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Africa's Memory of the World

A COLOURING BOOK FOR CHILDREN




News



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Editorial team: Misako Ito, Sylvia Adongo, Clara Weber, Judith Ogana

Reviewers: Jose Silva Evora, Massode Mathias, Dr. Vincent Sedego, Dr. Abdel Kader Haidara, Drissa Traoré, Obi Annabel Okigbo, Angulo Nancy, Aderaw Genetu Tassew, Hasiniaina Rajaonarivelo, H. Ramkalawan, Albertina N. Nekongo, Rosalia Nuuyoma, Mandy Gilder, Michal Singer, Johan van Langen and Khanyi Ngcobo

Illustrations and design: Vaninah Seraphine Tseheno Sandaniaina

Layout: Herimihamina Francesca



Africa now accounts for up to **5%** of inscriptions on the MoW International Register

SUMMARY

AFRICA'S STORIES IN COLOUR

Africa's diverse cultures are expressed in many beautiful forms—through music, dance, colourful traditions, sacred practices, and unique architecture that reflects centuries of creativity and identity. But Africa's story is also told in a different way—through documents, photographs, drawings, writings, and paintings. Together, these are called **documentary heritage.** Recorded in languages such as English, French, Portuguese, Amharic, San, Dutch, and various African indigenous languages, these records help us understand who we are, where we come from, and how communities across Africa have faced challenges with resilience, wisdom, and hope.

This colouring book is adapted from UNESCO's first regional publication on the Memory of the World (MoW) in Africa. It brings together contributions from **17 African countries** and showcases **29 documentary heritage inscriptions** listed on the UNESCO International Memory of the World Register up to 2025 — and the number is growing!

Designed for children aged **7 - 11,** the book uses engaging illustrations and colouring activities to spark curiosity, encourage creativity, and help young readers appreciate why protecting Africa's documentary heritage is essential—for today and for future generations.

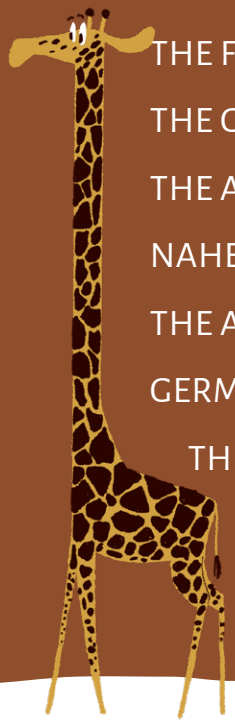
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"Since wars begin in the minds of men and women, it is in the minds of men and women that the defences of peace must be constructed."

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INTRODUCTION TO MEMORY OF THE WORLD

Welcome to Africa's Memory of the World!

This colouring book is a celebration of Africa's remarkable documentary heritage, showcasing 29 items from the continent inscribed on UNESCO's International Memory of the World (MoW) Register as of 2026, made accessible and engaging for our younger generations. These treasures represent the rich and diverse history, culture, and knowledge of Africa, preserved through manuscripts, archives, inscriptions, and other forms of documentary heritage.

The UNESCO Memory of the World Programme, established in 1992, aims to safeguard humanity's documentary heritage and ensure its accessibility for future generations. The Memory of the World Register highlights documentary heritage of world significance and outstanding universal value, reminding us of the importance of preserving and sharing these treasures. The Programme also encourages more people, especially future generations, to access and raise awareness about the priceless testimonies of their own countries and the whole world.

To introduce young children to the value of documentary heritage and stimulate their interest in diverse histories and cultures across Africa, UNESCO has prepared this colouring book. Each page reveals a piece of Africa's story, inviting young children to explore, learn, and connect with the continent's legacy in a fun and creative way.

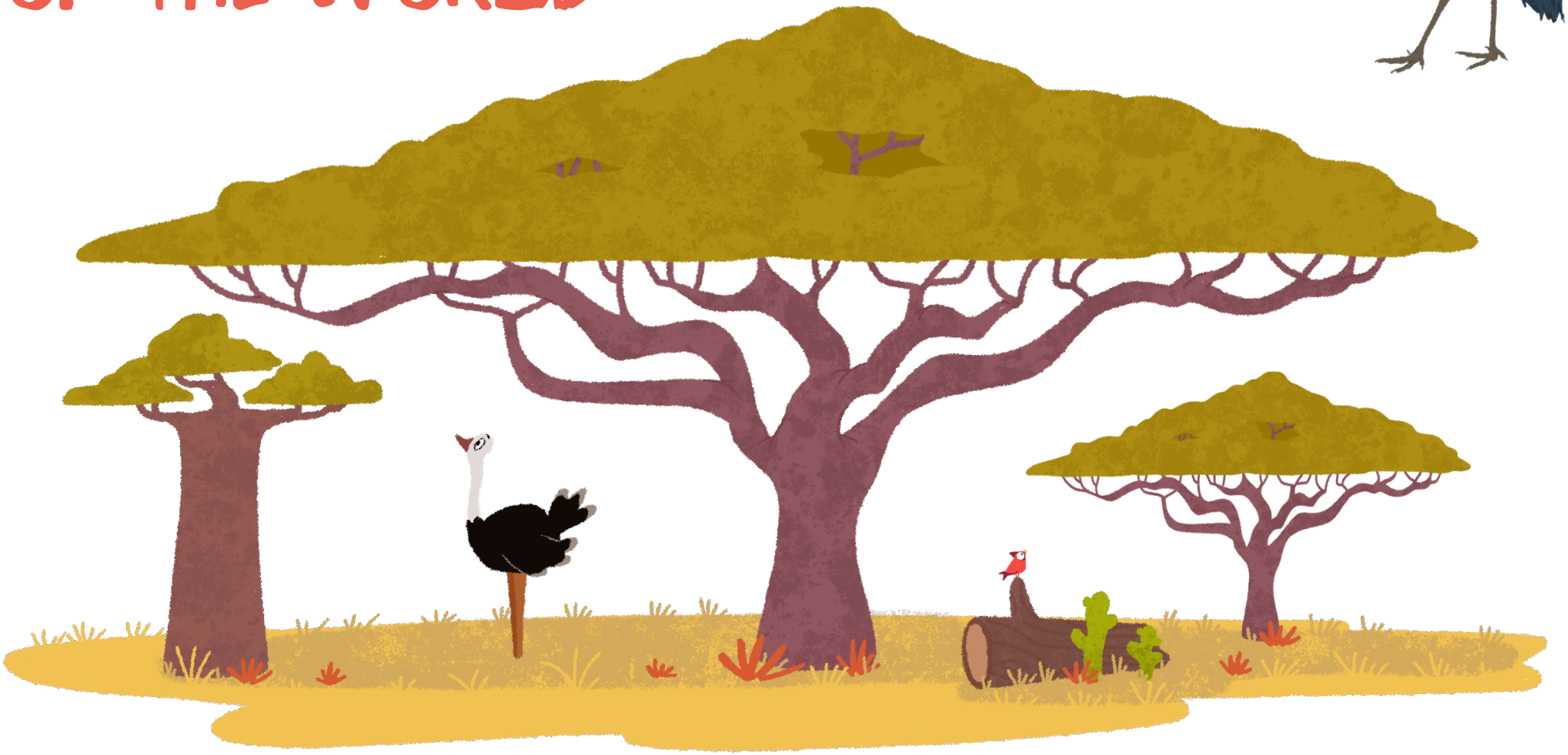
Let your imagination bring these treasures to life with colour as you discover the richness of Africa's documentary heritage!

L. Haxthausen

Louise Haxthausen
Director and Regional Representative
UNESCO Regional Office for Eastern Africa



AFRICA'S MEMORY OF THE WORLD

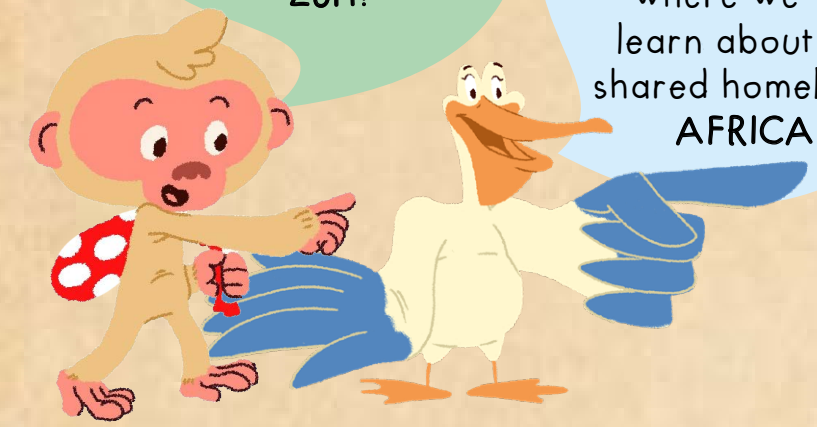


Hello! My name is **Mpanza,** and this is my best friend **Zuri!**

We want to take you on an exciting safari where we will learn about our shared homeland - **AFRICA!**

The story behind the name AFRICA is very long. However, we got the name from various visitors who came to see our homeland long ago, and these people contributed to making AFRICA what it is today.

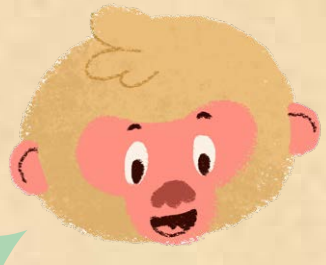
Together with our wonderful teacher, UNESCO, we are going to learn about the great heroes, cultures, and histories of AFRICA. We will experience all these from the special written pieces of documents that our ancestors left us from long ago.



These documents are called **documentary heritage,** and they help to keep the memory of our homeland alive!



Yes! And UNESCO helps the world to keep these documents safe so that we can remember and learn about our past to help make our future better.



This is called **Memory of the World,** and UNESCO has over 500 documents that they record and help to protect and preserve all over the world!



As we learn about these precious memories we will also colour along the journey.

Mpanza, let's go! UNESCO has so much to teach us!

Come with us to the back of the book, where we can colour the country we have learnt about on the map to show that you have learnt something new and exciting about it!

Okay! friends, come with me and Zuri to discover the memories Africa has kept for us. I hope you have fun as you read and colour with us!

Whuuu uuuuu!!!!





CABO VERDE

WRITTEN STORIES OF CABO VERDE

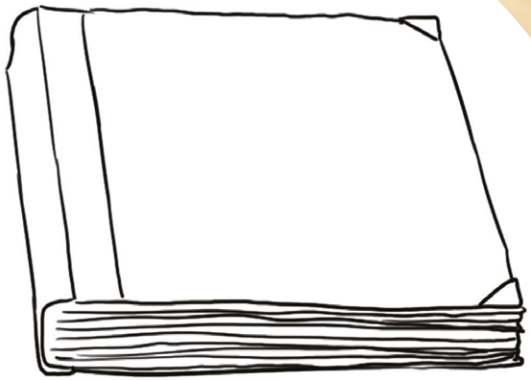
Hello friends!

I want to tell you, about the Memory of the World found in Africa!

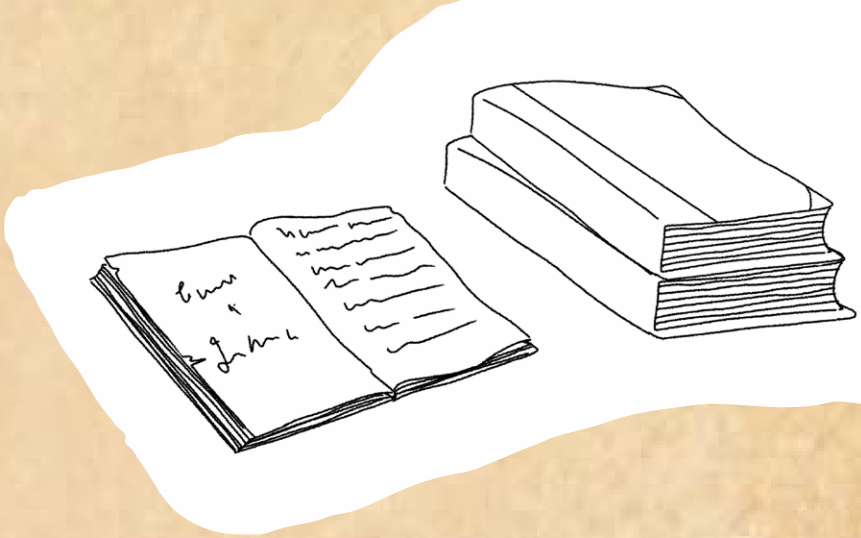
Can you see those old dusty books and papers?











Good. Welcome to **CABO VERDE** Islands, where, long ago, it was a crossroad for ships from Europe that came to carry African crops and minerals to different parts of the world. Sadly, they also carried away many Africans from their homes to work as slaves in faraway lands.

These old books and papers were written many years ago by the Government of Portugal between the years of 1803 and 1927. At that time, Portugal occupied Cabo Verde together with other African countries. Some of the books and papers were written as far back as the year 1674!





They are so old!

Yes, they are. The letters and books tell us about the oaths taken long ago, meetings that were held, and the agreements signed between countries. They also tell us the sad stories of the pain of the enslaved people and how they got their freedom.

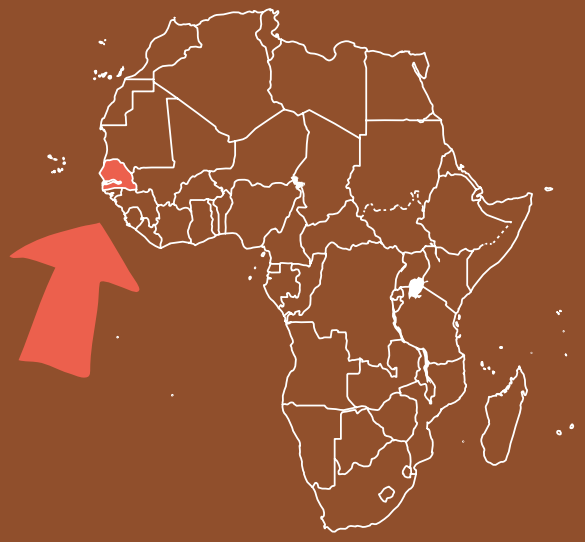
But how will we keep this memory alive when the books are so old?

Good question, Mpanza. The **National Archives of Cabo Verde** is where these books and papers are safely kept. They have also digitised them, meaning the stories will be accessible for many years to come to people everywhere.



Shall we move on?

Yes



FRENCH WEST AFRICA



SENEGAL





Let me tell you. This is **SENEGAL,** a land rich in Islamic heritage and architecture, culture, colourful festivals, and sports, especially football.







That's great, Mpanza. Now, we have many memories to learn from Senegal, so pay close attention.

In 1895, the Afrique occidentale française (AOF), which is French for French West Africa, combined a large group of French colonies in Africa into one administrative unit. They included eight countries - Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, and Burkina Faso.





These countries combined were seven times bigger than France! By 1960, all these countries proudly gained their independence.

The French government then kept a careful record of all the activities they carried out in these countries, such as how the colonies were governed, how schools and Francophone African states were created, and how religion and culture shaped life. Yet, among these pages are also painful memories of slavery, including records linked to Gorée Island in Senegal, which is now a powerful symbol of the slave trade and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.







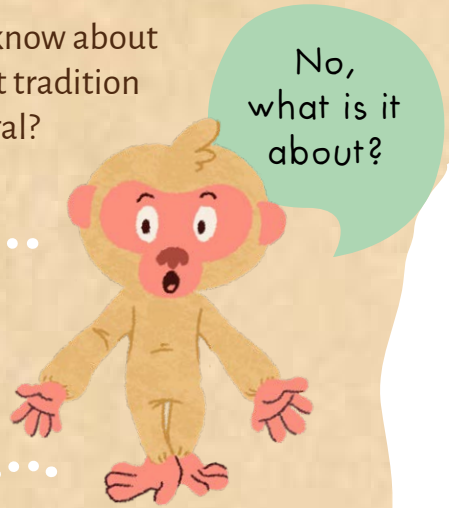




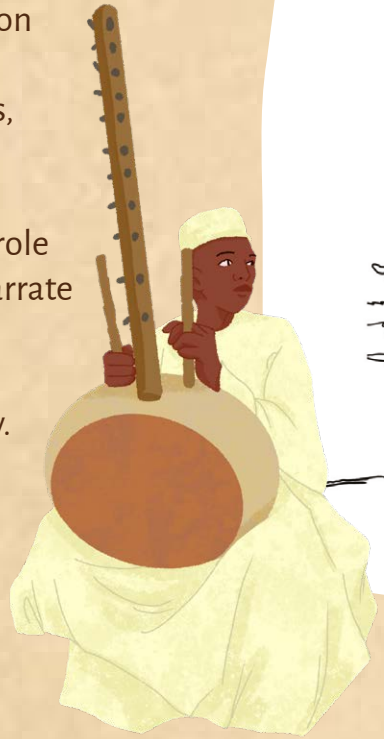
At the **National Archives of Senegal** in Dakar. However, over time, heat, light, and humidity have damaged the records, but archivists are now working hard to scan and digitise them, making sure the history they carry will not be lost.

THE SCHOOL OF HISTORY

Do you know about the Griot tradition in Senegal?



The Griot tradition refers to a group of oral historians, musicians, and storytellers of Senegal, whose role is to keep and narrate history, mediate conflicts, and entertain society.





What a wonderful tradition!



Very true, Zuri, and because of such a tradition, several aspects of the Senegalese culture have survived over the centuries. An almost similar practice was initiated long ago in a school.

In 1903, a special school called the William Ponty School was created in Saint Louis, Senegal, to train teachers who would later work for French West Africa. It had students from across West Africa who came to learn and share ideas in history, science, and art.

What was special about this school?



This school was unlike any other. During school holidays, students went around the neighbouring communities, talking to the children, women and men, the elderly and the village elders, asking them about daily life and their culture. Afterwards, they wrote down everything they saw, heard, tasted and touched so that many years later, when we read their books, we too can learn something about how life was like back then. Between 1933 and 1957, students created more than 700 notebooks!

Now we get to read what they wrote!



Yes, we do, Zuri. The notebooks are now safely kept in **Dakar,** Senegal and many are being digitised to ensure we and generations to come can continue to learn from them.





