



## Encyclopedia of African History and Culture (Facts on File Library of World History - 3 Vol. Set)

By Willie F. Page

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Authoritative and Illuminating; This comprehensive set covers the entire expanse of African history as never before. It treats Africa - its geography, art, cultures, peoples, personalities, and even its wildlife - in three volumes, each devoted to a major period in the continent's development. Each volume's in-depth, heavily cross-referenced, and alphabetical entries draw students, researchers, and general readers into the histories of ancient cities, powerful kingdoms, and charismatic leaders, many of whom are little known. Filled with fascinating sidebars, unusual illustrations, and above all wonderful stories, these accessible, attractive, and very readable encyclopedias are authoritative information sources as well as enteratining and illuminating guides to the world's most diverse continent.

**Ancient Africa;** This volume covers the earliest stages of Africa's history, from civilization's beginnings through the Metallic Age, the kingdoms of Egypt and Nubia, Africa's interaction with ancient Greece and Rome, and the rise of Kush and Aksum. **African Kingdoms;** The focus of tis volume is on the period from approximately 500 through 1500, encompassing the powerful kingdoms of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai along with the wealthy city-states of the west and south. **African Conquest and Colonization;** Covering the period from approximately 1500 to 1850, this volume examines the Grain, Gold, and Slave Coasts; the rise of the slave trade; the partitioning of West Africa; and the traditional governments, religions, and arts of the regions.

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**Encyclopedia of African History and Culture (Facts on File Library of World History - 3 Vol. Set) By Willie F. Page Bibliography**

- Sales Rank: #4694736 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Facts on File
- Published on: 2001-11-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 3
- Dimensions: 3.10" h x 8.68" w x 11.18" l,
- Binding: Hardcover
- 885 pages

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## **Editorial Review**

From School Library Journal

Grade 9 Up-This well-researched resource will enhance and support the study of this vast continent. Three chronological volumes cover up to the 19th century. Books are arranged alphabetically with entries ranging from one paragraph to two pages in length. They discuss locations, countries, individuals, peoples, concepts, events, plants, and animals, and include many cultural references. Articles for certain topics can be found in each volume. For example, there are separate entries of varying length in all three volumes for "Guinea" and "Hutu." Sidebars add important detail and much information on legends, myth, and folklore. There are cross-references to entries within the same book and see-also references to other volumes, and some of the articles conclude with a list for further reading. Each book begins with a list of entries for the set and some of the same maps. However, they have different introductions and time lines that reflect the periods they cover. Good-quality, black-and-white photographs, reproductions, and maps are scattered throughout. While some might initially find the arrangement of this wide-ranging, useful set a bit confusing, it will serve both teachers and students as they begin their investigations of African history.

*Janet Woodward, Garfield High School, Seattle, WA*

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From Library Journal

This three-volume encyclopedia is arranged chronologically, dividing the history of this vast and fascinating continent into three major periods. Volume 1, "Ancient Africa," covers prehistoric times to 500 C.E., with entries on human origins; the Sahara desert; the history and culture of the Egyptian, Nubian, Bantu, and San peoples; archaeology; and religion. Legends and myths about certain events are also included here. Volume 2, "African Kingdoms," examines medieval times, from 500 to 1500 C.E. a period marked by grandeur and includes the great Bantu Migration, the development of centralized states and kingdoms, the spread of Islam, and the development of trade routes with the outside world. Volume 3, "From Conquest to Colonization," covers 1500 to 1850 C.E., a turbulent time that saw the rise and decline of kingdoms and empires, civil wars, the transatlantic slave trade, and the beginnings of European exploration and colonization. Some entries are cross-referenced and also include valuable suggestions for further reading; time lines, maps, a glossary, a cumulative index, and many appendixes enhance this work. In addition, many common spelling variants are given within the text, all of which are listed and cross-referenced in the index. Finally, each volume includes both a list of images and a cumulative list of entries arranged alphabetically. While the entries are unsigned and much of the coverage is duplicated in other reference sources, this three-volume encyclopedia is valuable as a time-saving reference tool for its accessible prose and easy-to-use format. Recommended for public, high school, and college libraries. Edward McCormack, Univ. of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast Lib., Long Beach

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From [Booklist](#)

African history from the earliest stages to 1850 is the focus of this set intended for students and general readers. The author is emeritus professor of Africana Studies at Brooklyn College and former director of the Africana Research Center.

Overall arrangement is chronological. Volume 1, "Ancient Africa," covers prehistory to 500 C.E.; volume 2, "African Kingdoms," covers 500 to 1500; and volume 3, "From Conquest to Colonization," covers 1500 to 1850. Within each volume, arrangement is alphabetical. Entries range in length from a paragraph to several

pages and treat a wide variety of topics, including places (*Ghana empire, Mozambique, Timbuktu*), geographical features and wildlife (*Ethiopian highlands, Lualaba River, Giraffe*), people and groups of people (*Imhotep, Bantu, Craftspeople, Hunter-gatherers*), commodities (*Bananas, Cloth, Gold*), practices (*Child rearing, Farming techniques, Initiation rites*), and more. There are also broad entries such as *Art, Climate, and Towns and cities*. Some entries conclude with lists of further readings. Occasional sidebars and illustrations break up the text. Readers are aided by a glossary, a time line, and a set index that are repeated in every volume. Another useful tool is an alphabetical list of all entry headings and the volume or volumes in which they appear. We counted more than 1,350 headings, but because many headings occur in more than one volume, the total number of encyclopedia entries is considerably more.

Although the chronological approach provides a useful historical perspective, it also creates challenges for the reader. Some topics, such as *Ancestor worship, Body adornment, and Family structure*, are addressed only in volume 1 although they also have relevance for volumes 2 and 3. Coverage of other topics can be disjointed, because the reader must check in each volume for entries on *Egypt*, to take one example. Fortunately, the index and extensive cross-references do a good job of referring readers to content in all three volumes.

Although we have seen many reference sources related to African American culture and history, Africa is not as well represented. This is a problem that the editors of *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience* (Perseus, 1999) tried to address, and for smaller collections *Africana* may suffice. *Encyclopedia of Africa South of the Sahara* (Scribner, 1997) is more scholarly and covers a wide range of contemporary as well as historical topics. *Encyclopedia of African History and Culture* fills a gap in the reference collection and is recommended for high-school, public, and academic libraries that need to expand their coverage of Africa. *RBB*

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