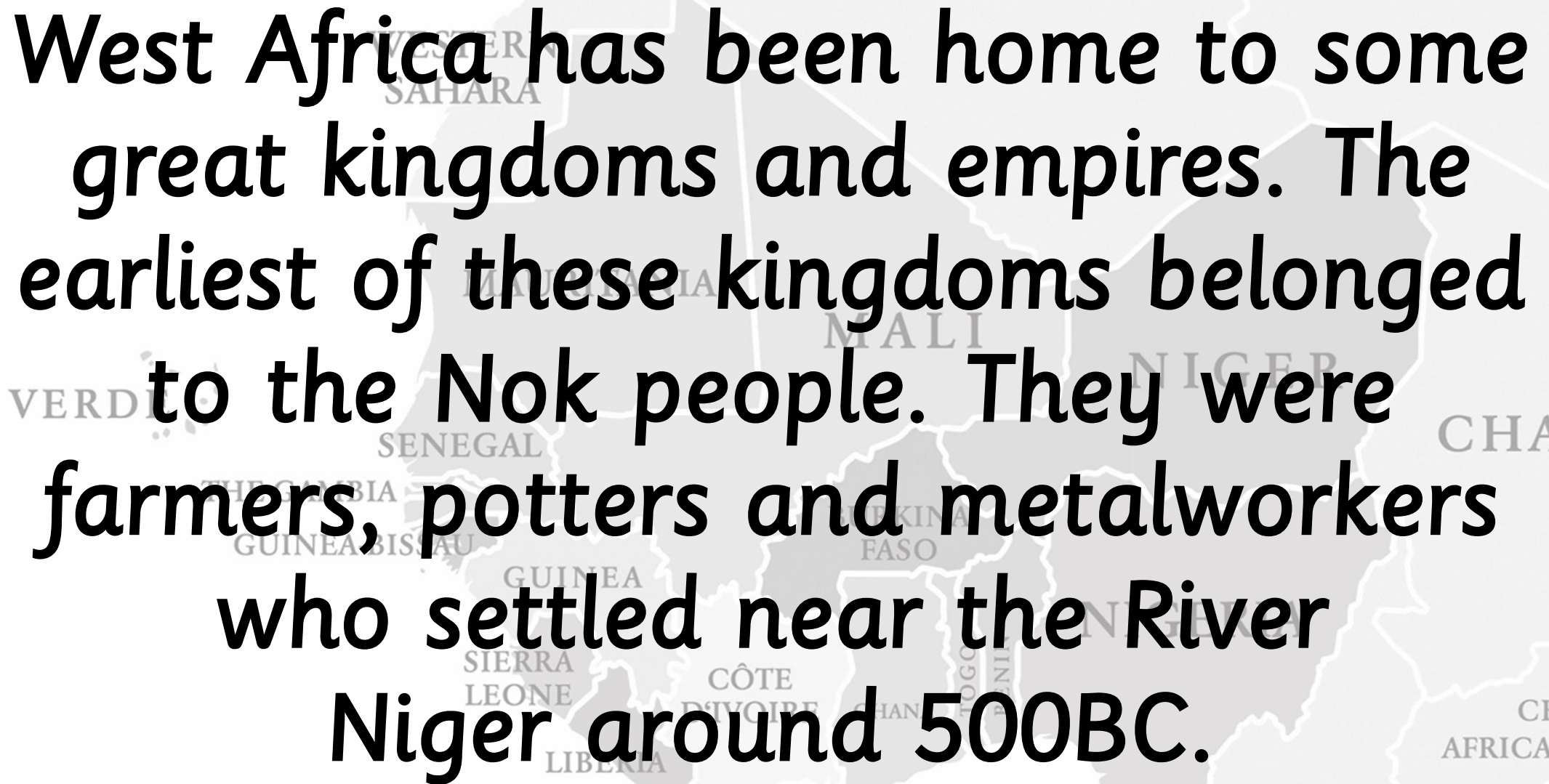