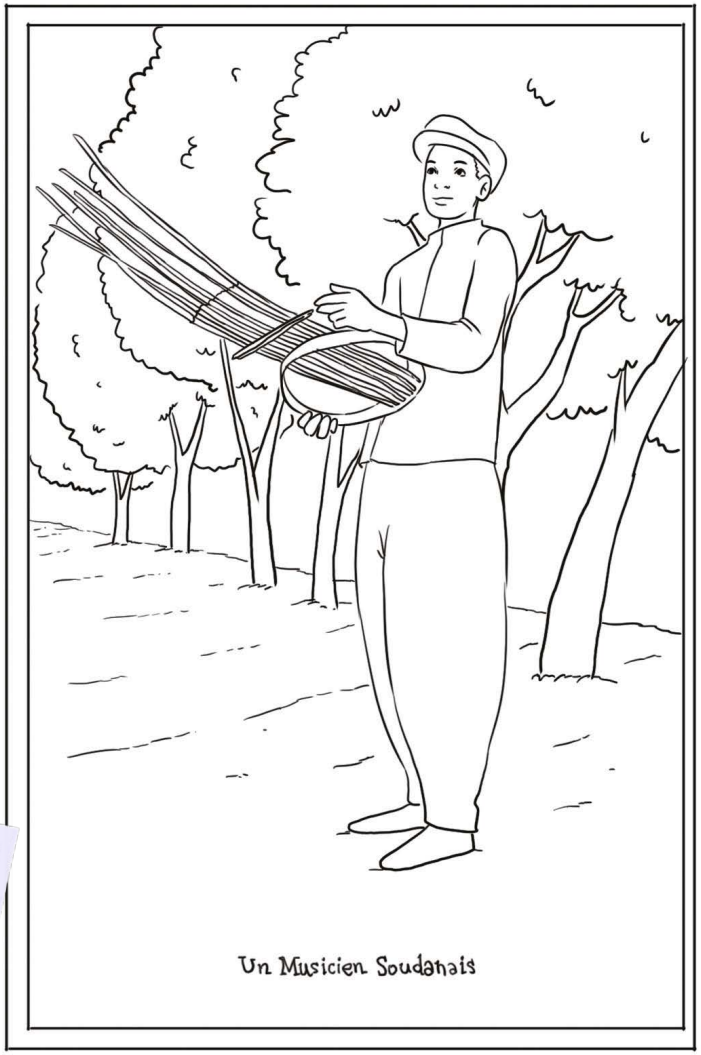
MY LITTLE POSTCARD



Be careful , Zuri, not to tear it. That is one of the memories we will learn about. It is a postcard which has a story along with many others.









Sure, Zuri. Between 1900 and 1959, photographers travelled across French West Africa, taking pictures of people, places, and everyday life. Those photographs, such as the one you are holding, were later turned into postcards and sent all around the world.

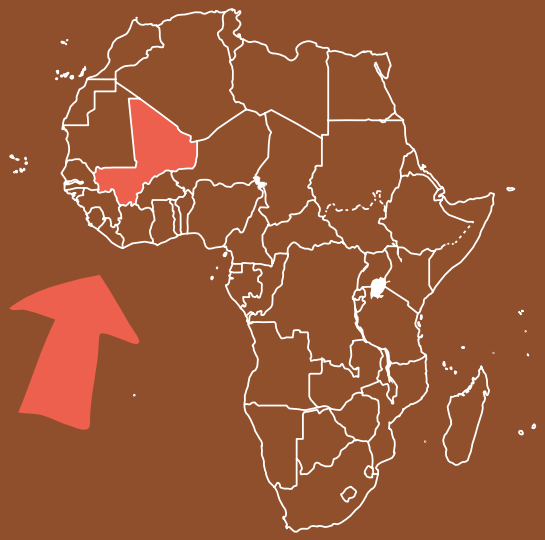
A postcard is a picture with a short message that can be sent to family and friends to share experiences of places one has visited. These postcards show many things — from markets, schools, and farms to soldiers and celebrations. Through them, people around the world, especially in France, got to see the life of the people and what the land of Senegal was like. However, for the local people, it was sadly a reminder of the colonial rule they had undergone.



Today, more than 1,500 postcards are protected at the **National Archives of Senegal.** Many have been digitised so that future generations can continue to learn about the history of Senegal during the colonial period, the culture of the people, and the changes that occurred during that time.







THE WISDOM OF TIMBUKTU

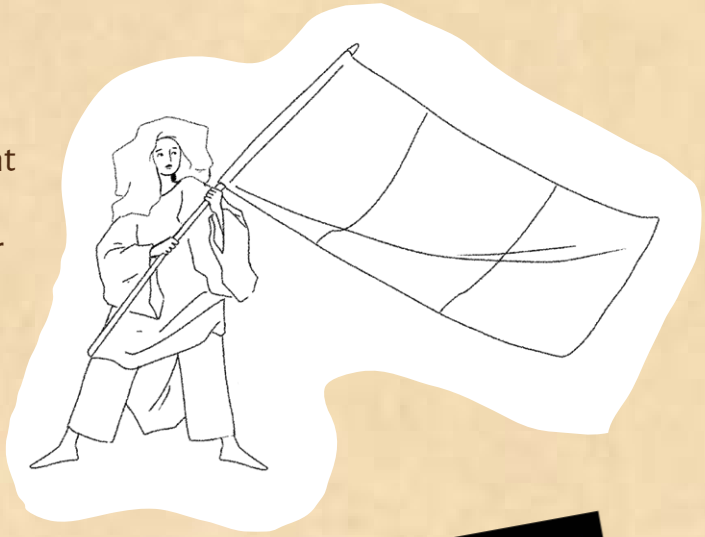


MALI





Now we are in the ancient land of **MALI!** Mali is a country that is known for its great empires and kingdoms. It is located in the Sahara Desert, which is the largest hot desert in the world!





Can you see the beautiful camels? They are great travel companions in hot deserts like the Sahara.





Yes, they do and apart from the majestic camels, Mali is known for its historic golden city of Timbuktu, which is home to one of the oldest universities in the world – the University of Timbuktu.



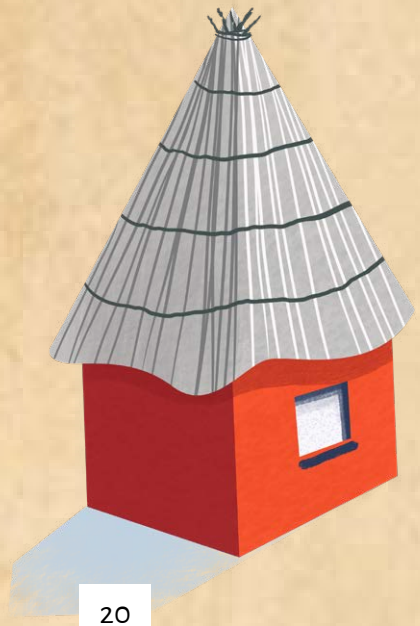


Over 300 years ago, a wise and famous scholar named *Sayyid Ahmad al-Raqqadi* from Timbuktu wrote a very special book called *Kitāb Shifā al-Asqām*. This is an Arabic phrase that means *'The Book of Healing.'*



The book is written in Saharan style of calligraphy, using black, red, and yellow ink. It has ancient knowledge and wisdom about medicine, science and magic. These ancient secrets tell us about cure for sicknesses, protection against bad spirits, how to get good harvests, how to live peacefully as a family and even how to find lost items through divination!





It means we had our own medicine and science long ago?





Yes, we did! In fact, over the years, those who read the book added in their comments, which made the book more valuable.

Where can we find this book?



Good question, Zuri. It can be found at the **Mamma Haïdara Library** in Bamako, the capital city of Mali, reminding us of the precious wisdom of the Sahara people.

On to the next adventure.

YEAH!



A MESSAGE FOR THE BELIEVERS



Yes, we are still in Timbuktu. Mali has a lot of memory for us to learn from.

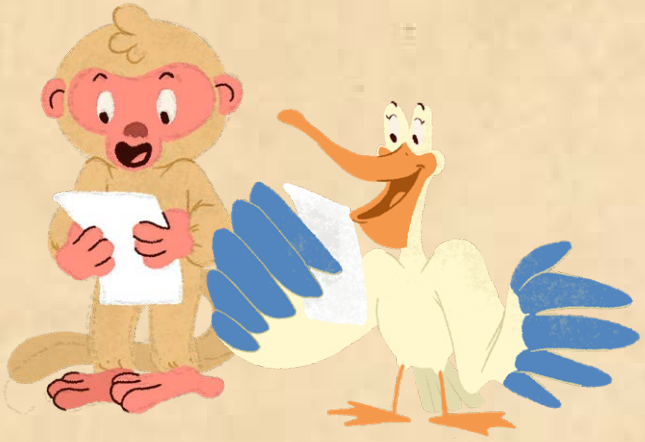




There is another book I want you to know about. It was written with a special message for the Muslims who lived in the Sahara. It was called *Tadhkirat al-Gāfilīn*, which is Arabic and means *'a reminder to those who do not pay attention.'*

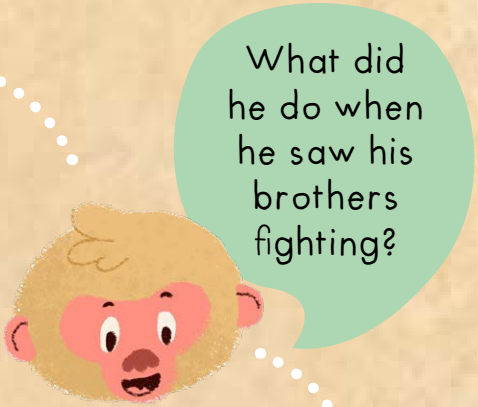


It was written by *Sheikh al-Hajj Umar Tall*. One day, he was coming back from a pilgrimage from the holy Muslim city of Mecca.

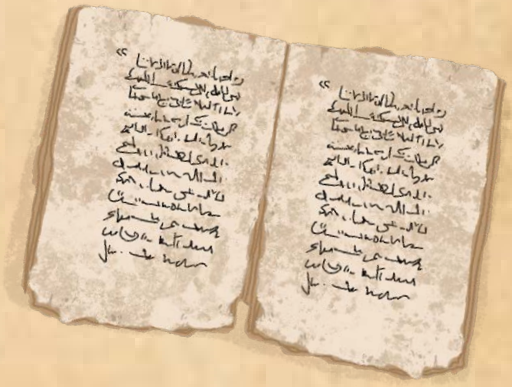


On the way, he found Muslim brothers violently fighting one another, which made him very sad.





The Sheikh wrote this book in the form of a poem. It is an *acrostic poem*, where each verse begins with a letter from verse 9 of Sura 49 of the Qur'an, the holy book of Islam.



Through this poem, Sheikh teaches us all that violence only brings harm. The poem asks us to live peacefully together, to forgive one another, and for leaders to choose dialogue over fighting.



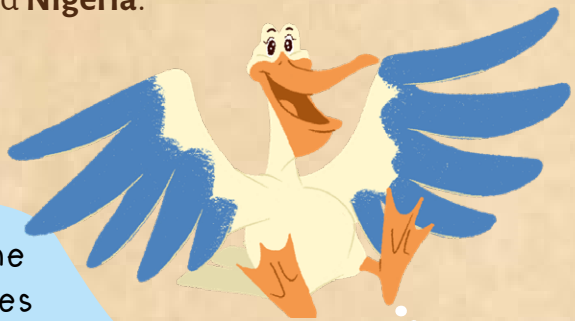
The **Ahmed Baba Institute** in Timbuktu helps to keep the book safe from any damage. We must keep the book protected, so that Africa and the world are reminded to always choose harmony and that Islam values peace, respect, and solidarity.



Wonderful indeed! Friends, we have one more memory to learn about in Mali.

OUR HUMAN LIFE

This is a shared memory for **Mali** and **Nigeria**.



So some countries have a common memory?

Yes, Zuri, and this shows us that we have more in common across our homeland Africa than we know! We will come across many more memories which are shared between countries, including with countries outside of Africa.

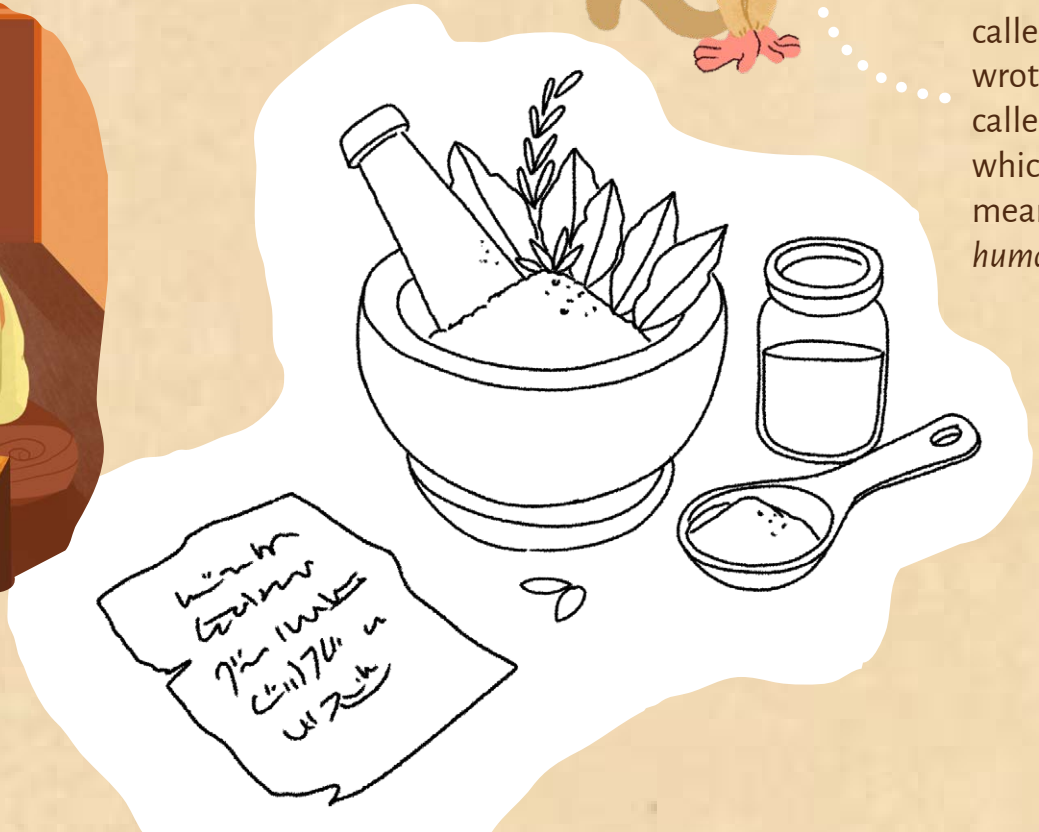
That's exciting!





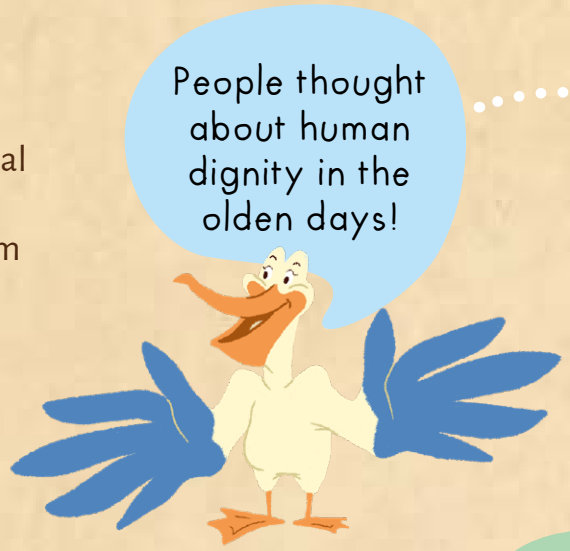
It is. For this shared memory, many centuries ago, a man called *Abdullah Dan Fodio* wrote a manuscript called *Masālih al-Insān*, which is Arabic and means *'the interest of the human being'*.



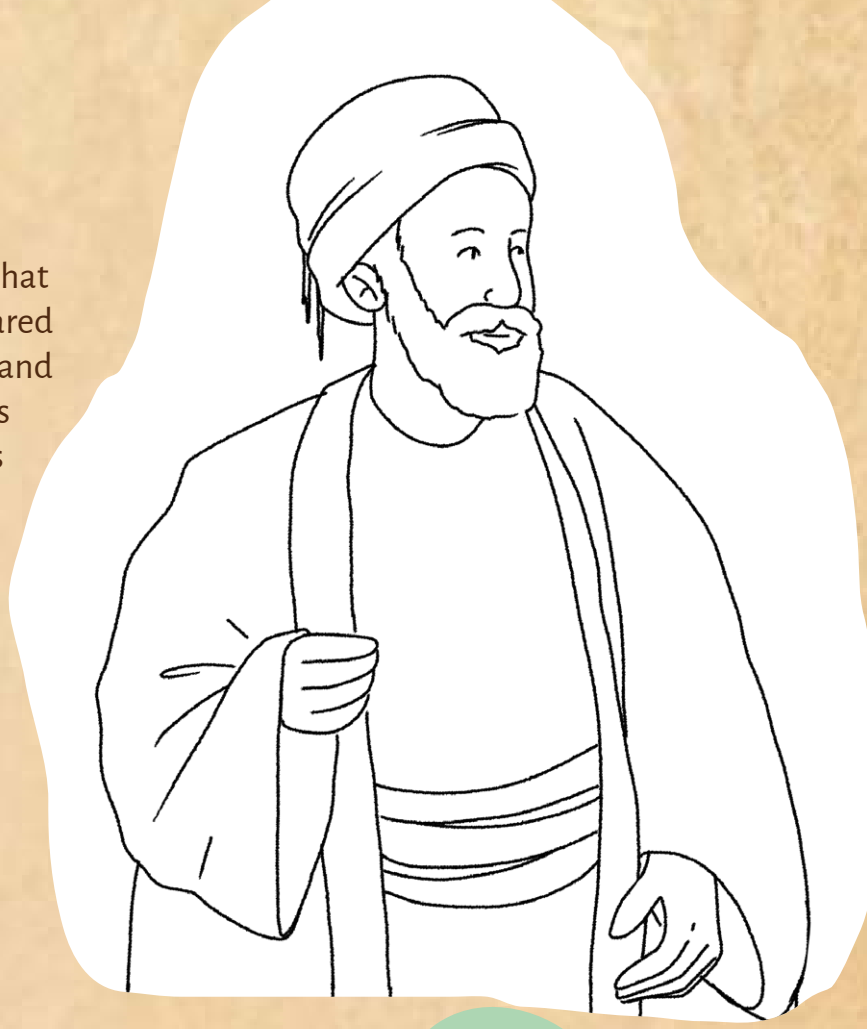


The book speaks about three important areas of life: religion, health and medicine.

