and resisting the slave trade.



Queen Dahia al-Kahina



Queen Nzinga

## The Slave Trade

- In 1441, a ship from the European nation of Portugal sailed down Africa's western coast.
- The ship captain's plan was to bring African captives back to Europe.
- During the voyage, the captain and crew seized 12 Africans – men, women, and boys.
- With its human cargo on board, the ship then sailed back to Portugal.
- These captives were the first Africans to be part of a slave trade that would involve millions of people.



The Portuguese slave ship *Diligente*, which was engaged in the illegal slave trade, was captured by a British ship in 1838. It had 600 enslaved Africans on board. A sailor on the British ship painted this scene.

# The Slave Trade

## How Was African Slavery Practiced?

- Slavery was a common practice throughout the world.
- It had been practiced in Africa since ancient times.
- Bantu warriors raided nearby villages for captives to use as laborers, servants, or soldiers.
- Some were set free for a payment.
- Africans also enslaved their enemies and traded them for goods.



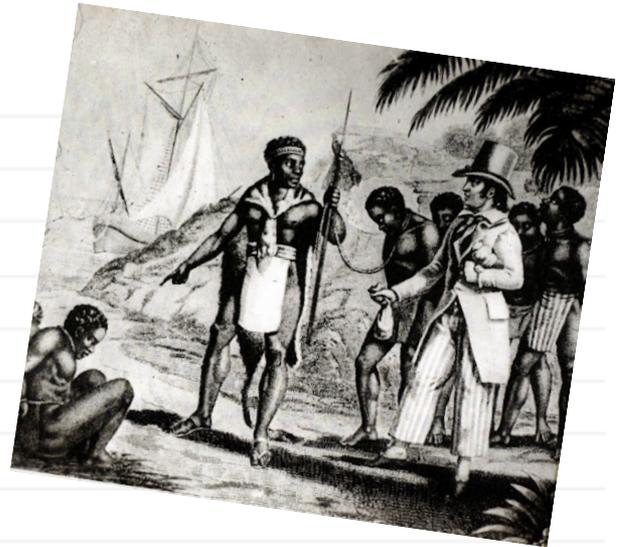
Enslaved people cut sugarcane on the Caribbean island of Antigua in 1823.

- The lives of enslaved Africans was hard, but they might win their freedom through work or by marrying a free person.

# The Slave Trade

## How Was African Slavery Practiced?

- The trade in humans grew as Africa's contact with the Muslim world increased.
- The Quran banned the enslavement of Muslims.
- Muslims, however, could enslave non-Muslims.
- Arab merchants, therefore, began to trade cotton and other goods for enslaved non-Muslim Africans.

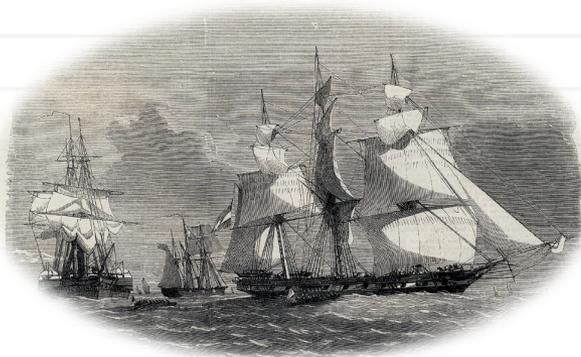


- When Europeans arrived in West Africa, a new market for enslaved Africans opened.
- Africans armed with European guns began raiding villages to seize captives to sell.