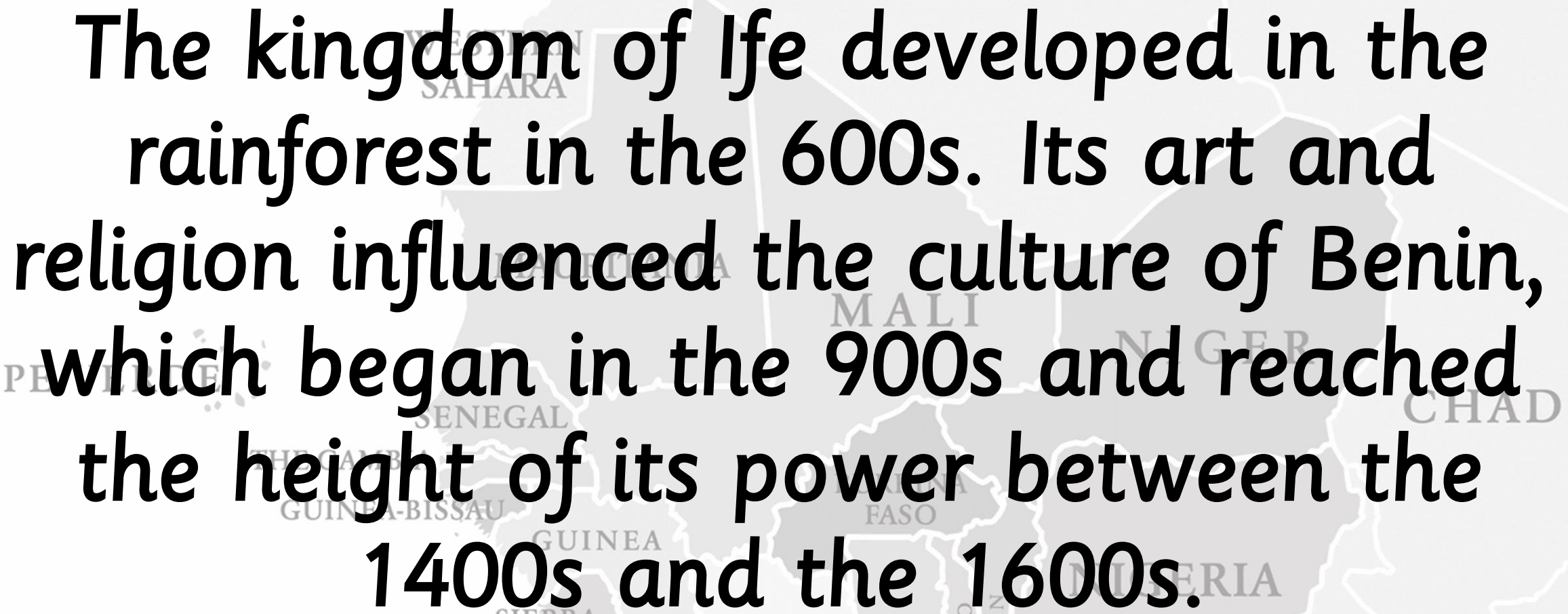