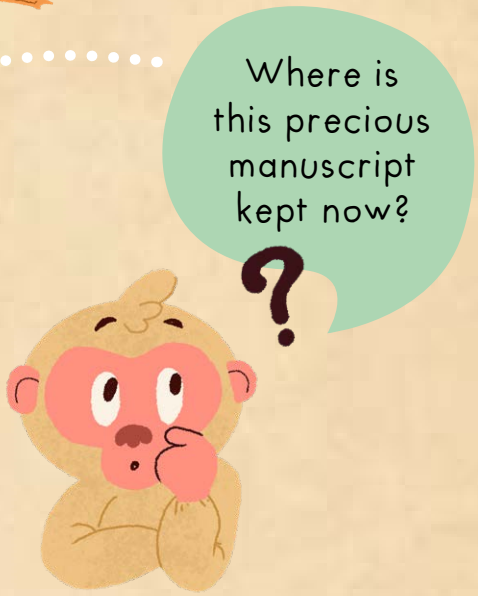
From the book, we learn about traditional practices such as marriage and baptism ceremonies, as well as the practice of medicine by traditional healers.



Exactly, Zuri. This manuscript is proof that the African people cared about human rights and protecting life – ideas that still matter to us today.



Well, this manuscript was part of 42,000 other old manuscripts, which were passed down through nine generations of a family. Except for this one, all the other manuscripts are kept at the **Mamma Haïdara Library** in Timbuktu. They have survived fires, thefts, and even house collapses!





This manuscript, however, is now at the **SAVAMA-DCI Headquarters** in Bamako. They are digitised and made accessible to people everywhere.

Now we go to another land. Are you ready?







BURKINA FASO



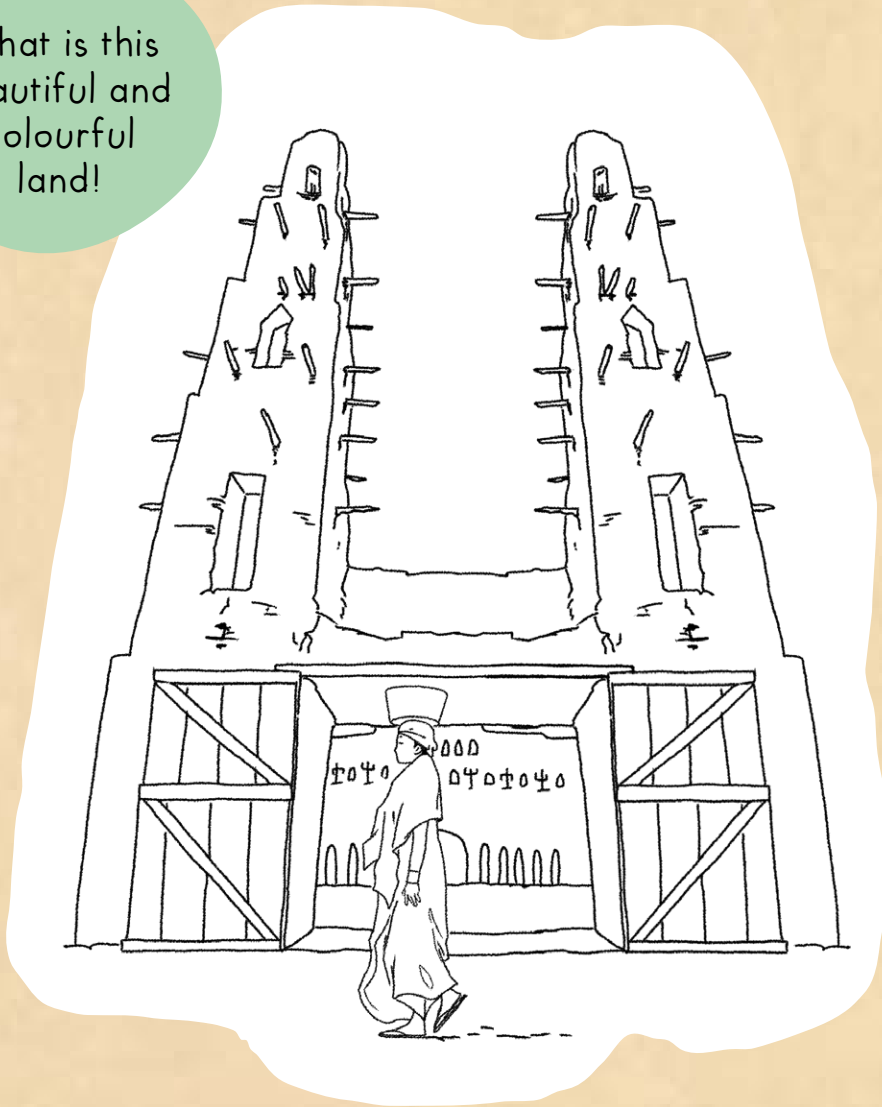
AN ARCHIVE FOR THE POOR



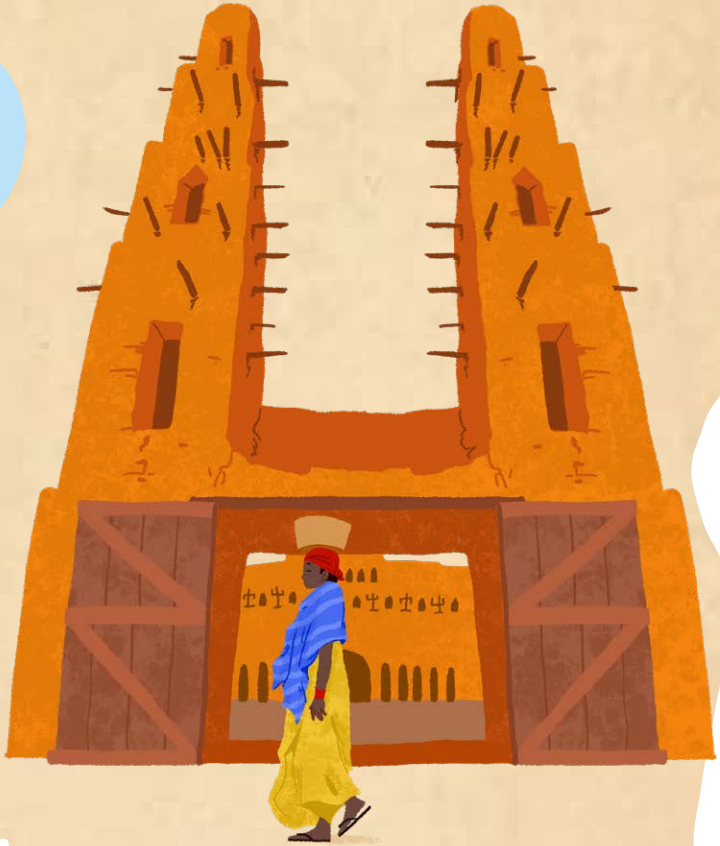
What is this beautiful and colourful land!

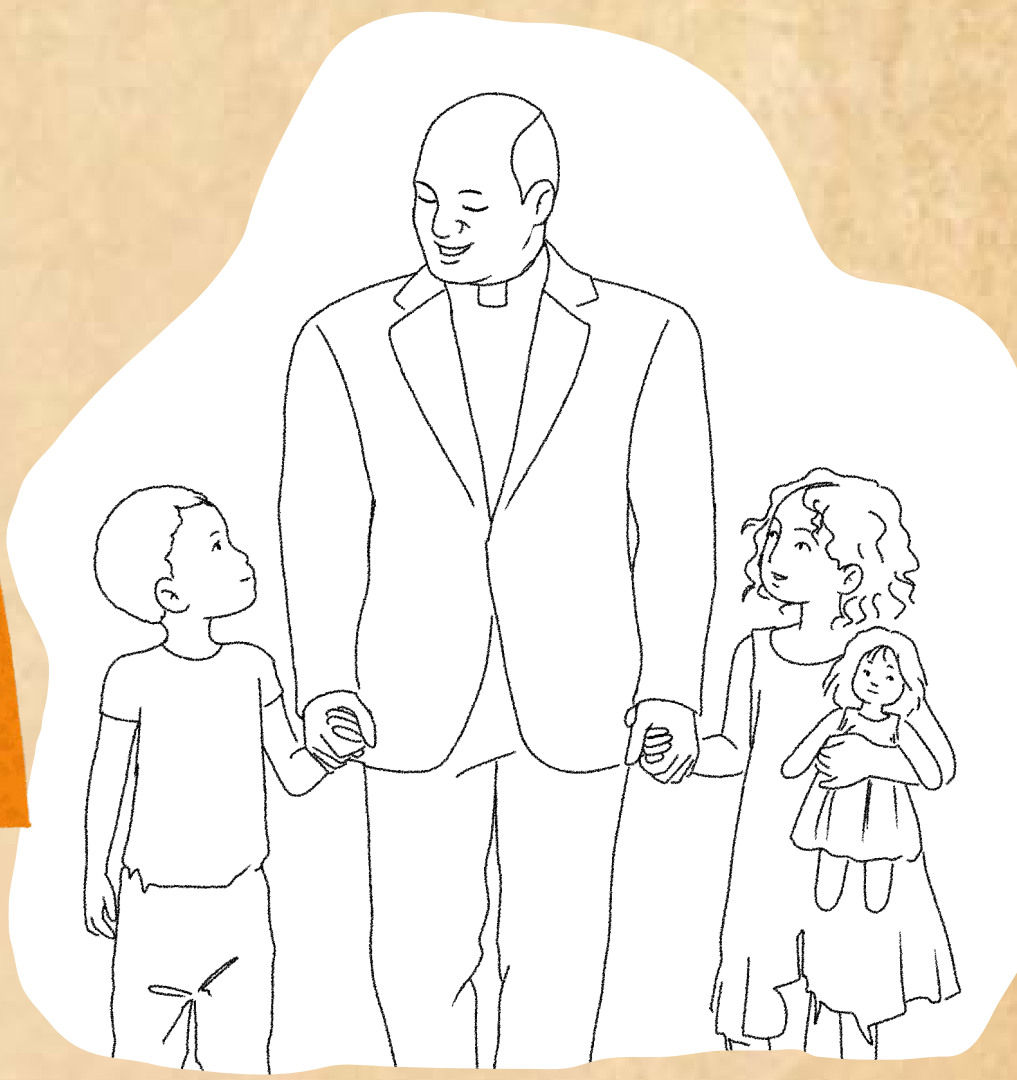
Welcome to **BURKINA FASO!** The land of rich cultural heritage, vibrant music and dance traditions.

This country got its name in 1984 from the famous African leader – Thomas Sankara. From the Mossi people he took the word Burkina meaning *'men of integrity,'* and from the Diouala people, he got the name Faso, meaning *'fatherland.'*









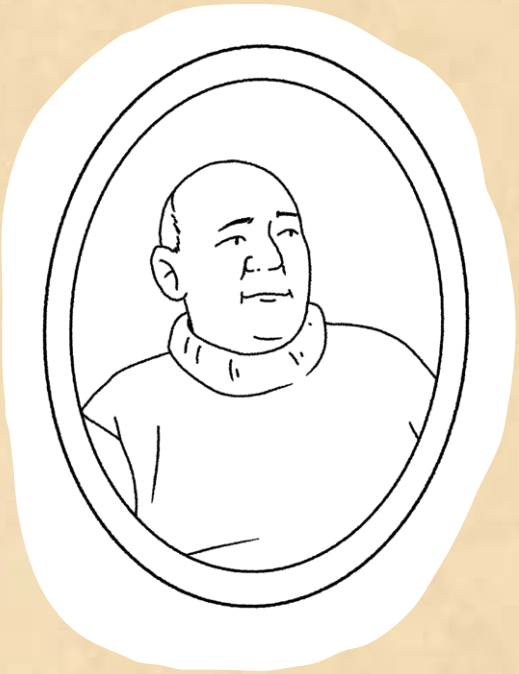


Correct, Zuri. Burkina Faso is known as the land of people with integrity. Apart from that, it has a very noble shared memory with France that we will learn about.

In 1957, Father Joseph Wresinski from France began a charitable organization known as the All Together in Dignity (ATD) Fourth World Movement, whose main objective was to end extreme poverty. Father Joseph believed that every voice deserved to be heard.







How did he make sure they were heard?





He took time to listen to the stories of the poor and carefully took notes and photos. Over time, volunteers from around the world joined in this work, and organisations such as UNESCO also supported ATD.

Burkina Faso then became the first country in Africa to support ATD, enabling them to continue with their mission.



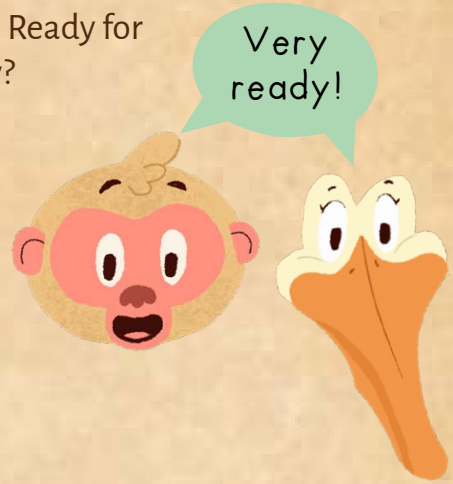
The archives hold many memories: testimonies, studies, photos, films, art, and publications from the poor all over the world. In 1992, the United Nations declared 17 October the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, thanks to the work of ATD and Burkina Faso's support!







This teaches us that we can make a difference in the lives of others with the little we have. Ready for our next story?





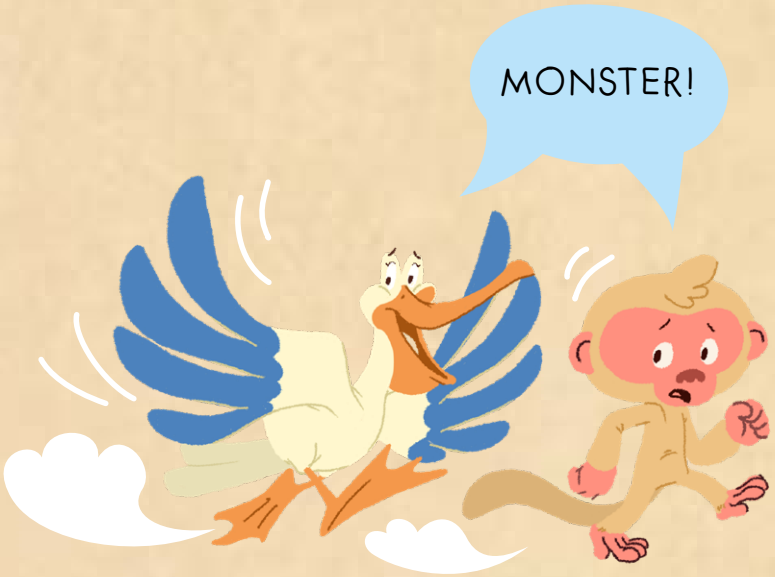


BENIN



THE KINGDOM OF DAHOMEY







To understand that, I must introduce you to **BENIN,** home to one of the most powerful kingdoms that ever lived - the Kingdom of Dahomey. It is also home to a very ancient religion called Voodoo, which is a form of ancestral worship. The masquerade is central to this religion as it is believed to carry the spirits of the ancestors and delivers messages for the people to action.



Not at all. Now, let me tell you about the Kingdom of Dahomey which had great military and economic power.

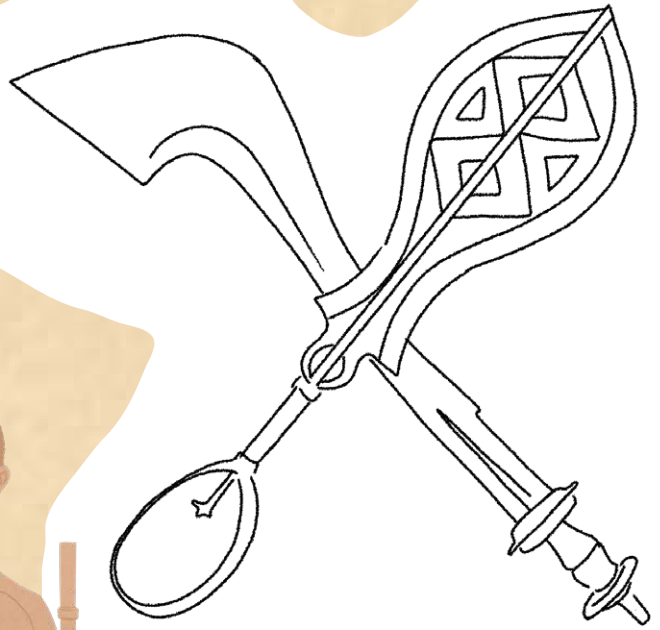


It was led by great kings and chiefs who protected their lands and people with courage and wisdom. However, in the 1800s, the French colonizers arrived and wanted to take over their lands and resources. There rose great leaders like *King Behanzin* and *Bio Guerra* who stood up against the French and fought bravely to defend their people.



Records from that period, between 1843 and 1960, tell the stories of how borders between countries were drawn, how Christianity, Islam, and African traditions coexisted and how the colonial rule brought hardship and change to the lives of the people of Benin.









These memories are in the safekeeping of the **National Archives of Benin** and they remind us of the struggle for freedom and the courage it took to resist colonial rulers and protect their traditions.







Yes, we will, Mpanza. This is our history but remember, our past does not define our future. It is the lessons we pick from the past that help us have a better present and a brighter future.