# The Slave Trade

## European Slave Trade

- In 1444, a Portuguese's ship brought 235 enslaved Africans to a dock in Portugal.
- An official of the royal court saw the Africans begin taken off the vessel.
- He was moved to ask:



*“What heart could be so hard as not to be pierced with ... feeling...? For some kept their heads low, and their faces bathed in tears ... Others stood groaning ... crying out loudly, as if asking for help... others stuck their faces...But to increase their sufferings still more, ...was it then needful to part fathers from sons, husbands from wives, brothers from brothers?”*

# The Slave Trade

## European Slave Trade

- Portuguese merchants now sold humans.
- At first, most enslaved Africans worked as laborers in Portugal.
- Later, they were sent to the Atlantic islands of Madeira, the Azores, and Cape Verde.
- The Portuguese had settled these islands.
- The mild climate was ideal for growing **sugarcane** on plantations, or huge farms.
- Harvesting sugarcane was hard work.

**sugarcane:** grassy plant that is a natural source of sugar



- Plantation owners could not pay high wages.
- Instead, they used enslaved Africans.
- Enslaved people received no wages.

# The Slave Trade

## European Slave Trade

- By 1500, Portugal had become the world's major supplier of sugar.
- In the late 1400s, Europeans arrived in the Americas.
- They brought enslaved Africans across the Atlantic Ocean to grow sugar, tobacco, rice, and cotton.



Sugarcane grows on the island of Maui.

## Culture in Africa

- Africans excelled in many art forms, including painting, weaving, woodcarving, poetry, dancing, and metalworking.
- These arts served a religious purpose.
- They also taught people the history of their communities.



# Culture in Africa

## Art in Africa



Maiden spirit mask symbolizing beauty and peacefulness, painted wood, southern Igbo Ekpe society, Nigeria; in the Nigerian Museum, Lagos. Height 21.3 cm.

- The earliest art forms in Africa were rock paintings.
- These paintings show the life of people in the area as they hunted animals, danced, and carried out everyday tasks.
- African woodcarvers made masks and statues for religious ceremonies and teaching purposes.
- People believed the masks held spiritual powers.
- Clay and metal figures served similar purposes.
- Metalworkers in West African region of Benin made beautiful bronze and iron statues of people and animals.

## Culture in Africa

### Early African Music and Dance

- Music and dance were connected to everyday African life.
- People used these arts to express their religious feelings.
- They also used the arts to help ease an everyday task, such as planting a field.
- Music and dance also had a vital role in community activities.
- African music included group singing.
- In many African songs, a singer calls out a line, then other singers repeat it.



Dogon dancers of Mali wear *kanaga* masks. These masks are traditionally associated with funerary rites to honor deceased relatives and to guide their spirits to the realm of the ancestors.

- Musical instruments, such as drums, whistles, horns, flutes, or banjos, were used to keep the beat in early African music.

## Culture in Africa

### Early African Music and Dance

- Enslaved Africans relied on music to remind them of their homeland.
- In America, songs of hardship eventually developed into a type of music called the blues.
- Songs of religious faith and hopes for freedom became spirituals, or gospel songs.
- Over time, other forms of African-based music developed, such as ragtime, jazz, rock and roll, and more recently, rap.
- For many Africans, dance was a way to communicate with the spirits and express the life of a community.



Women of the Jukun people of Nigeria perform a ritual dance in order to exorcise evil spirits.

- Lines of dancers swayed and clapped their hands.
- In the background, drummers sounded out the rhythm.
- Many African peoples had dance rituals that marked stages of life, such as when young boys or girls became adults.

# Culture in Africa

## African Storytelling

- In addition to music and dance, Africans also kept alive their storytelling tradition.
- A few enslaved Africans escaped and shared their stories.
- Those who heard these stories retold them.
- They also retold popular stories that focused on the deeds of famous heroes.



In Mali, as in other countries of western Africa, griots have long played an important role as storytellers, historians, and musicians.

# Review This Lesson

## Vocabulary / People

- extended family
- matrilineal
- oral history
- sugarcane
- spiritual
- lineage group
- Queen Dahia al-Kahina
- Queen Nzinga

## Key Ideas

- examples of ways some women broke out of traditional roles in African society
- what families like in early Africa
- how slave trade affect Africans
- how contact with other parts of the world affect the slave trade in Africa
- why art was important to Africa
- different forms of African art
- roles music and dance plays in African life