West Africa

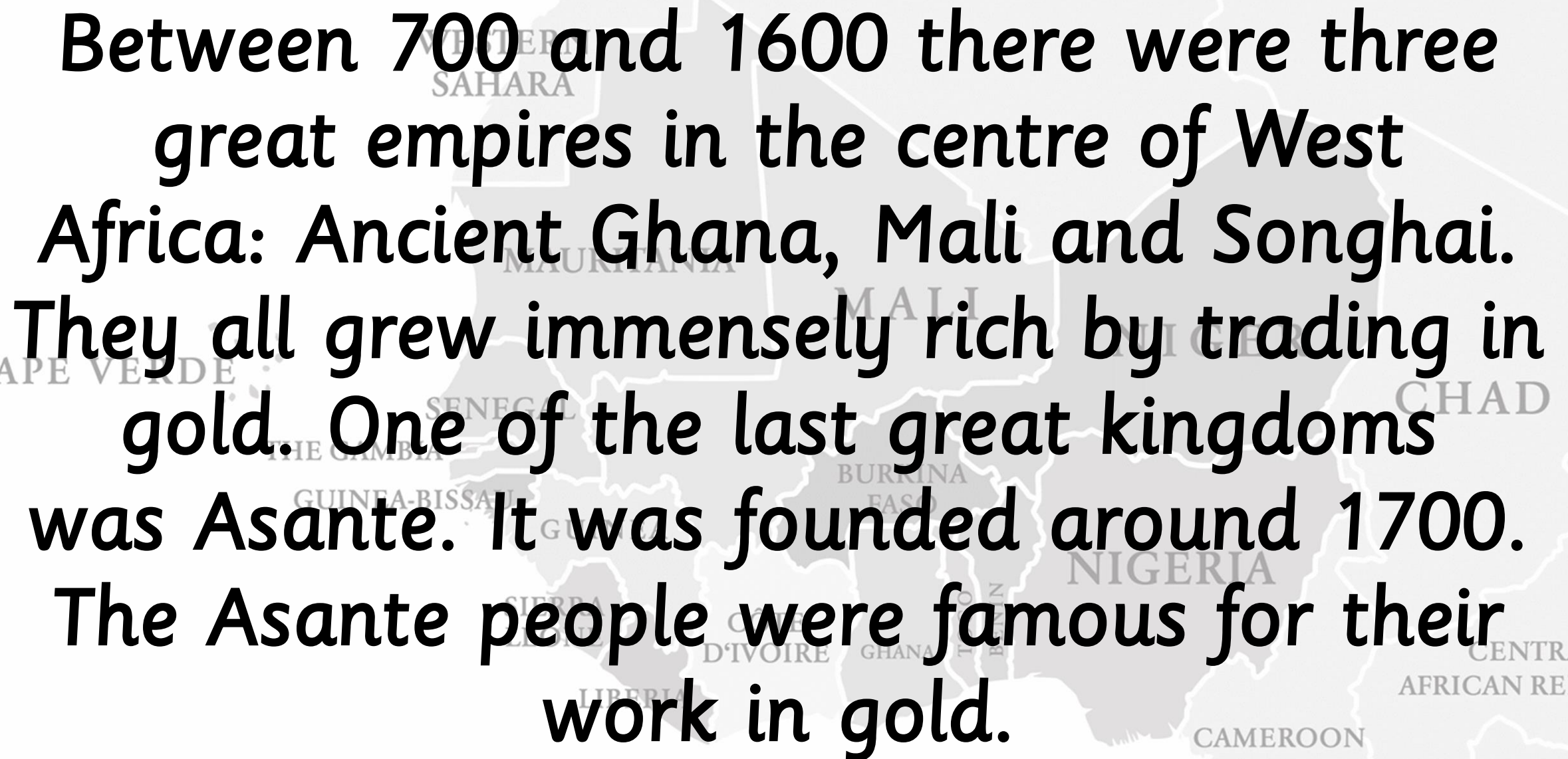




West Africa has been home to some great kingdoms and empires. The earliest of these kingdoms belonged to the Nok people. They were farmers, potters and metalworkers who settled near the River Niger around 500BC.



The kingdom of Ife developed in the rainforest in the 600s. Its art and religion influenced the culture of Benin, which began in the 900s and reached the height of its power between the 1400s and the 1600s.



Between 700 and 1600 there were three great empires in the centre of West Africa: Ancient Ghana, Mali and Songhai. They all grew immensely rich by trading in gold. One of the last great kingdoms was Asante. It was founded around 1700. The Asante people were famous for their work in gold.

Canary Islands
(1291-1492)