GHANA

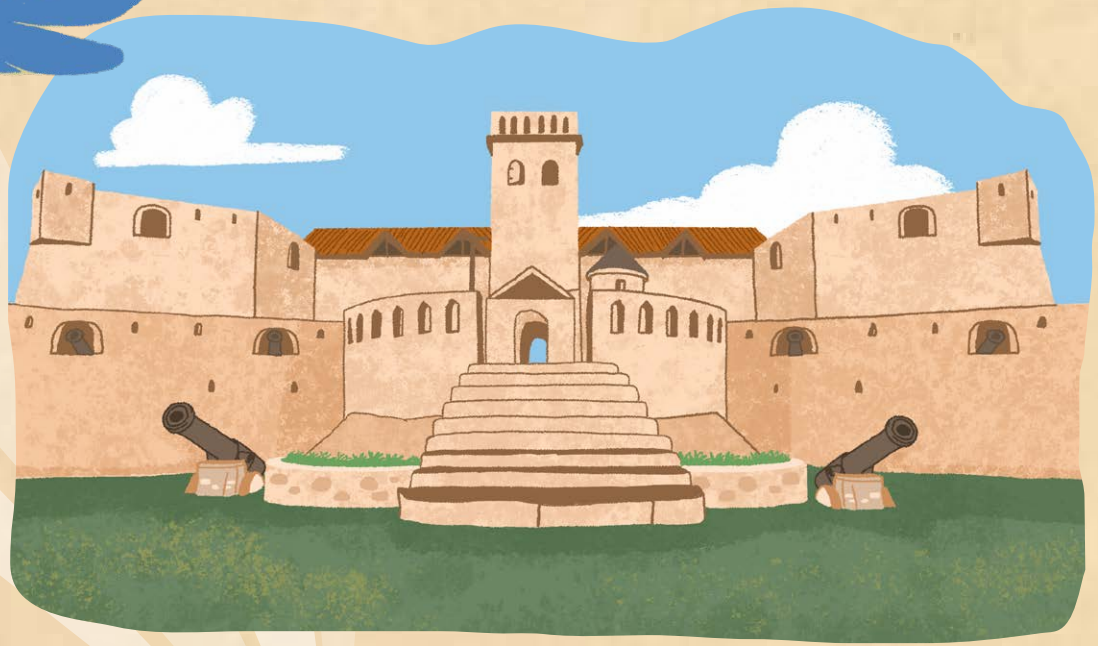


WHEN EUROPEANS CAME TO THE AFRICAN COAST





That is because we have entered the Gold Coast of Africa, which we now call **GHANA!**



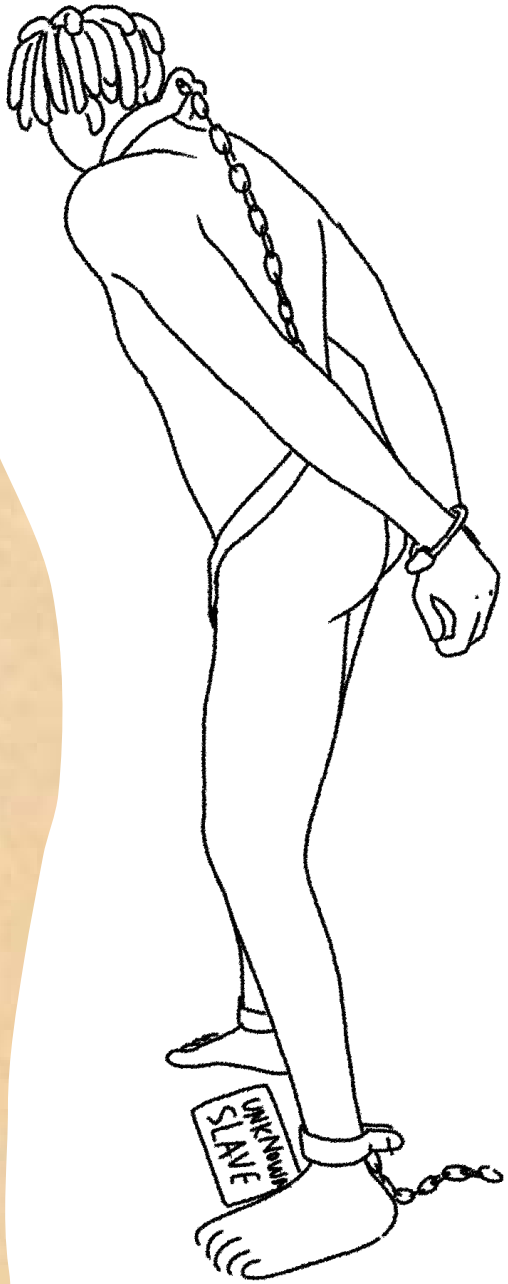


In the past, it was called the Gold Coast by the Europeans who came and saw that it had a big supply and market for gold. Therefore, this story will tell us more about the time Europeans came to the African coast of Ghana.

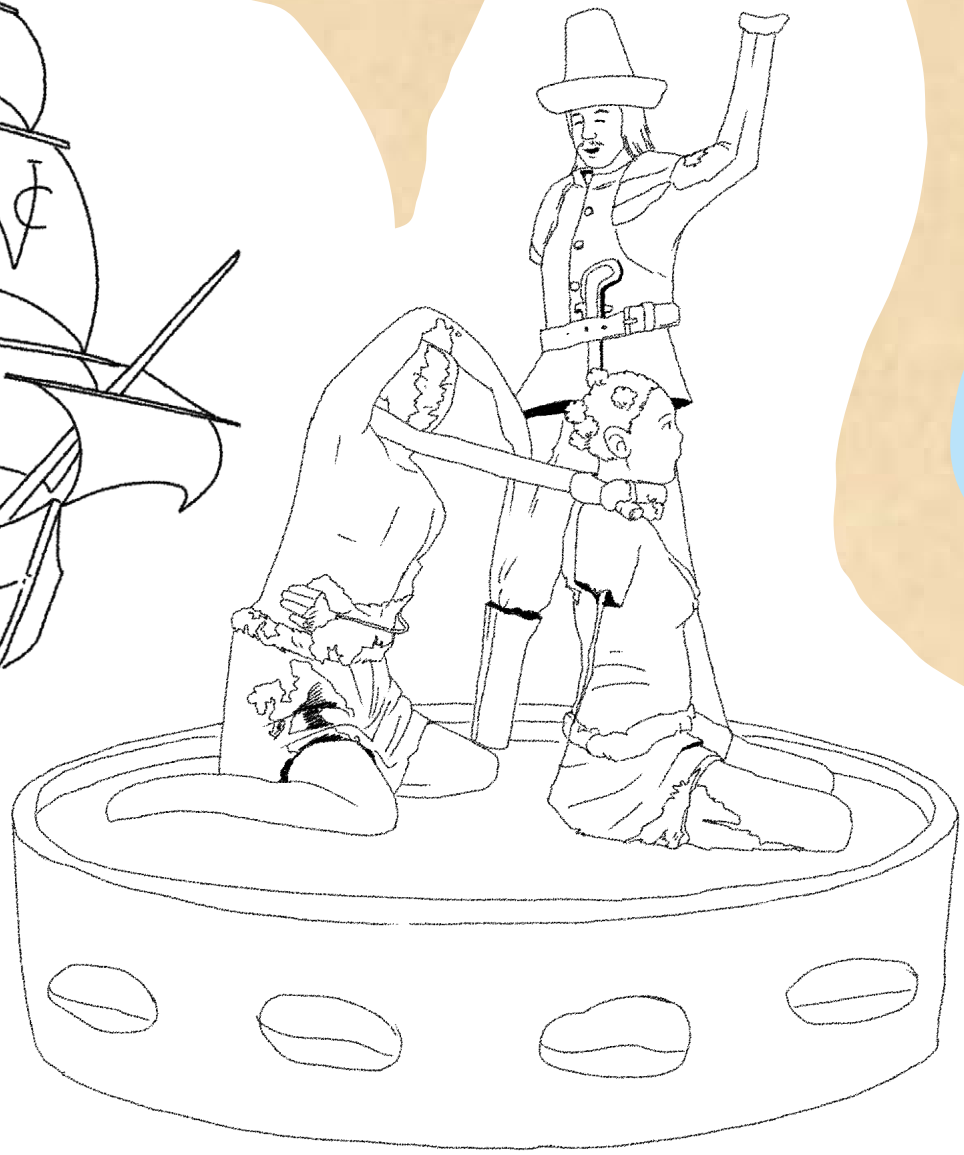
In 1621, the Dutch created the West India Company to control trade in West Africa and the Americas. Sadly, the company became a major driver of the transatlantic slave trade.



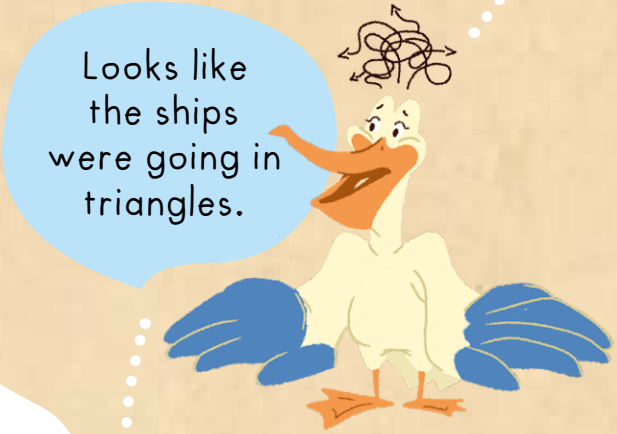








Ships sailed across the ocean, carrying goods such as weapons, wine, and textiles from Europe to Africa. Then they carried enslaved people and gold from Africa to the Americas, and products such as sugar and gold from the Americas to Europe.

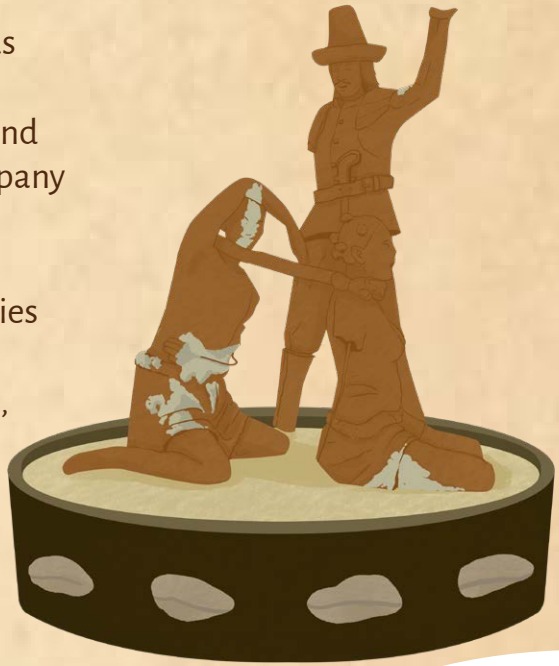


Good, Zuri! This system of trade was actually called the *triangular trade*, and it shaped the history of Africa, the Americas, and Europe for 170 years.

What happened to the people they took?



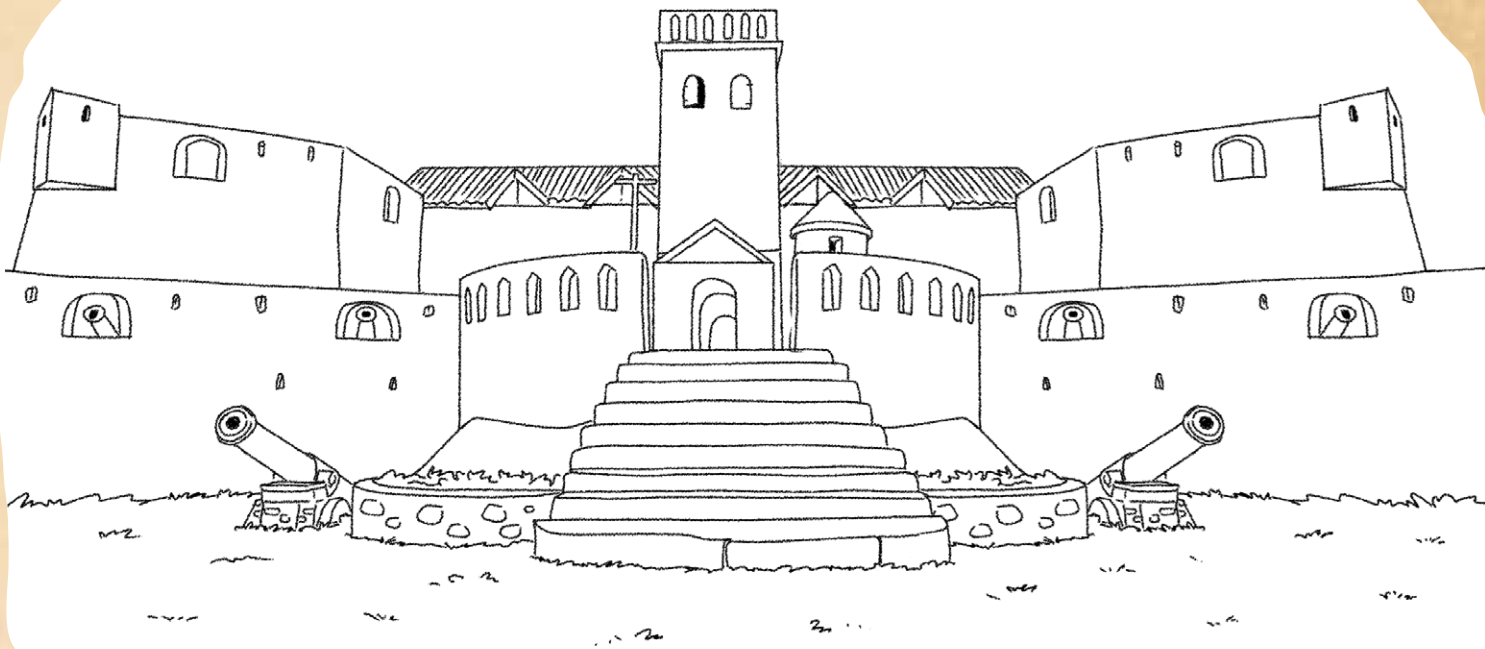
They went on to work as enslaved people in the Americas and Europe and settled there. The Company also kept an archive of letters, records, and notes which tell us stories of slavery, trade, wars, diplomacy, plantations, and daily life.







These memories are now protected in several archives and libraries around the world, including at the **Public Records and Archives Administration Department** in Ghana. Most of the documents are accessible online, allowing people everywhere to learn from them, so that such injustice will never be repeated.





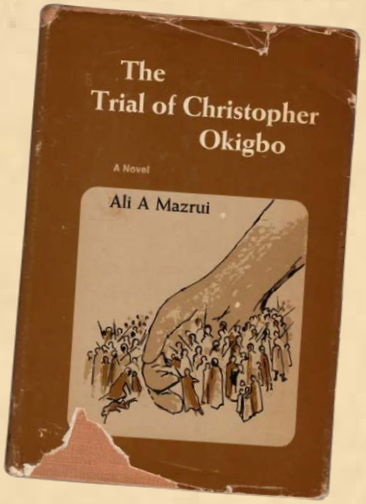


NIGERIA



From that sad story, we move to the neighbouring land of **NIGERIA,** another country known for its rich history of kingdoms, wars, and great civilisation!

A FAMOUS POET





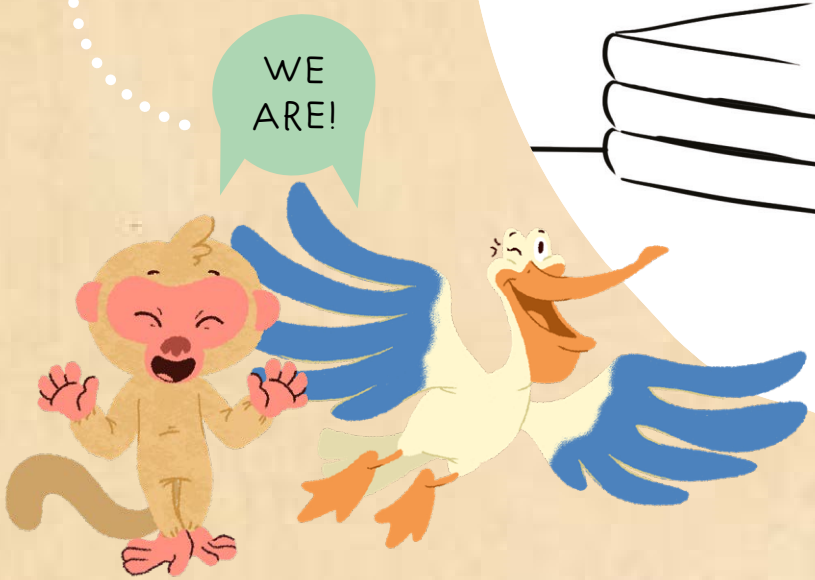
This story will definitely cheer you up! There was once a famous Nigerian Igbo poet called *Christopher Okigbo,* who loved to mix Igbo traditions with ideas from around the world. Some of his well-known poems include *Path of Thunder, Anthem to Biafra* (Land of our Birth) and other poems in the Igbo language.



Sadly, he died during the 1967 Nigerian Civil War. However, all his works in the form of letters, notes, poems, and even drawings remain as wonderful memories for us to remember to celebrate our African cultures, our identity and creativity with pride. His collection is safely kept at the **Harry Ransom Center in Texas, USA.**



I knew you would, Zuri. Are you ready for the next story then?





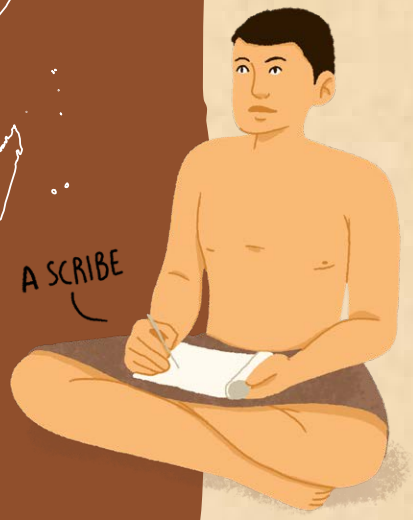
AN AFRICAN LIBRARY





ANGOLA





Do you know who a scribe is, Mpanza?

