

# West Africa

In the last 2000 years, several great empires have been created and have fallen in West Africa, including ancient Ghana, Mali and Songhai. These empires grew rich on the trade of goods such as gold, iron and salt, and from the slave trade. Their wealth attracted the attention of both Arabs and Europeans, who came to the area to exploit its riches.

- 1 Wood writing board, typical of the sort used in Koranic schools attached to mosques. From northern Nigeria.
- 2 Sword and leather scabbard, worn by men in Senegal and The Gambia in the mid 19th century.
- 3 Wood female figure, from Sierra Leone, made before 1842. Said to be a “household goddess” with the power to protect homes from intruders.
- 4 Cartridge belt, made from the skin of a monitor lizard before 1844. The belt was made by the Akan speaking peoples of central and southern Ghana. It has compartments for cartridges, powder and flints, and is based on a European design.

## Metals

- 5 Pair of gold horns, from the Kono District, Sierra Leone. Presented to HRH Queen Elizabeth II on her visit to West Africa in 1961.

- 6 Gold model of a wooden stool, presented by the Eastern Region House of Chiefs, Ghana, to HRH Queen Elizabeth II in 1961.
- 7 Boxes, made from beaten brass sheet by the Akan speaking peoples of southern Ghana. These boxes were used until the end of the 19th century to store gold dust.
- 8 Brass weights made by the Akan and Asante people of central Ghana. They were used to weigh gold dust until the end of the 19th century.
- 9 Spoon, made of beaten brass, used for carrying gold dust from the box to the scales.
- 10 Box made of cast copper alloy. Used to store gold dust wrapped in small twists of cloth.
- 11 Scoop made of beaten brass sheet. The gold dust was placed in the scoop and swirled around, causing the impurities to blow away.
- 12 Pair of scales, used for weighing gold dust.

The two groups of brass weights marked with a black dot, the spoon, scoop, box and scales were all presented to HRH Duke of Edinburgh by the Asante Region House of Chiefs, Ghana, in 1961.

- 13 Copper bracelet, called a 'manilla', used as currency. Manillas were exported in great quantities from Europe for trade in West Africa. This one, found

in Nigeria, was made in the 19th century.

- 14 Cast copper alloy neck rings, from the Yaounde area, Cameroon, early 20th century. These personal ornaments were used as a store of wealth.
- 15 Cast copper alloy bracelets, probably from northern Nigeria, 20th century. These personal ornaments were used as a store of wealth.
- 16 Cast copper alloy bracelet, probably from the Senoufo people of northern Côte D'Ivoire (Ivory Coast) and southern Burkina Faso, 20th century.
- 17 Bar of forged iron known as a 'Kissi penny', made in the 19th century. Its name comes from the area of Sierra Leone where it was made and used as currency.

## **Weapons**

- 18 Throwing knife, probably from northern Cameroon, made in the early 20th century. Formerly used as a weapon of war, but more recently knives like this one have been made to demonstrate the skill of the blacksmith.
- 19 Axe, probably made by the Hausa people of northern Nigeria. This axe was made in the early 20th century for carving wood.
- 20 Axe, made by a blacksmith in Kawa village

near Kaduna, northern Nigeria, in the 1950s.  
Probably made for the tourist trade.

- 21 General purpose knife, made in West Africa, early 20th century.
- 22 Knife, used for cutting decoration into gourd bowls. This knife was collected in the Borgu area of northern Nigeria in the 1970s.
- 23 Knife with an iron loop handle, from the Yaounde area of Cameroon, made in the early 20th century.
- 24 Iron hoe blades, from the Yaounde area of Cameroon, early 20th century.
- 25 Iron spear-head, from West Africa, made in the early 20th century.
- 26 Iron spear, a weapon of war made by blacksmiths for the Tuareg people of the southern Sahara desert. Made in the late 19th century.
- 27 Spear, obtained before 1839 from Bioko (Fernando Po), in the Gulf of Guinea.
- 28 Iron tipped arrows, Manding type, made in the mid 19th century.

## **Costume**

- 29 Cotton robe with embroidery panels, probably from Nigeria or Cameroon, mid 19th century.

- 30 Child's embroidered cotton robe, probably from Nigeria or Cameroon, mid 19th century.
- 31 Straw apron, worn by women in the Bolgatanga area, northern Ghana, made in the early 1970s.
- 32 Rectangle of woven raffia, used as costume. Obtained in Bioko (formerly known as Fernando Po), in the Gulf of Guinea, before 1839.
- 33 Sword and scabbard, from northern Nigeria or Niger. Brought back by Captain Daniell about 1843.
- 34 Leather sandals and leggings, bag, pouch and amulet, a quiver with arrows, and a knife in a sheath. From Senegal and The Gambia, all made in the mid 19th century.
- 35 Leather purse, from northern Nigeria, probably made in the mid 19th century.
- 36 Decorated leather panel, from northern Nigeria, made in the early 20th century.
- 37 Straw hat with leather panels, from northern Nigeria, mid 20th century. This hat was worn over a turban.
- 38 Leather and feather fan, from northern Nigeria, mid 20th century. Carried by a Hausa chief.
- 39 Embroidered leather slippers, from northern Nigeria, mid 20th century. These slippers were

worn by Ahmad Sanden, Premier of Kaduna Province.