CAI

TANIA

NIGER

CHAD



GUI

SIERRA
LEONE

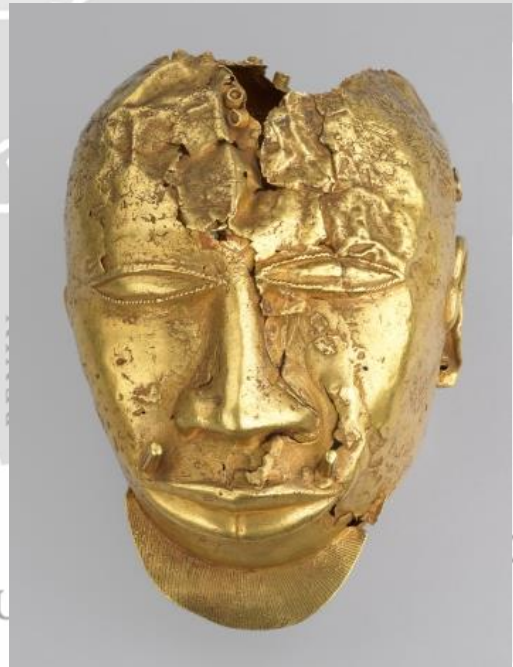
L

KINA
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EQUATORIAL GU

SAG TOME AND PRINCIPLE



ON

CENTRAL
AFRICAN REPUB

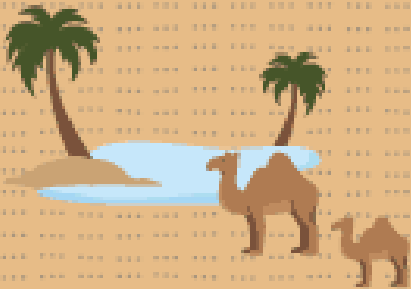


AFRICA

Ancient Ghana

Songhai

SAHARA DESERT



Mali

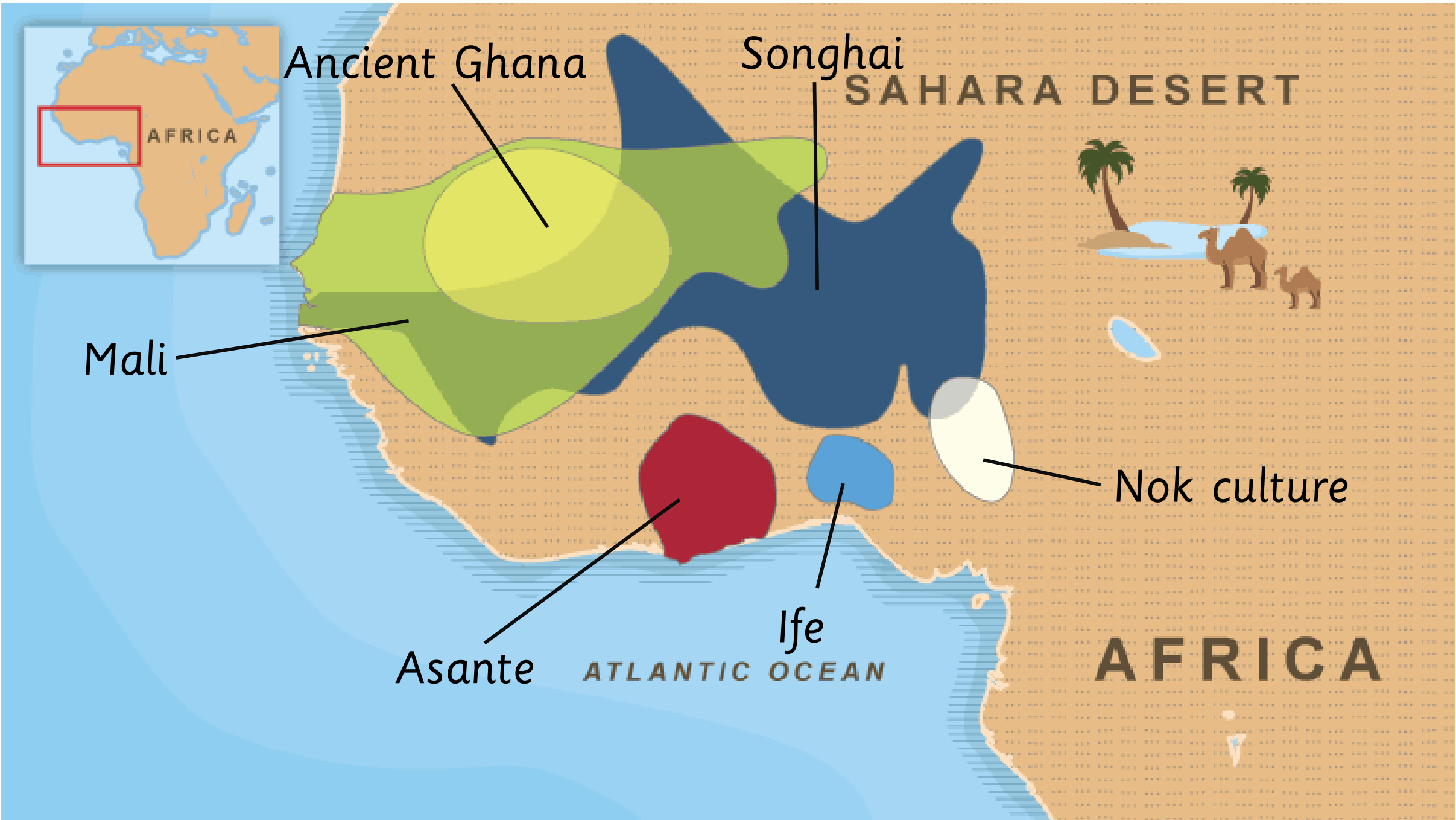
Nok culture

Asante

Ife

ATLANTIC OCEAN

AFRICA



Benin



Canary Islands
(SPAIN)