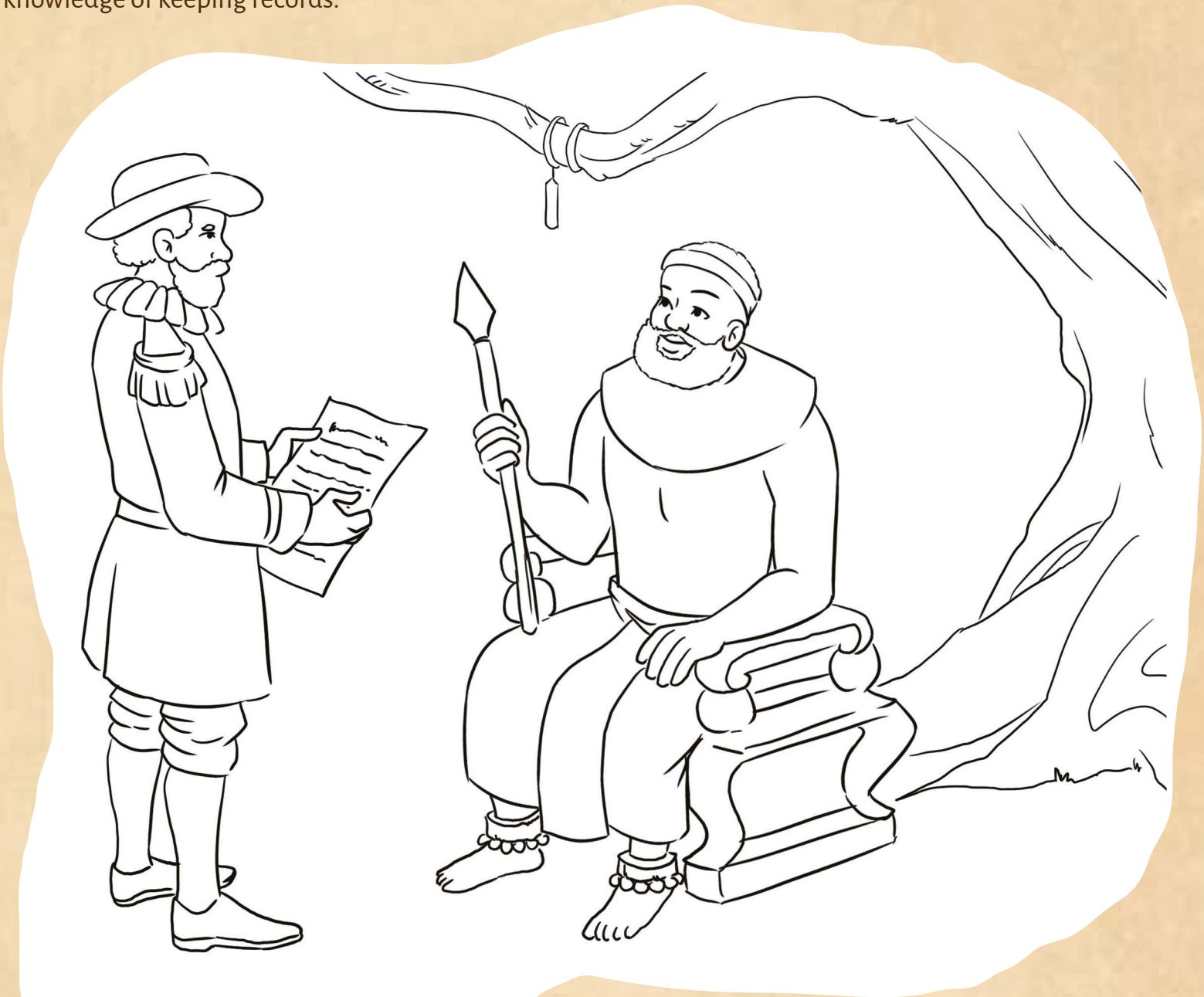
Yes. They write letters, important documents, and historical records.



Good. We are now in **ANGOLA,** the land of the Ndembu chiefs, to learn about a shared memory they have with Portugal.



A long time ago, before the Portuguese came to colonise Angola, the Ndembu people had a thriving community. They were an oral community, meaning that they passed on their culture and traditions through word of mouth. They were also advanced in the knowledge of keeping records.





Yes, they did. Among the Ndembu people were experienced scribes who had mastered the skill of writing and archiving. Because of this, they were able to develop their own state archive, a kind of library filled with important papers.









Those libraries were built over a period of more than 200 years. They contain memories and stories of how the Ndembu worked with the Kingdom of Congo, the Portuguese colonial government, and other African leaders. They recorded everything, including letters, wills, certificates, prayers, spelling books and even had some of the documents stamped with wax seals!









These archives show how African traditions and European practices came together. New roles like scribes and secretaries became important in Ndembu society, and the Portuguese language blended into their culture.

Now, both Angola and Portugal work to safely keep these memories alive. The archives have also been digitised, and we can get to read to understand how life was for the Ndembu people many years ago.





NAMIBIA





A PEN AND PAPER



Ha ha ha, Zuri. Yes, they do. Those peaks are called sand dunes, and we are now in the land of **NAMIBIA,** home to the Namib Desert, which is one of the most beautiful deserts in the world.





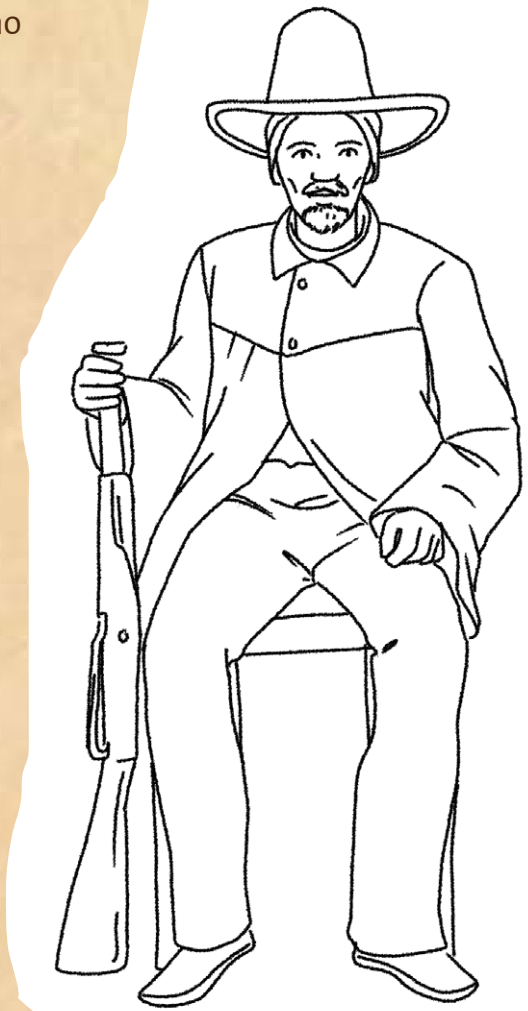


We will learn about a great leader in Namibia who used only his pen and paper to lead his people in resisting the colonial rule of the Germans, who had come to their country.

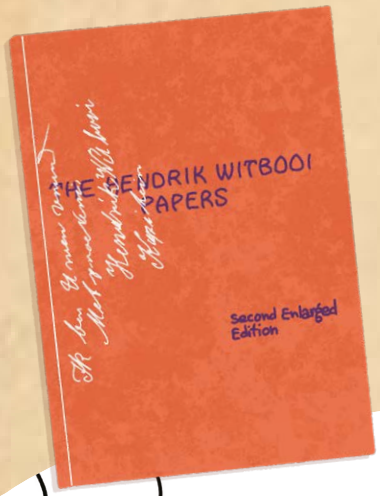




This great leader was *Hendrik Witbooi*, a man who Namibia remembers as one of its bravest national heroes.



Between 1884 and 1894, he united different communities to stand against injustice and to collectively oppose the establishment of the German "Protection Treaty".



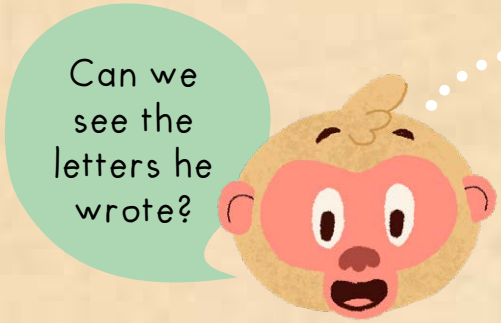
He did this by writing many letters and journals and keeping records that help us understand both the challenges his people faced and his role as a leader.

In those writings, he combined Biblical words with African storytelling to promote peace and unity, and he also shared the earliest ideas of Pan-Africanism — the belief that African peoples should stand together as one.





For Namibia, these writings gave them courage to bravely resist the unfair German rule without the use of violence.



Yes, you can. Thanks to technology, they have been digitised. Also, the **National Archives of Namibia** keeps the Hendrik Witbooi Papers, his Bible, and other heritage items safe, from where they can be studied and continue to teach new generations about the history of Namibia and Africa.

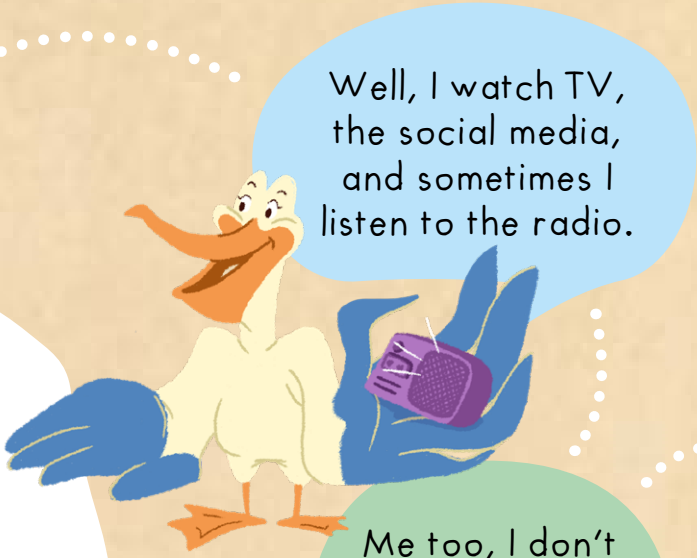
I have one other memory to tell you about Namibia.

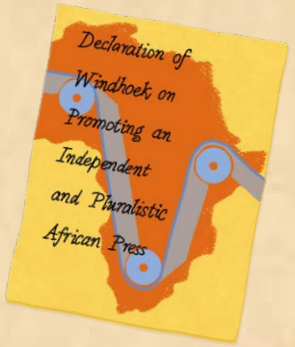


A DOCUMENT THAT CHANGED THE WORLD



Where do you usually go to learn about what is happening in Africa, Zuri?









Me too, I don't like reading newspapers though. They are too long to read!

This is **Windhoek,** the capital city of Namibia, with a special place in history in the world.



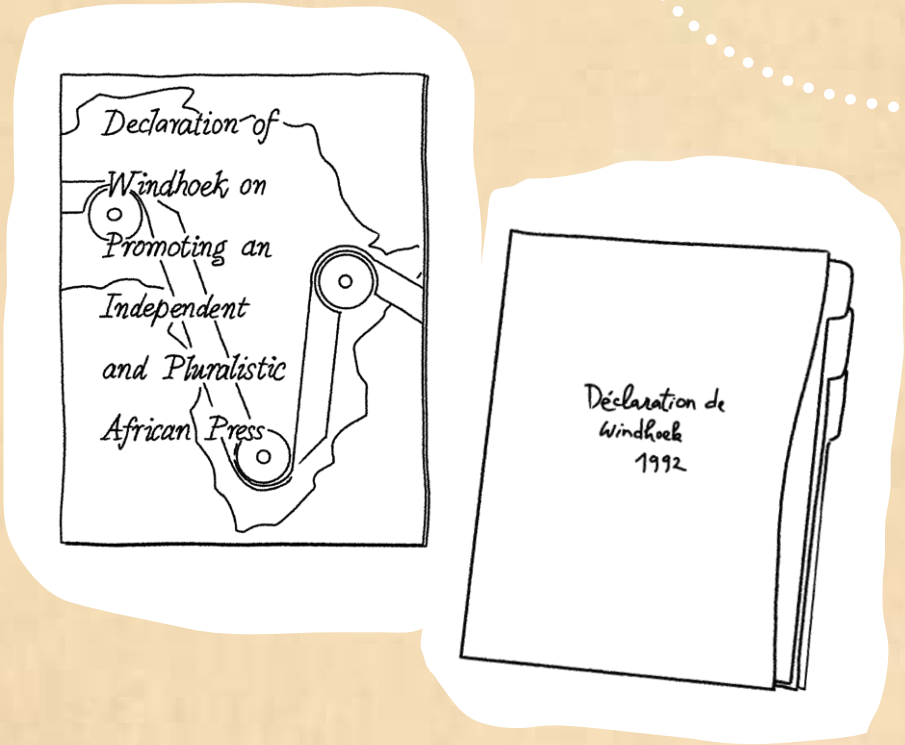
In 1991, journalists from 38 African countries came to Windhoek for a special meeting. We collectively call them the media or the press and they include those who work in TV, radio and newspapers. They met to discuss the importance of a free and independent press.

Together, they developed a special document known as the *Windhoek Declaration*, which became a global symbol of press freedom. The United Nations established World Press Freedom Day, which we celebrate every year on 3 May.





Correct, Mpanza. The Declaration showed the world that freedom of expression and different voices in the media are important for democracy.



This memory inspired many other regions in the world to copy this African example and develop their own documents to protect their media and freedom of expression.

Now we will hear about a very famous country in Southern Africa. Can you guess which one?



You are right! Let's go!



SOUTH AFRICA

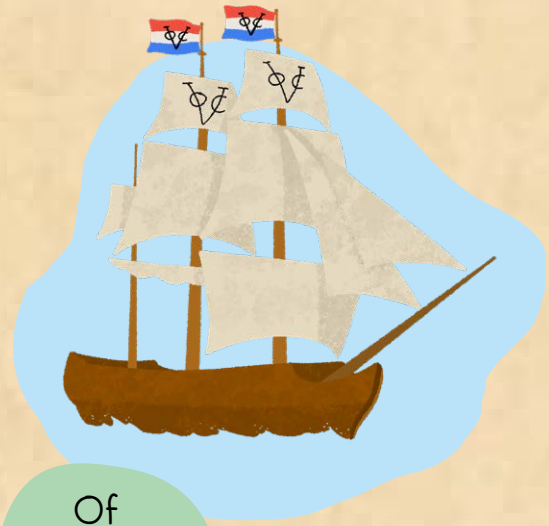


THE DUTCH EAST INDIA COMPANY

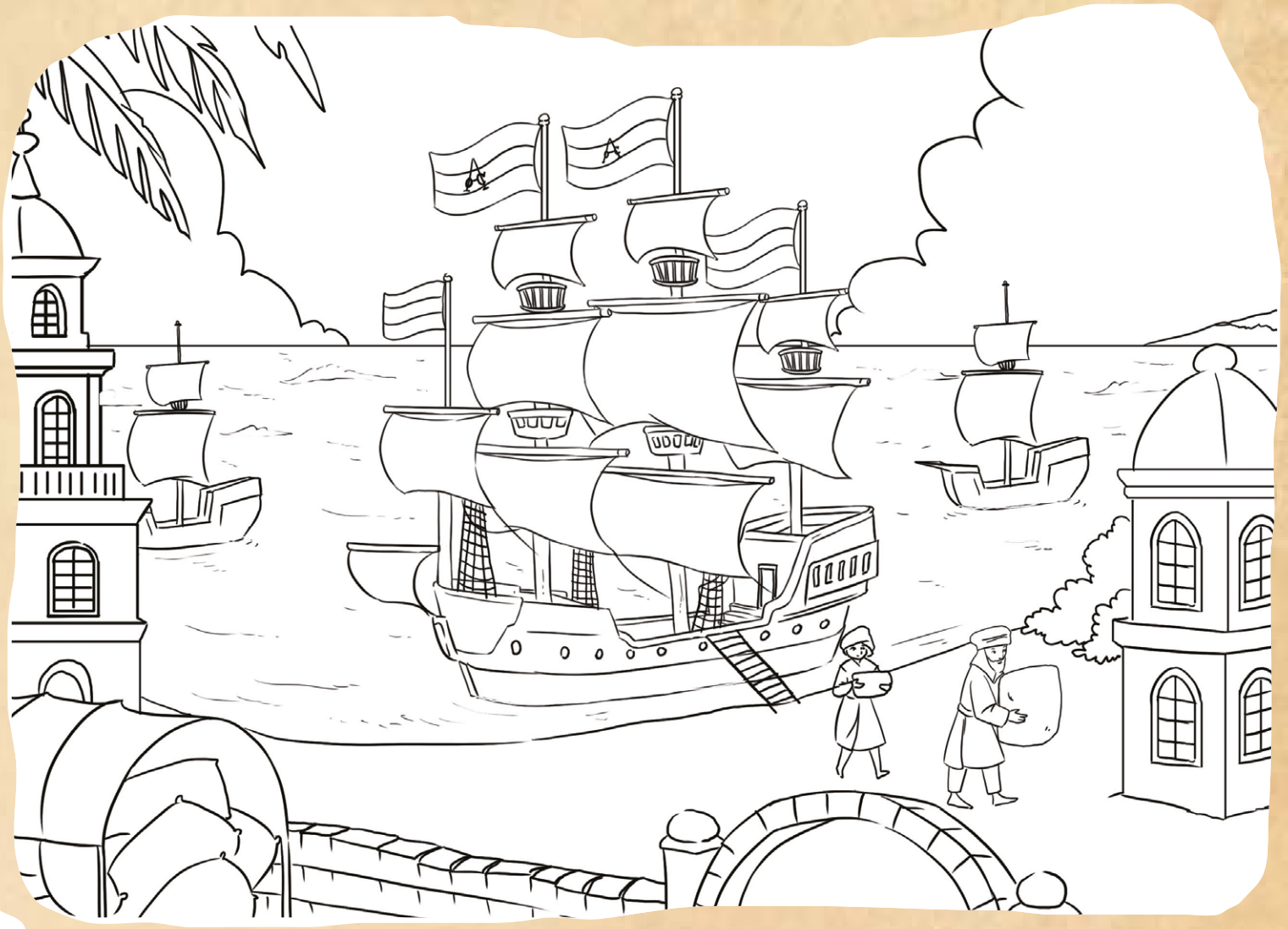




True, Zuri. That is why **SOUTH AFRICA** called it the Table Mountain. One of the oldest mountains in the world. Also, Mpanza, your name comes from one of the largest tribes here in South Africa, the Zulu. It means one *who is intelligent.*

