

Summary: History and Governments

Early Eastern and Southern Africa

The oldest human fossils have been found from Ethiopia to South Africa. People slowly spread to other continents.

About 2,000 years ago, a trading empire called Aksum arose in Eastern Africa. From about 1100 to 1500 the Shona was a great trading empire in Southern Africa. Its people created stone enclosures called *zimbabwes*. The Great Zimbabwe is a huge stone ruin of a city made up of three parts. The Great Enclosure is the largest ancient structure in Africa south of the Sahara.

The Masai once lived in nearly all of Kenya and about half of what is now Tanzania. In the 1800s, many Masai died fighting each other over water and grazing rights. The British and Germans invaded Masai territory in the 1880s.

The Zulu migrated to Southern Africa about 1,800 years ago. A chief named Shaka Zulu led wars to expand Zulu territory. After his death in 1828, the Zulu began losing land to European settlers. By the late 1800s, the United Kingdom, Germany, and France had claimed most of Eastern and Southern Africa.

African Independence

World Wars I and II weakened Europe. European nations began to lose control of their African colonies. This paved the way for independence. Almost all of the new African governments were democracies. But many were overthrown and became dictatorships. Today, many African nations are returning to democracy.

From 1969 to 1991, a dictator, Siad Barre, ruled Somalia. In 1991, Barre was driven from office. Since then, 12 clans have been fighting for control in Somalia.

Through much of the 1990s Rwandan women had few rights. In 1991, a new constitution gave women more rights, but the new laws were not enforced. In 1994, civil war broke out. Many men were killed, and women began taking over as heads of households. As a result, Rwandan women have gained more rights.

Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

fossil *noun*, hardened remains of bone or plant life

trading empire *noun*, an empire that is founded on and sustained by trade

After You Read

REVIEW What do the Great Zimbabwe and the Great Enclosure tell us about life in early Africa? Draw a box around the sentences that tell about the Great Zimbabwe and the Great Enclosure. The sentences will help you answer the question.

REVIEW What events in Europe enabled African nations to gain their independence? Highlight the sentences that explain what paved the way for African nations' independence.