LIBYA



Benin

CAPE VERDE

THE
GU

CHAD

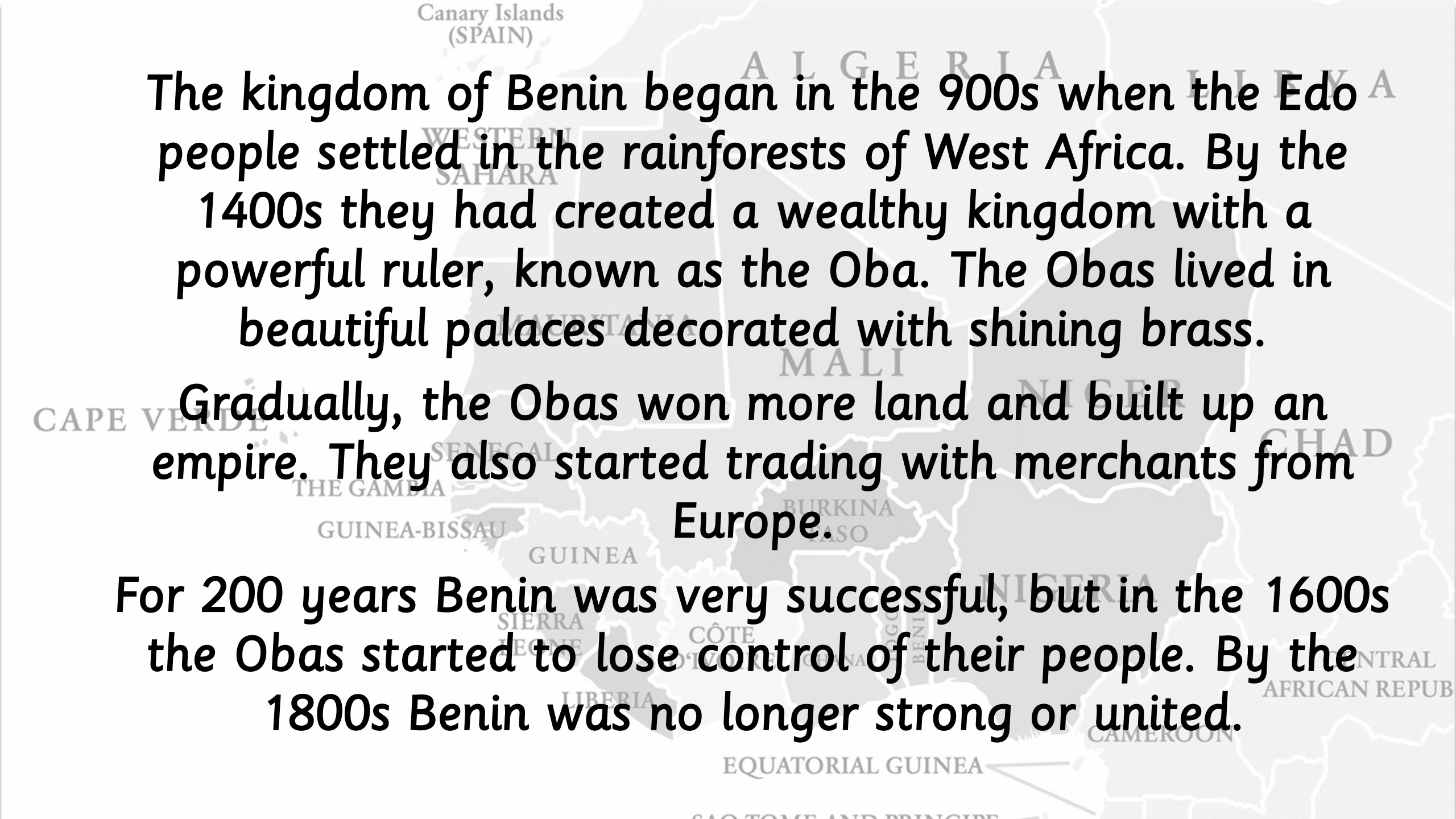
RIA

CENTRAL
AFRICAN REPUB

AMEROON

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

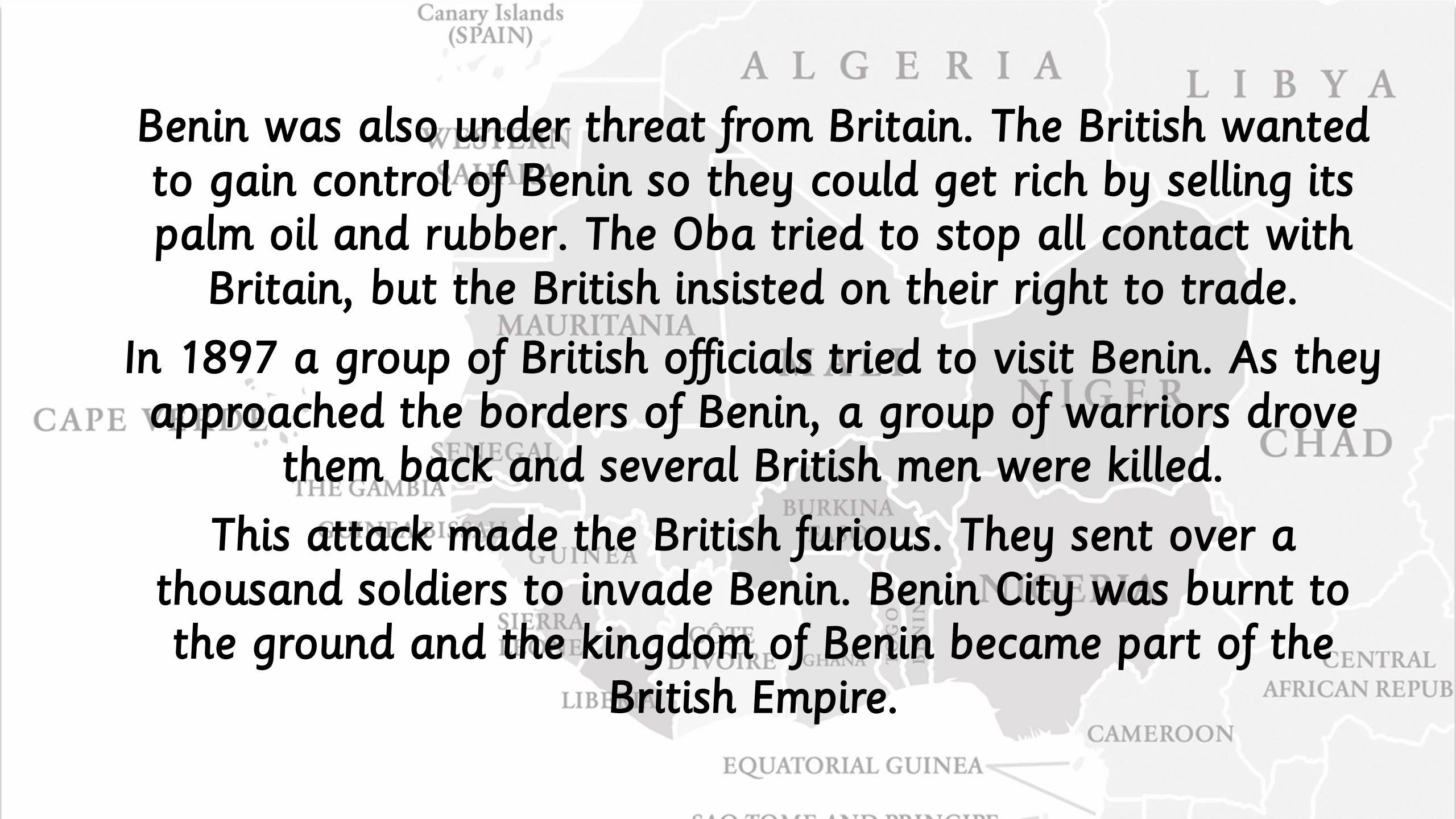
SAO TOME AND PRINCIPLE



The kingdom of Benin began in the 900s when the Edo people settled in the rainforests of West Africa. By the 1400s they had created a wealthy kingdom with a powerful ruler, known as the Oba. The Obas lived in beautiful palaces decorated with shining brass.

Gradually, the Obas won more land and built up an empire. They also started trading with merchants from Europe.


For 200 years Benin was very successful, but in the 1600s the Obas started to lose control of their people. By the 1800s Benin was no longer strong or united.