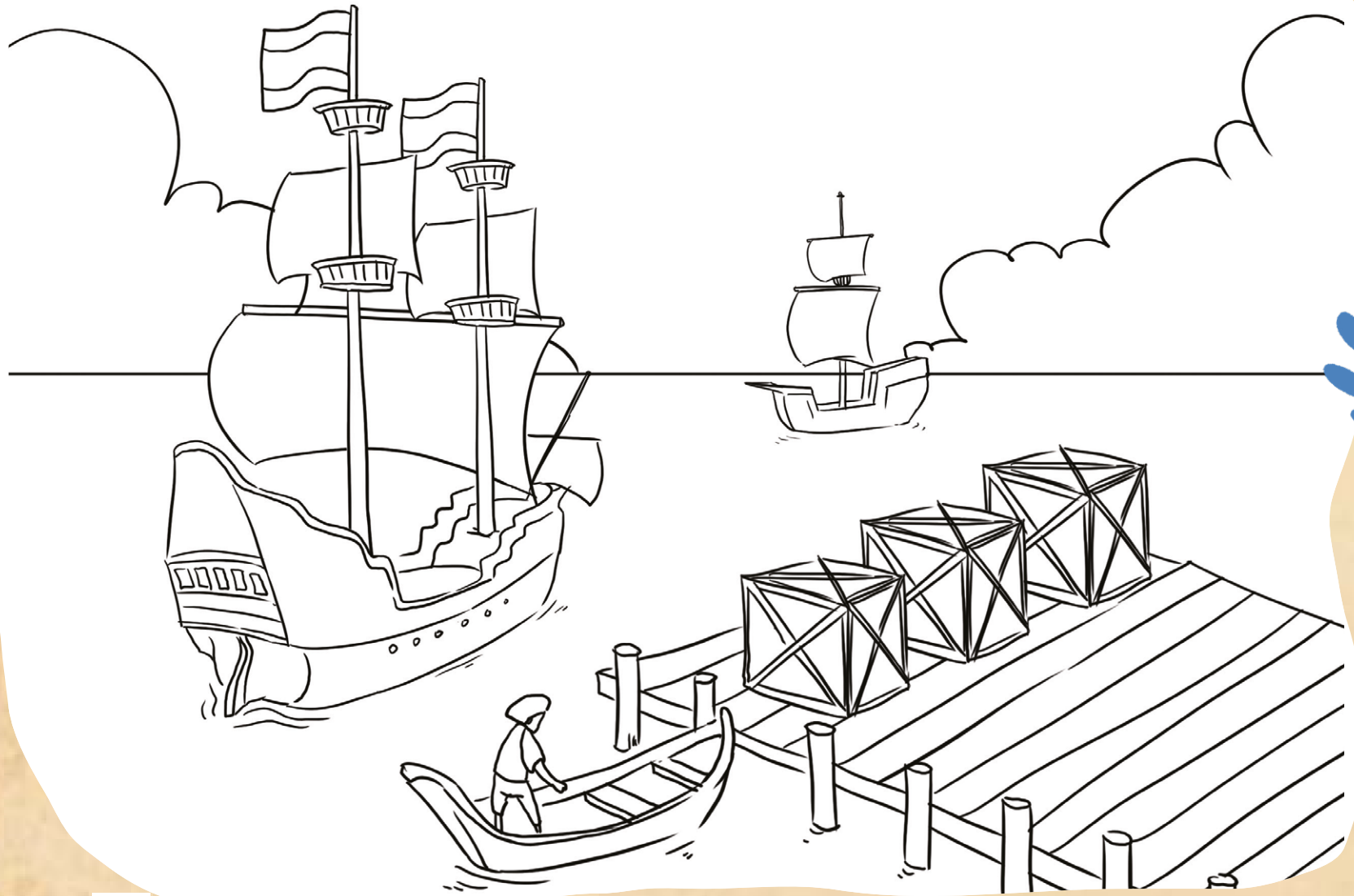


Ha ha ha, we know you are. Now, we have many memories to learn from South Africa, so pay close attention. First, we will learn about the shared memory of South Africa with Europe and Asia.





This was made possible through the Dutch East India Company (VOC) founded in 1602 and became the biggest European trading company in Asia. The company traded in spices, silk, porcelain, and textiles, but it also built forts, kept armies, and made agreements with kings and rulers.







The company had many letters, reports, and even ship logs that tell us about trade, wars, cultures, religions, and everyday life across Asia and Africa during that period.

They also include descriptions of interesting facts, such as records of some of the indigenous communities in South Africa, for example the Khoikhoi and San people, the slave trade in Mombasa, and even the first written account of life in Taiwan, which is in Asia.







That is a lot of memory to have. Where can we find it?





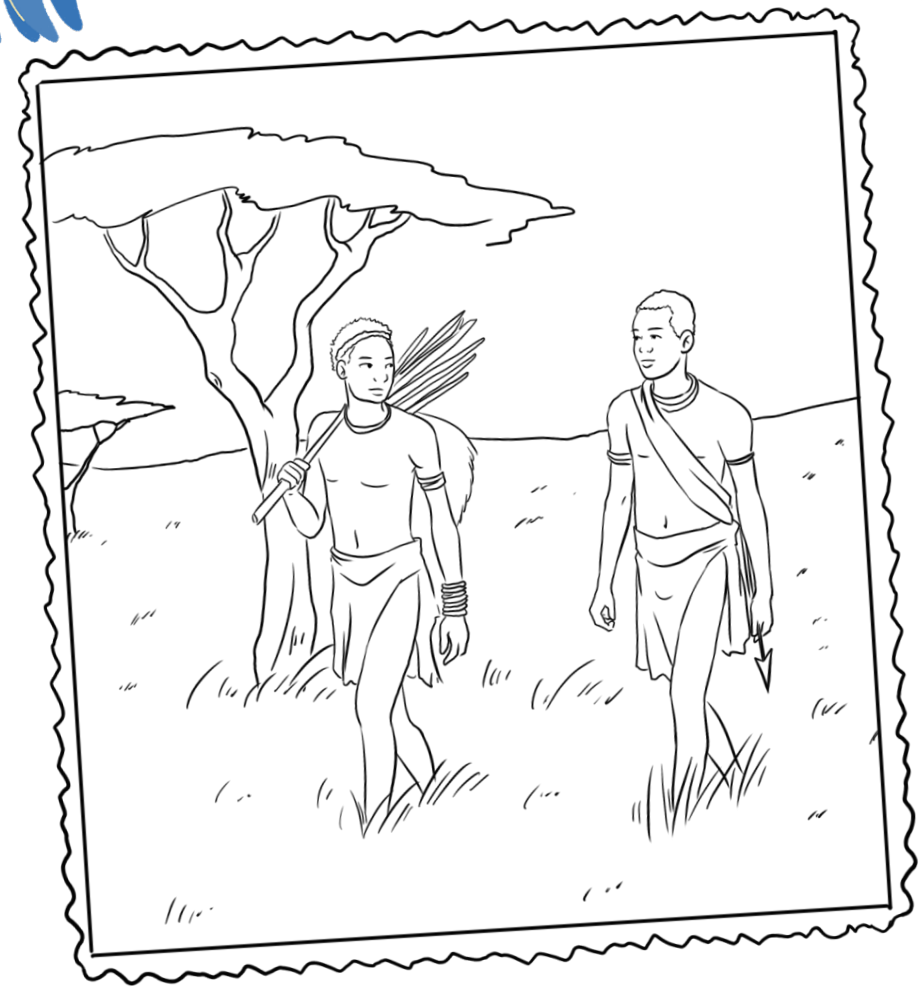


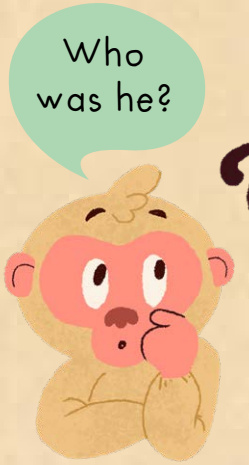
We can find it in the memory institutions such as archives and libraries in South Africa, India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and the Netherlands. They are also digitised so that anyone can learn more about slavery and the trading that took place.

THANK YOU DR. BLEEK



Not where but who. There was a man who helped South Africa keep a unique memory about one of their special tribes.







His name was *Dr. Wilhelm Bleek* and in the 1870s, he came across the San people in a town called Cape Town.

The San are the oldest people in Southern Africa, whose history stretches back over 200,000 years. Dr. Bleek realised that their language and stories might disappear forever, and he wanted to help to keep their language and culture alive for the generations to come.

That is why he began the important work of writing down their language and stories.



Those notebooks became the precious memory we have today that tell us everything we know about the beliefs, culture and language of the San people.



Not at all. It was indeed a lot of work going around listening keenly to a language you do not know. So, his sister-in-law, *Lucy Lloyd*, and later his daughter *Dorothea* joined him. Together, they filled thousands of pages with the myths, songs, words, and drawings of the San people.

Sadly, a fire broke out in 2021 and destroyed some of the papers, but most of them were saved and carefully preserved.



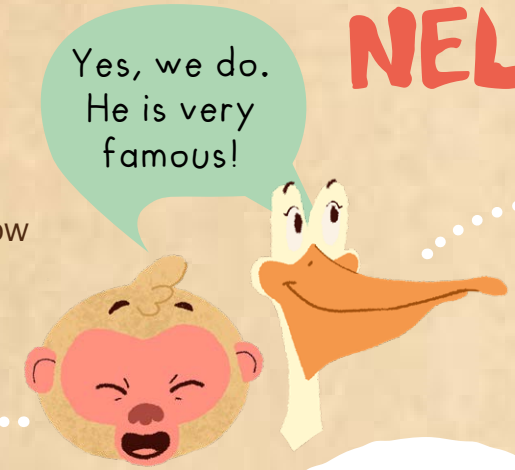
Later, many of them were digitised and can now be read online by anyone wishing to know more about the fascinating history and life of the San people.



NELSON MANDELA



Do you know Nelson Mandela?



Indeed, he is. However, he went through many struggles in his life. We will hear about two main stories he was involved in.

In 1963, Nelson Mandela and his friends were taken to court for fighting for justice for the South African people.

At the time, they were protesting against the unfair system of *apartheid* — a system that separated people by race, giving some people more rights than others based on skin colour.





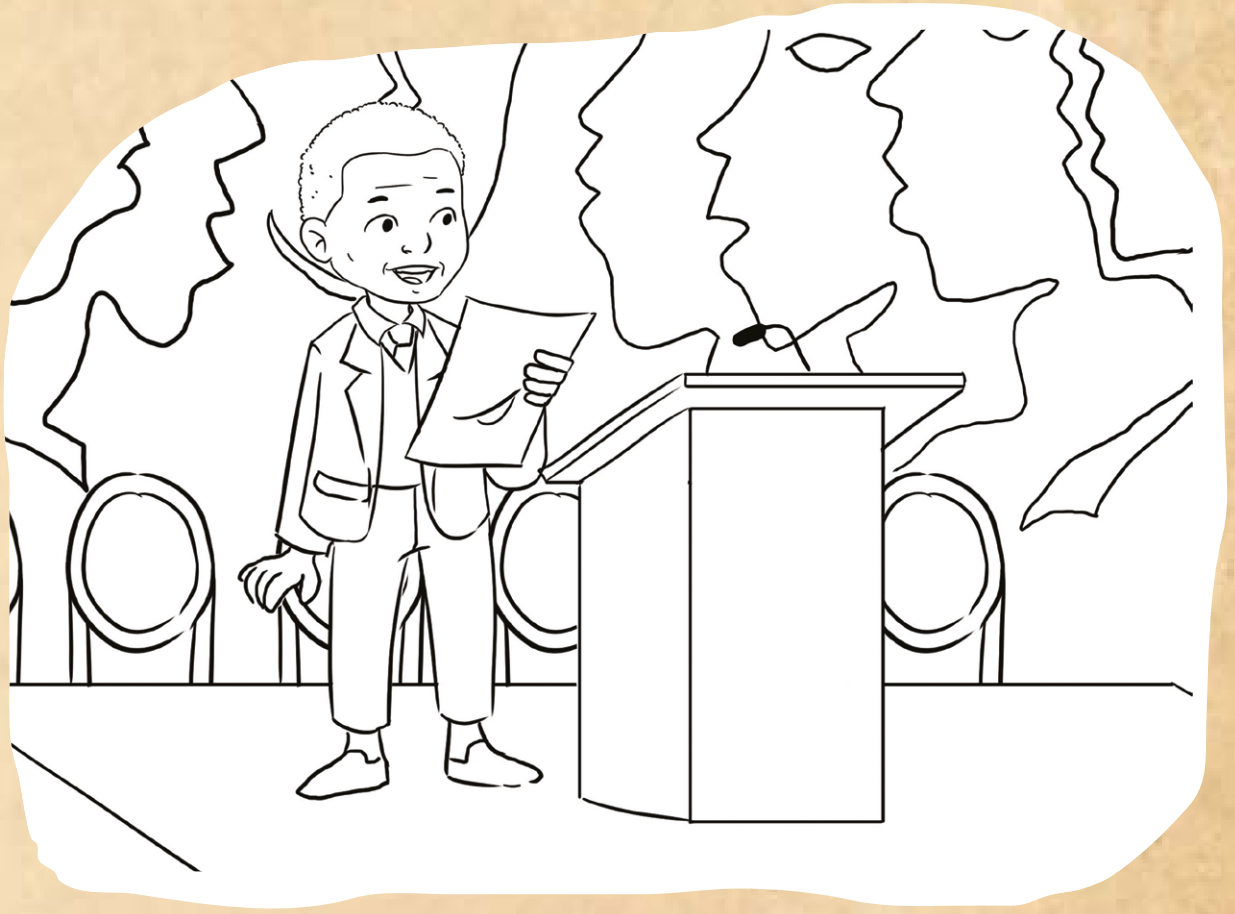
Very much so Mpanza. This is what Nelson Mandela and his friends tried to pass across to the government which was being headed by the Dutch who came and settled in South Africa many years ago. The court case became known as the *Rivonia Trial*.



During the trial, Nelson Mandela gave a famous speech, saying that he was willing to die for democracy and a free society in South Africa



Not just him, but his friends too. The memory of the trial records, which include Mandela's speech, witness testimonies, and even secret papers of his political party, which was called the African National Congress, are all being kept safe by the **National Archives of South Africa.**





They will always remind us of the extraordinary courage it took to fight for freedom and equality in South Africa.



Unfortunately, no, Mpanza. They were sent to prison, but their spirit never broke. Years later, South Africa became independent, broke free from that unfair system, and became a nation where people of all colours could live in freedom.

THE MAN AND HIS CAMERA





What happened next now that Nelson and his friends went to prison!



Others continued to fight for fairness and freedom in a different way. One particular man used his skill in film and photography, and this greatly helped to keep the memory of that fight alive for South Africa and Africa as a whole.



His name was *Craig Matthew* and he was an African journalist. In the 1980s, he used his camera to film the struggle against apartheid, starting from Southwest Africa, which is today Namibia, all the way to South Africa.

His films captured many important moments — people marching in protests, clashes between citizens and police, the funeral of the Guguletu Seven - the seven activists killed during the protests - and even the day Nelson Mandela was finally released from prison after 27 years!

What courage with just a camera!

Indeed Mpanza. The audio-visual recordings that he collected over many years remain as proof of the memory of how the people of Southern Africa fought for their rights, freedom and justice.

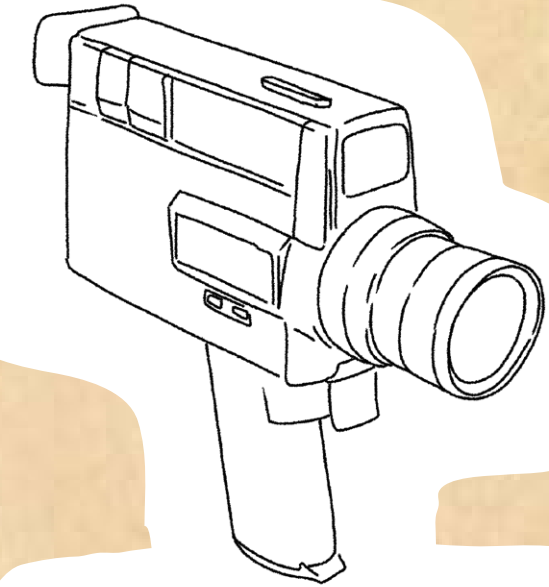
Some of the films were damaged in a fire but were restored by experts.

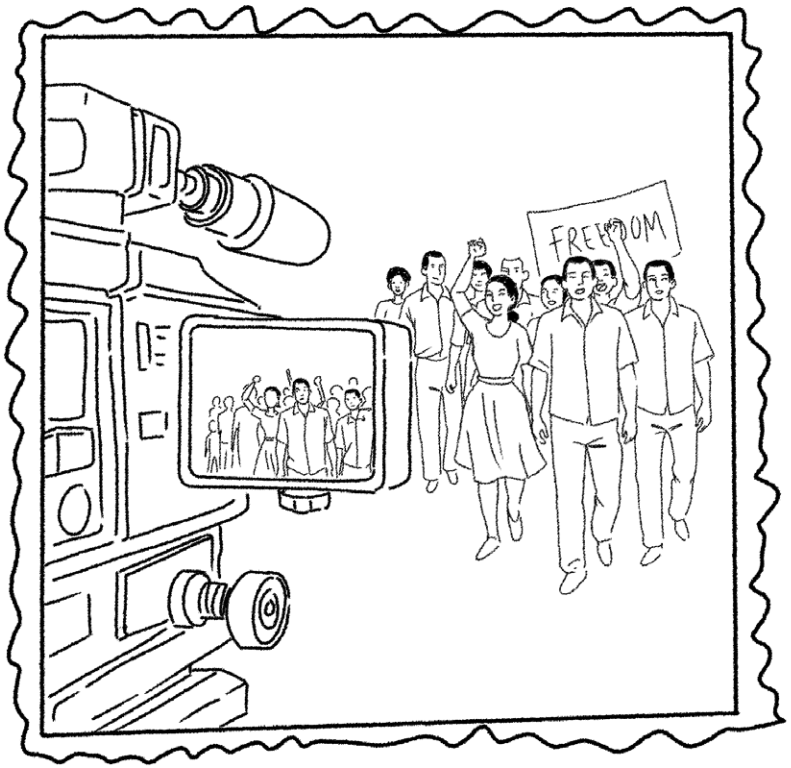
I would like to watch the films!

Well, Zuri, the recordings are well stored by Mr. Matthews himself! And thanks to his camera, South Africans — and people all over the world — will always remember the courage of those who stood up for what is right.

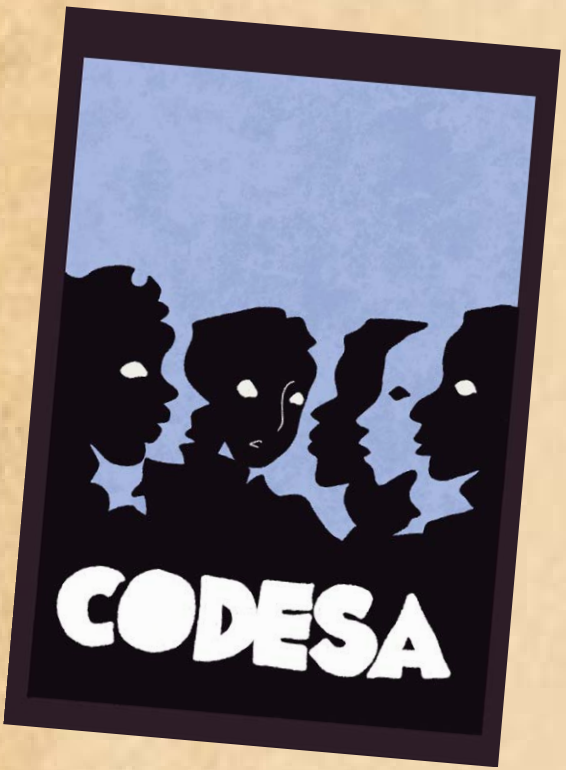
I want to become a photographer when I grow up.

You can become anything you want to be Mpanza! As long as you work to make a positive difference in your community, that will be remembered just like Mr. Matthews.





A FREE SOUTH AFRICA





Well, after so many years of struggle in South Africa, change started to take place.





After Nelson Mandela was released from prison in Robben Island in 1990, the ban on South Africa's most popular political party, the African National Congress (ANC), was lifted.

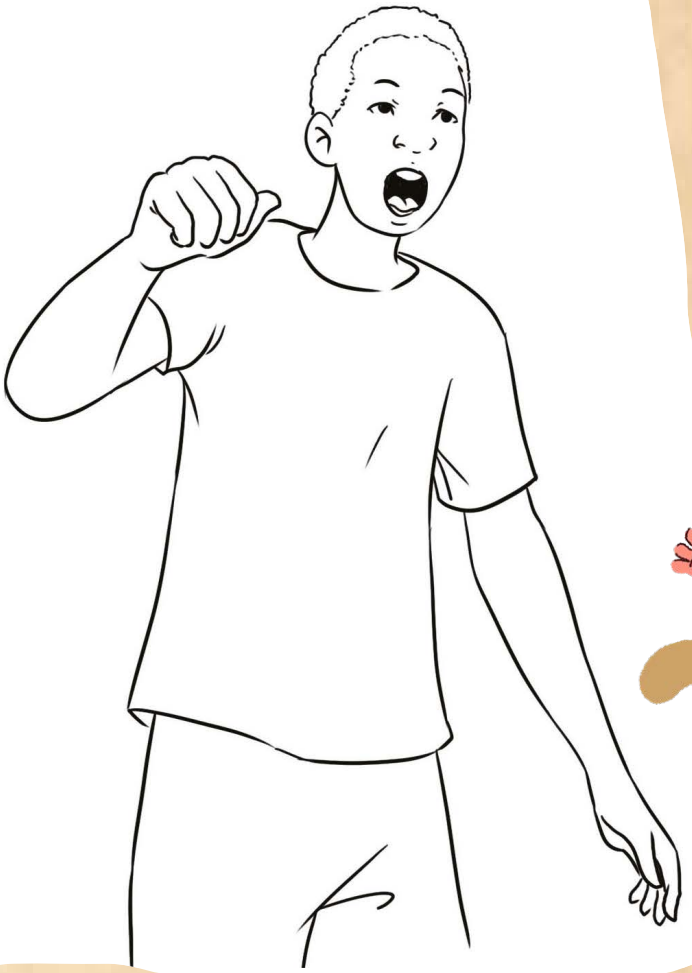
Soon after, leaders from different groups began meeting to plan a new future for the country. This group became known as the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA). Eventually, in 1993, a new constitution for a democratic South Africa was developed.

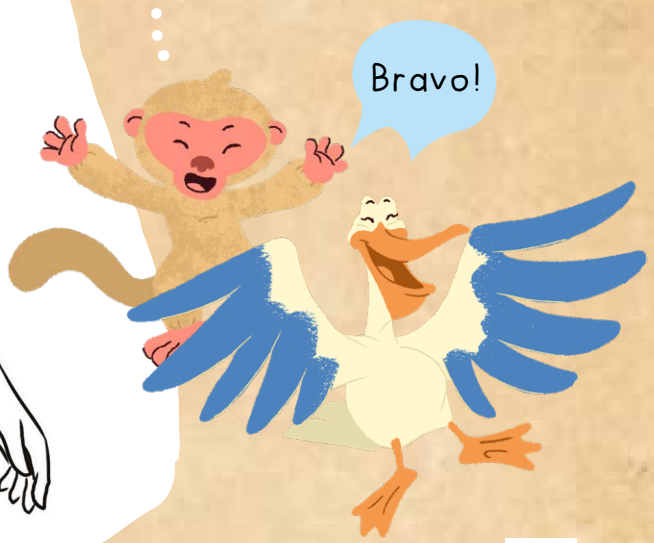


Exactly, Mpanza! Thanks to the dialogue between the government and political groups, South Africa moved from a system of racial division to one where everyone could vote regardless of race. Consequently, they got their independence in 1994 and began to build a new country in peace and equality.

These memories were all recorded in several documents which can be found in the **National Archives of South Africa,** reminding us of the courage, determination and hope that finally ended the unfair system of apartheid and built a new democracy for South Africa.











MOZAMBIQUE



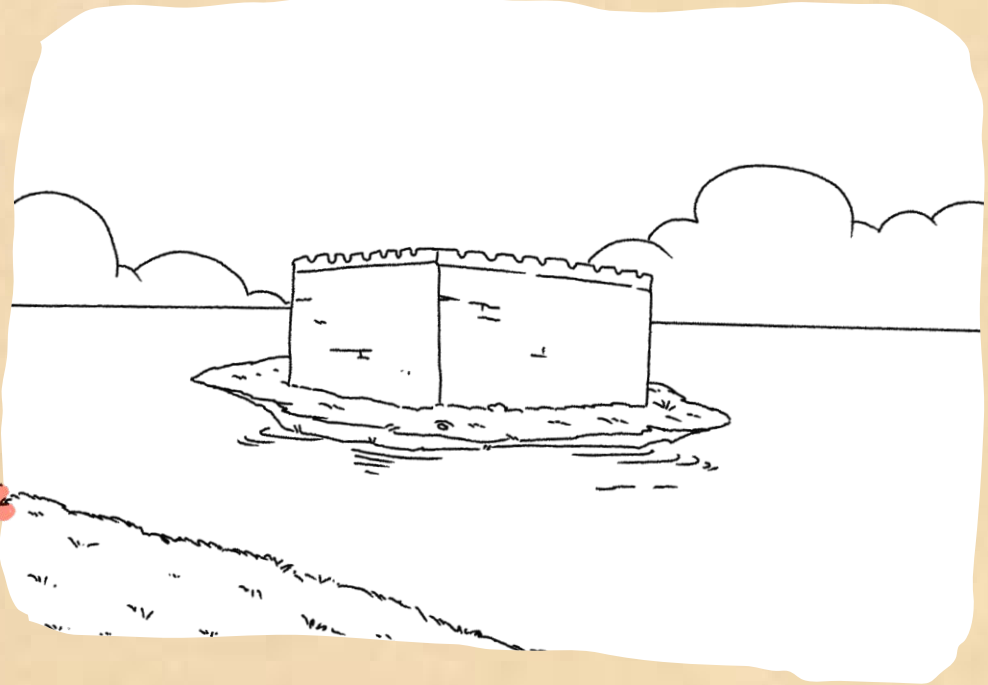
AN END TO SLAVERY



Welcome friends to **MOZAMBIQUE,** a beautiful, peaceful and welcoming country in Southeast Africa. The island you mentioned is known as the *Island of Mozambique*, and it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, known for its coral reefs and beautiful Arab, Portuguese, and African-style architecture.

We will learn about a shared memory Mozambique has with two other countries that we have heard about, namely Cabo Verde and Angola.

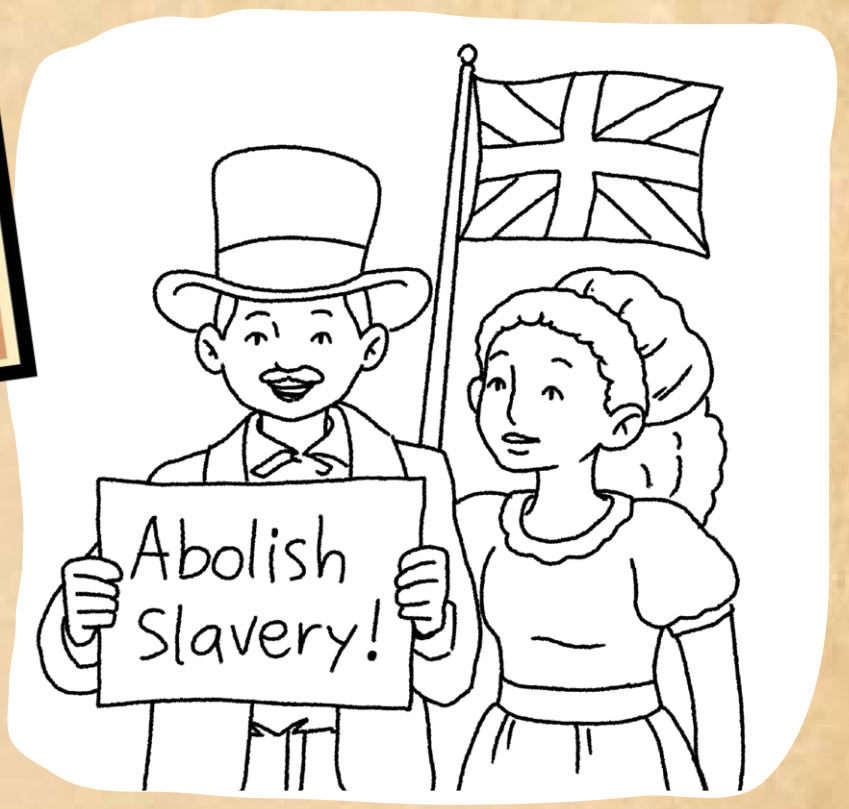






Though Mozambique is beautiful and peaceful, it was not always the case. Just like Cabo Verde and Angola, Mozambique was colonized by the Portuguese.

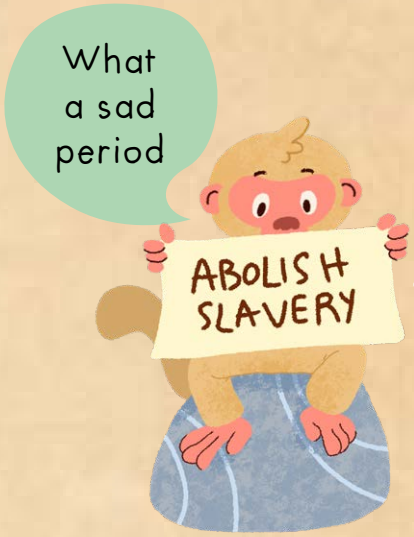


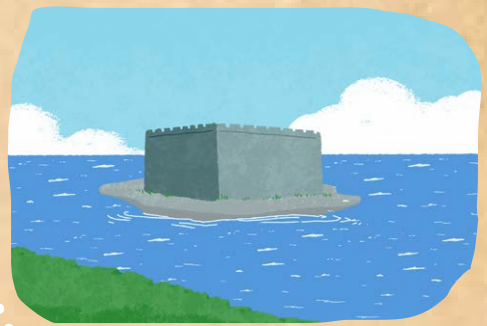


In 1498, a sailor named *Vasco da Gama* reached Mozambique and told the Portuguese king about it. The Portuguese then made Mozambique a major trading port on the East coast of Africa for slaves and other commodities that were being shipped to Europe and Asia.

However, at the beginning of the 19th century, several European countries, led by Britain, began to take a stance against slavery. So, in 1854, the Portuguese king made a rule to register all slaves and freed people in their African colonies. In total, they compiled 79 slave registration books from Angola, Cabo Verde and Mozambique between 1856 and 1875. The books had the names, ages, places of birth, body marks and jobs of slaves, among other information. Shortly after, slavery came to an end in 1869. These books can be found in the national archives and libraries of the three countries.







Indeed, it was, but one positive outcome was that these records are a reminder that slavery is a bad practice and that every person deserves freedom and respect.





MADAGASCAR



THE ROYALS OF MADAGASCAR



Now, we move slightly away from mainland Africa and into the islands!





You will like the next story then. We are now in **MADAGASCAR,** the land of the famous baobab trees, which are also known as the trees of life. They can live for 3000 years thanks to their big trunks that hold many litres of water. It is also home to the lemurs, an animal species that is only found in Madagascar.



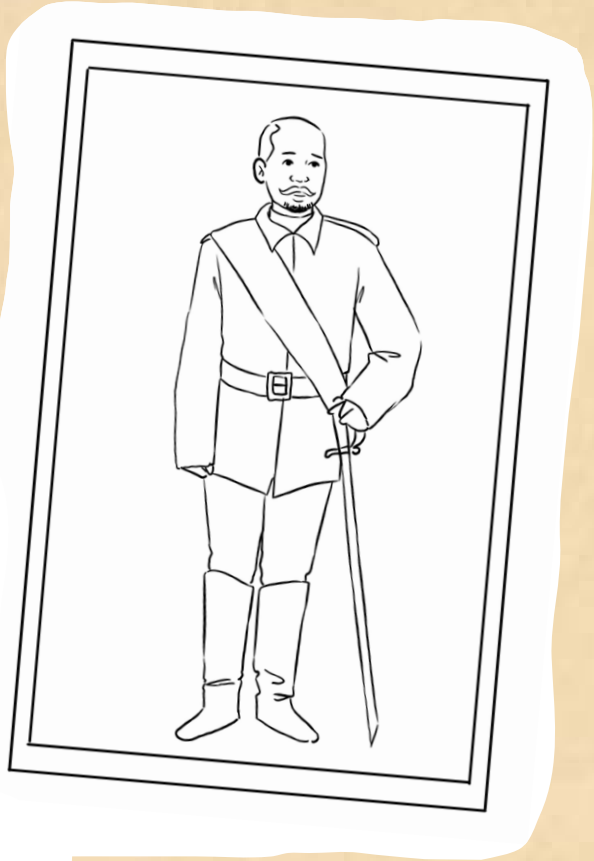


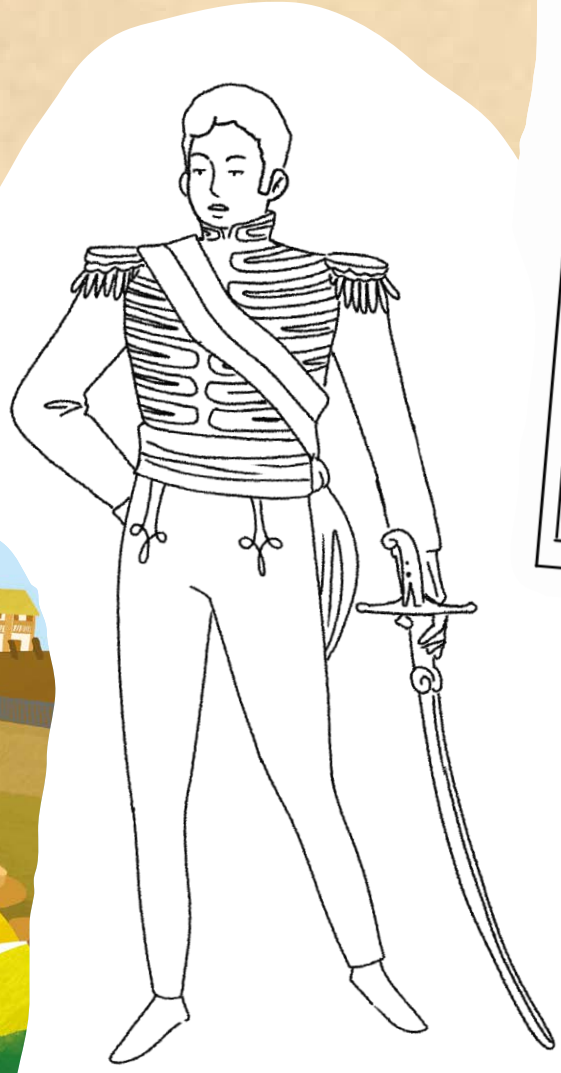
To be one, you must work to serve others just like the baobab tree and the kings and queens of Madagascar. In the early 18th century, Madagascar was officially recognized as a kingdom for the very first time through a treaty made between the Malagasy *King Radama I*, and the Mauritian governor, *Robert Farquhar*, in 1817. A treaty is a special agreement between countries, and once signed, countries must respect it.



Very correct, Zuri. Under King Radama I, the Latin alphabet was adopted, shaping the way Malagasy is written today.





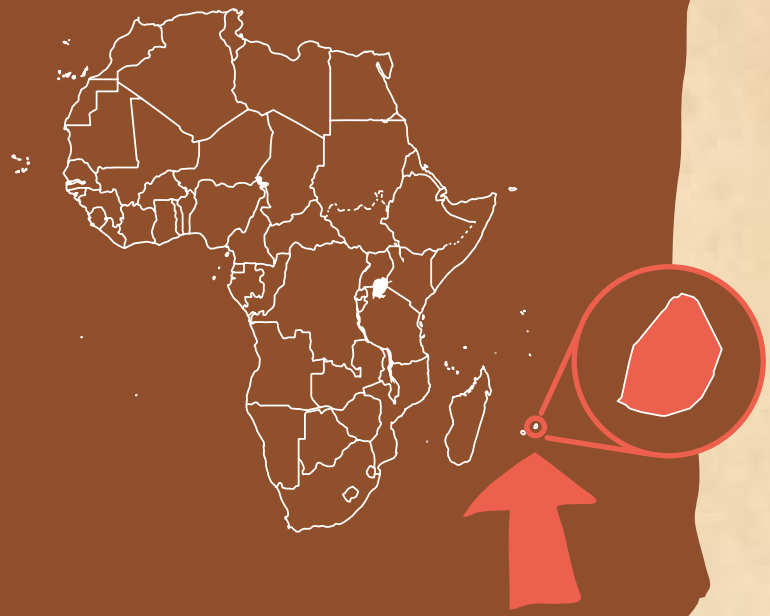


New schools were built, Christianity began to spread, Madagascar became more connected to Europe and finally a governance structure was developed for the island.