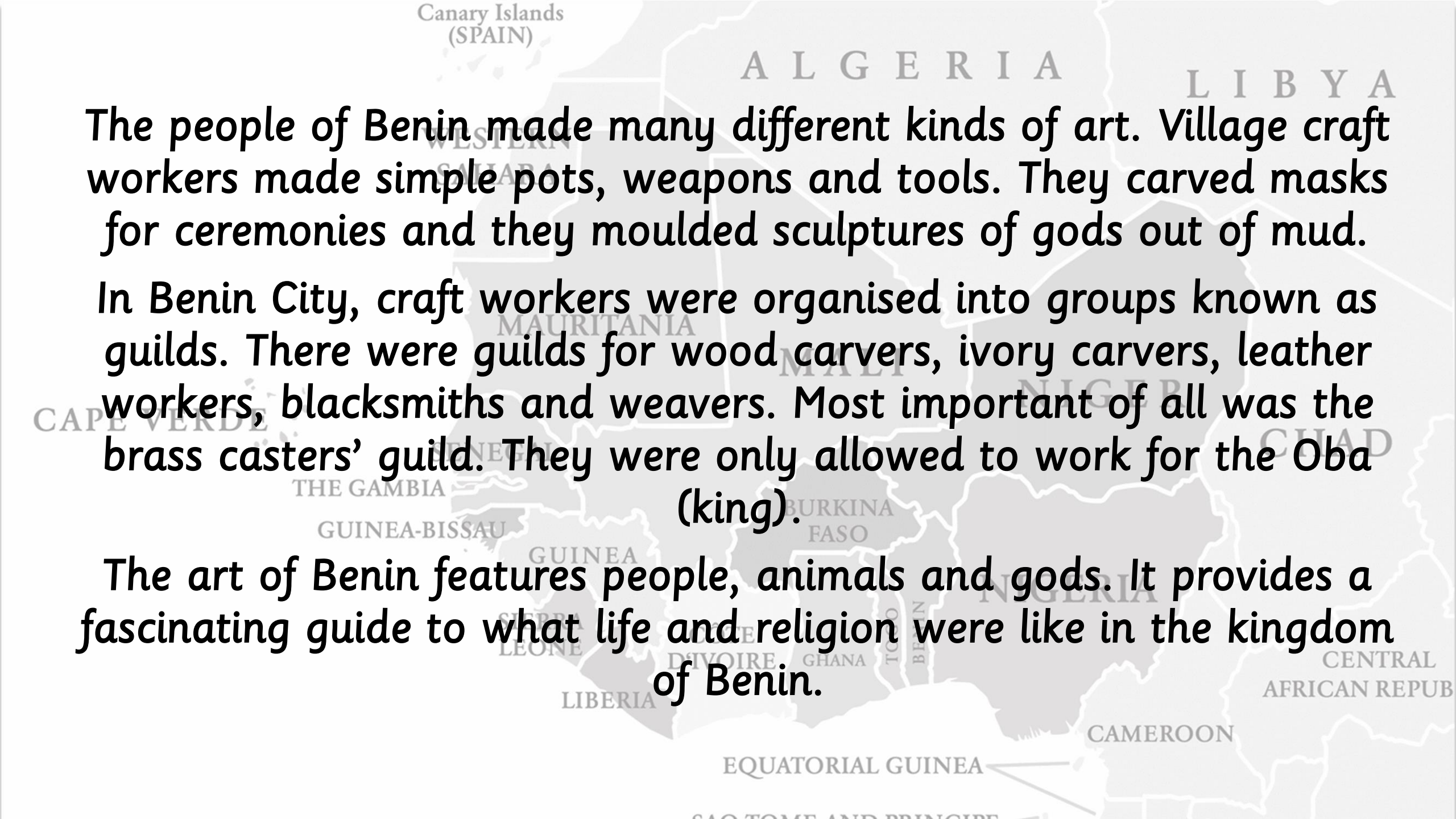
Benin was also under threat from Britain. The British wanted to gain control of Benin so they could get rich by selling its palm oil and rubber. The Oba tried to stop all contact with Britain, but the British insisted on their right to trade.

In 1897 a group of British officials tried to visit Benin. As they approached the borders of Benin, a group of warriors drove them back and several British men were killed.

This attack made the British furious. They sent over a thousand soldiers to invade Benin. Benin City was burnt to the ground and the kingdom of Benin became part of the British Empire.

A map of West Africa with the text "The Art of Benin" overlaid in a large green font. The map shows the outlines of various countries and regions, including Algeria, Libya, Mali, Niger, Chad, Nigeria, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Senegal, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Western Sahara, and Cape Verde. The Canary Islands (Spain) are also shown in the northwest. The text "The Art of" is in a large, green, serif font, and "Benin" is in a larger, green, serif font with a small diamond shape above the 'i'.

The Art of Benin



The people of Benin made many different kinds of art. Village craft workers made simple pots, weapons and tools. They carved masks for ceremonies and they moulded sculptures of gods out of mud.

In Benin City, craft workers were organised into groups known as guilds. There were guilds for wood carvers, ivory carvers, leather workers, blacksmiths and weavers. Most important of all was the brass casters' guild. They were only allowed to work for the Oba (king).

The art of Benin features people, animals and gods. It provides a fascinating guide to what life and religion were like in the kingdom of Benin.

The Benin Bronzes, some of Africa's greatest treasures, are a group of sculptures and plaques made by artists in Benin from the 16th century onwards. They are made from a variety of materials including ivory, coral and brass.

They were displayed in the palace of the Oba, or king, of Benin until 1897, when the British invaded the kingdom, sacked the palace and took the bronzes.

The Benin Bronzes were sold with many founding their way into the museums of Britain and Europe.

Racist attitudes towards African cultures meant that many Europeans refused to believe such beautiful and skilful sculpture could possibly have been produced by African artists.

Canary Islands

CAPE VERDE

THE C
GU



LIBYA

GER

CHAD

RIA

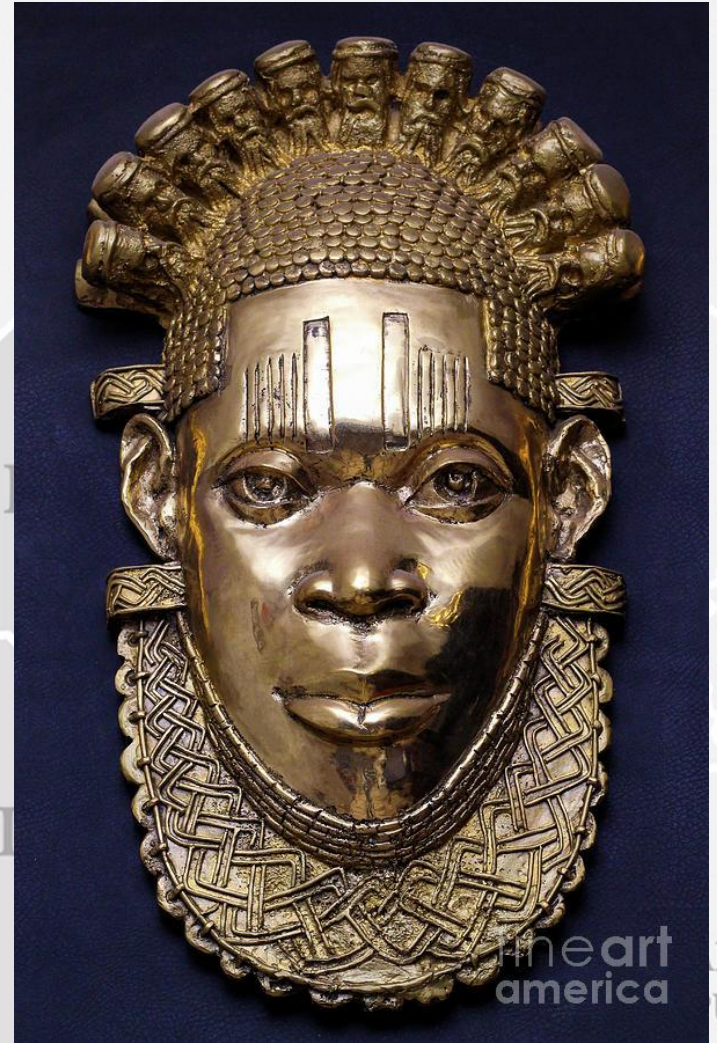
CENTRAL
AFRICAN REPUB

CAMEROON

Canary Islands
(SPAIN)

ALGERIA

LIBYA



the art
america

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CAMEROON

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

SAO TOME AND PRINCIPLE

Canary Islands
(SPAIN)

LIBYA

CAPE VERDE

THE
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CHAD

CENTRAL
AFRICAN REPUB

ON



Canary Islands
(SPAIN)



CAPE VERDE

THE GA
GUIN

LIBYA

GER

CHAD

NERIA

CENTRAL
AFRICAN REPUB

CAMEROON

Canary Islands
(SPAIN)

ALGERIA

LIBYA

WESTERN



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GHANA

LIBERIA

CENTRAL
AFRICAN REPUB

CAMEROON

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

SAO TOME AND PRINCIPLE

Canary Islands
(SPAIN)



ALGERIA

LIBYA



TANZANIA

ETHIOPIA

GHANA

CENTRAL

AFRICAN REPUBLIC

CAMEROON

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

SAO TOME AND PRINCIPLE

Canary Islands

I B Y A

CAPE VERD



CHAD

CENTRAL
AFRICAN REPUB

N

SÃO TOMÉ AND PRÍNCIPE

Canary Islands
(SPAIN)

ALGERIA

LIBYA



CAPE V

I

HAD

TOGO
BENIN

CENTRAL
AFRICAN REPUB

LIBERIA

CAMEROON

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

SAO TOME AND PRINCIPLE

A grayscale map of West Africa is shown in the background. The map includes labels for various countries and regions: Canary Islands (Spain), Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Niger, Chad, Senegal, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, and Cape Verde. A large, bold, black text overlay is centered on the map, reading: "I think these works of art from the ancient civilisation of Benin are amazing." The text is in a serif font and is slightly italicized.

I think these works of art from the ancient civilisation of Benin are amazing.

What do you think?