The Royal Archives recorded all these memories between 1878 and 1897 in different languages - Malagasy, French, and English. They also include memories of some of the famous kingdoms that existed in Madagascar, such as the diary of the powerful *Prime Minister Rainilaiarivony*, the *Sakaizambohitra* records – a set of instructions for officials.



From them, we learn about how African nations engaged with European nations and how we set up systems that built our nations.





MAURITIUS



THE FRENCH IN MAURITIUS

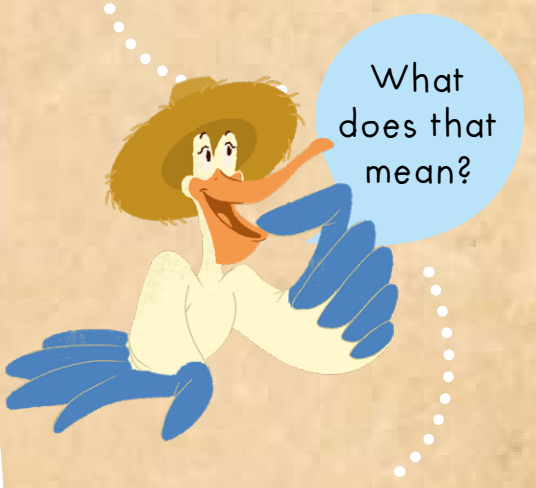
Welcome friends, to the wonderful island of **MAURITIUS,** known for its beautiful landscapes, coastlines and the *dodo bird* which is now unfortunately extinct. Mauritius has many rich memories for us to learn from, so once again, let us pay close attention.





In 1715, France took over Mauritius and renamed it Isle de France. Over time, Mauritius sadly became the centre for slave trade in the Indian Ocean. Then in 1721, the French East India Company was given administrative control over the island.

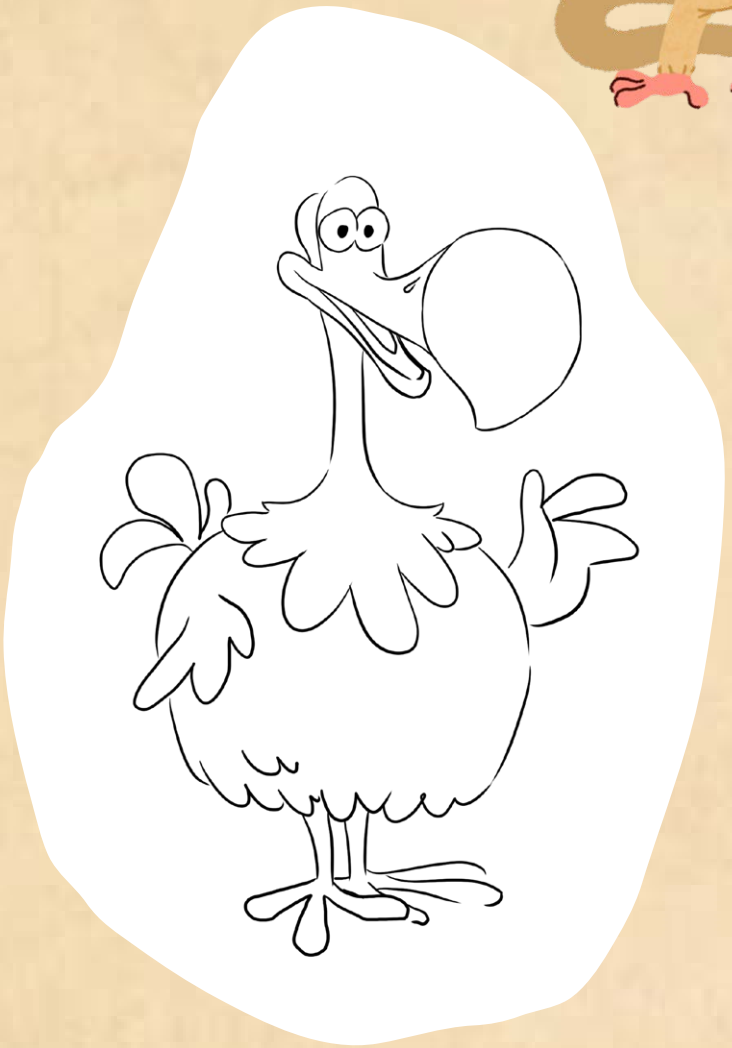




This meant the company was going to manage the country and ensure it obtained resources for France through the people. To do this, they began by setting up large sugarcane plantations, making sugar a major cash crop for Mauritius. Since the plantations were quite large, they needed many hands to work.

Thousands of Africans were taken from their homes in Madagascar and the African coast and forced to work as slaves in the sugarcane fields. Life was extremely hard for the enslaved people who were about 80% of the population of Mauritius by the 1700s.









Yes, we do. The French kept records that tell us rich stories about pirates and sea battles, the slave trade, the daily struggles of slave families, and the long fight for freedom from slavery, which was finally abolished in 1835 when the island was under British rule.

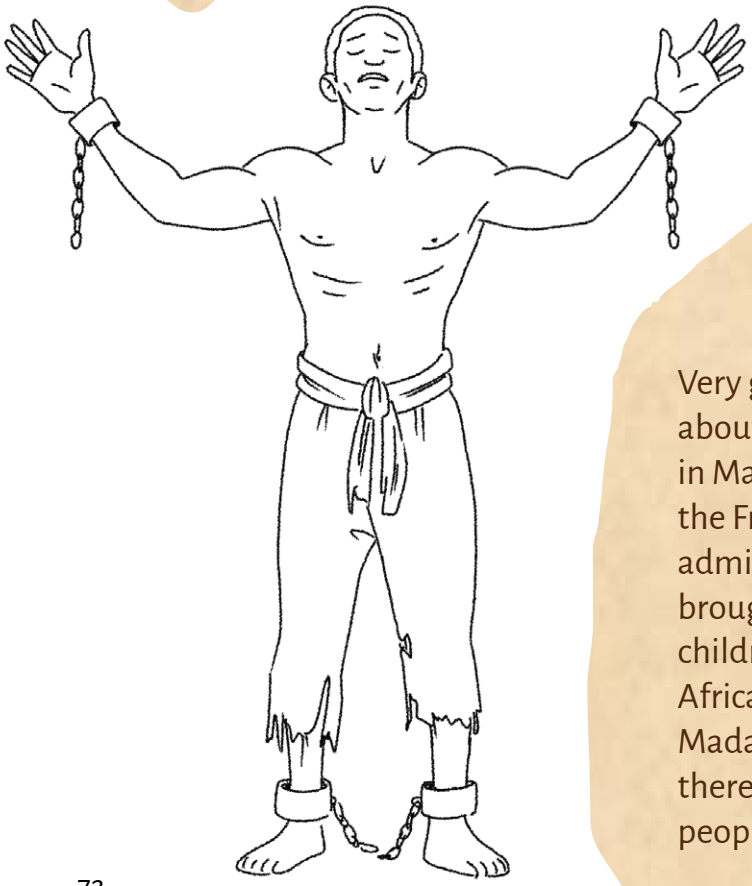
The **National Archives Department of Mauritius** now keeps these memories, and from them we learn how colonialism and slavery shaped the island's history. They also ensure that the voices of those who lived through it are never forgotten.

THE FRENCH EAST INDIA COMPANY

Do you remember our story about Mozambique?

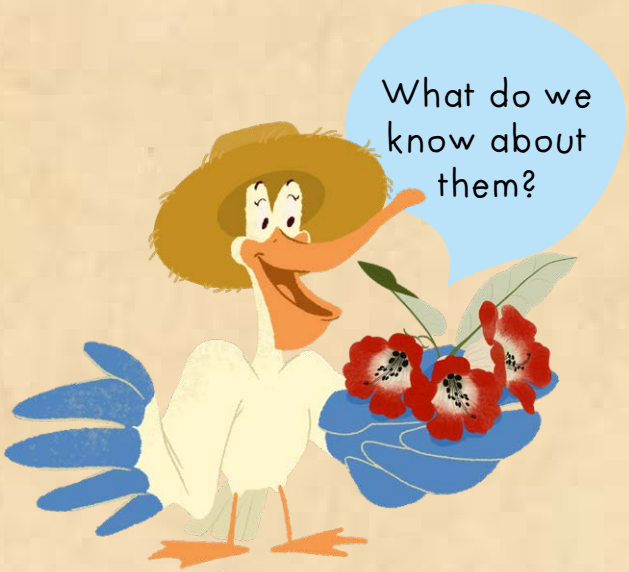


Yes, we do. They had to register all the enslaved people in Mozambique and eventually, slavery ended!

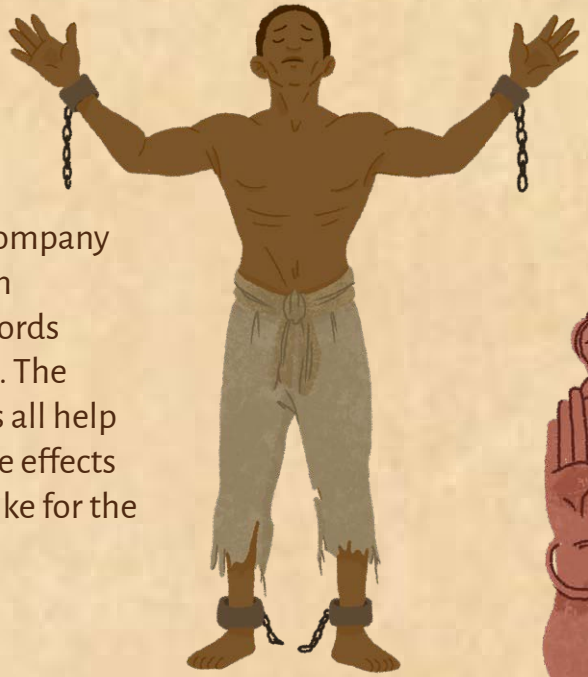


Very good, Mpanza! Now, I will tell you about something similar that took place in Mauritius. We have heard about how the French East India Company was given administrative control of the island. Ships brought thousands of men, women, and children as slaves from the East coast of Africa, such as Mozambique and Zanzibar, Madagascar, India, and beyond. By 1807, there were more than 65,000 enslaved people living on the island.





Well, the French East India Company coordinated the slave trade in Mauritius and kept many records that tell us about that period. The registries, letters, and reports all help us to understand the negative effects of slavery and what life was like for the slaves.





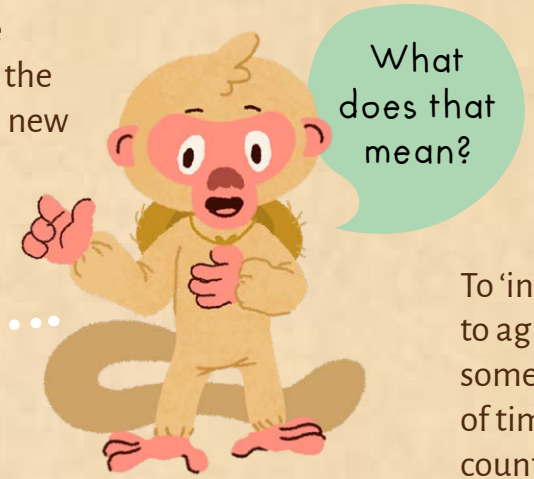
Despite those dark memories, Mauritius became home to a vibrant mix of many different cultures and peoples, whose descendants today are known as the *Creoles*.

The records of that period are kept at the **National Archives Department of Mauritius.** They are also being digitised so everyone can learn from this history and never forget the lives of the enslaved people.



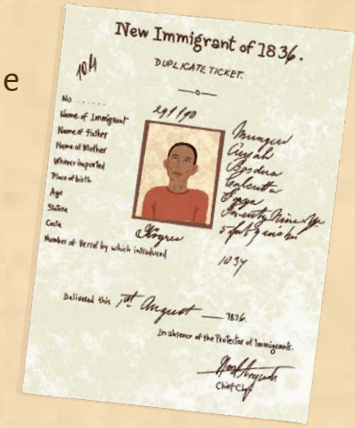
THE GREAT MIGRATION

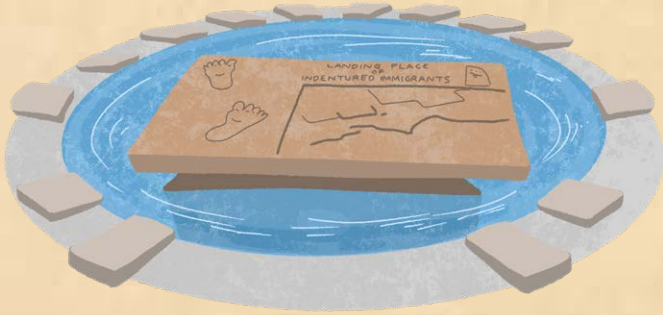
Still in Mauritius, the British took over from the French in 1810. Then in 1834, Mauritius became the first place in the world where the British tried a new system called the *indentured system*.





To 'indenture' means to agree to work for someone for a certain period of time, often far from your home country. This is what happened in Mauritius. Nearly half a million people from India, China, Madagascar, Southeast Asia, and Africa agreed with the British government and travelled across oceans in search of a better life in a new country. When they came, they landed at the Aapravasi Ghat, which is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



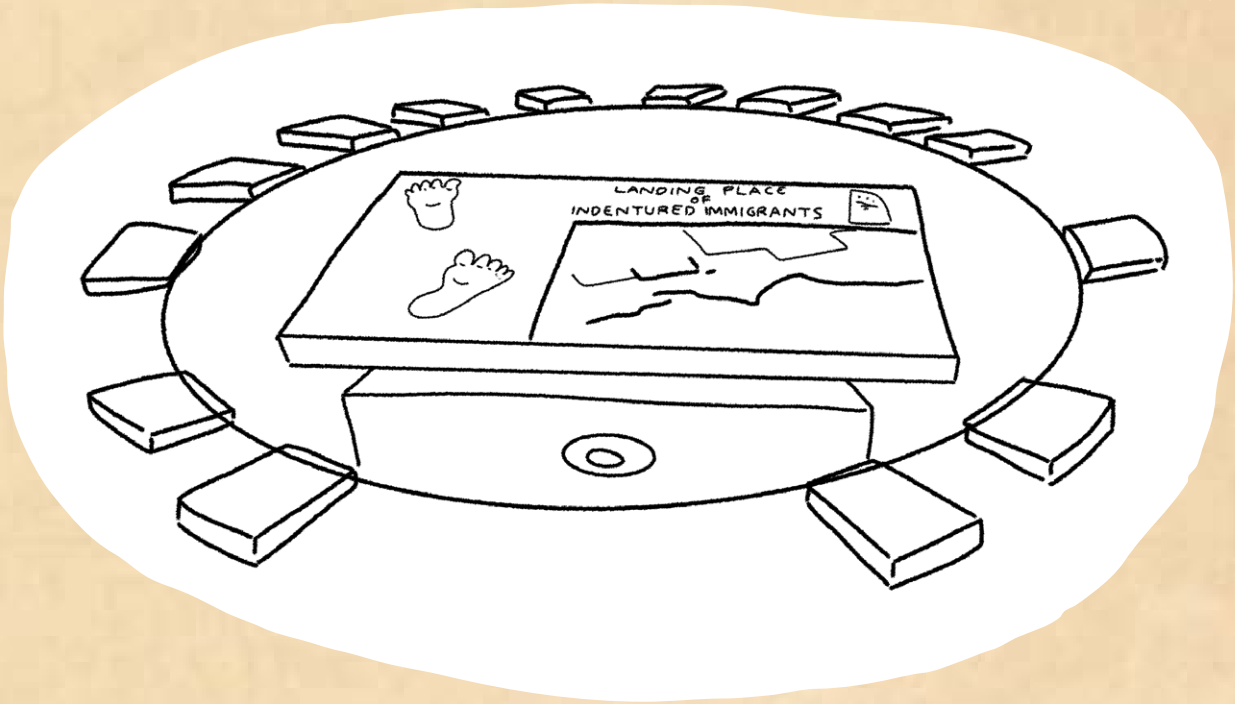




Yes, they were, Zuri. These are the people whose details were recorded, such as their names, home countries and the dates when they arrived on the island. These records serve as important memories, helping us to understand the lives, working conditions, and experiences of indentured labourers, as well as how migration changed societies and economies during that time.



Now, every year on 2 November , Mauritian families gather at the Aapravasi Ghat to remember their ancestors who came to work on the island. Coming from many different parts of the world, they make Mauritius one of the most diverse countries in terms of culture, language, and heritage in the world.





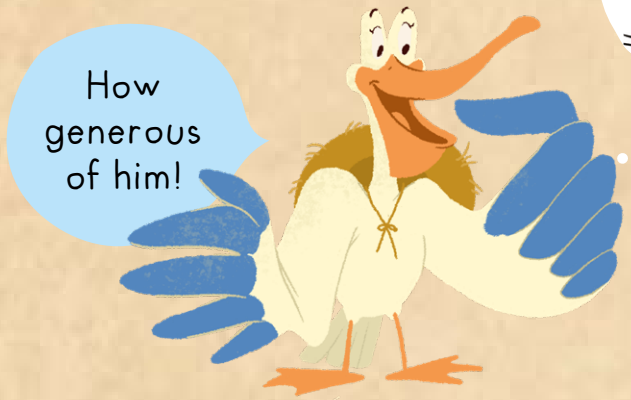
At the **National Archives,** the **National Library,** and the **Mahatma Gandhi Institute** in Mauritius, where they are kept as a reminder of the sacrifices and contributions of the indentured labourers to Mauritius and the world.

THE APOSTLE OF MAURITIUS



Yes, and it is our last. In 1841, a French priest named *Père Jacques Désiré Laval* arrived in Mauritius from France. He went there as a missionary and almost immediately began to serve the people. He dedicated his whole life to helping the poor, the sick, and the newly freed slaves who were struggling to rebuild their lives after the end of slavery.





Yes, he was and due to his compassion and support to the poor, he earned the name of "*Apostle of Mauritius*". Père Laval was not only a priest but also very skilled in medicine. He taught, fed and used his medical skills to care for the sick. By the time he died in 1864, he had baptized nearly 67,000 people!

Every year on September 8, thousands of Mauritians visit his shrine to remember him and celebrate his life. The story of Père Laval lives on in the archives, where his letters, reports, books, maps, and even stamps are kept for future generations.







Very true, Mpanza, and these memories give us an understanding of how the Christian faith helped the freed slaves of Mauritius to live a more dignified life through the help and support of Fr. Père Lava. This is why he is still remembered with so much love and respect, inspiring us to help those in need in our communities.



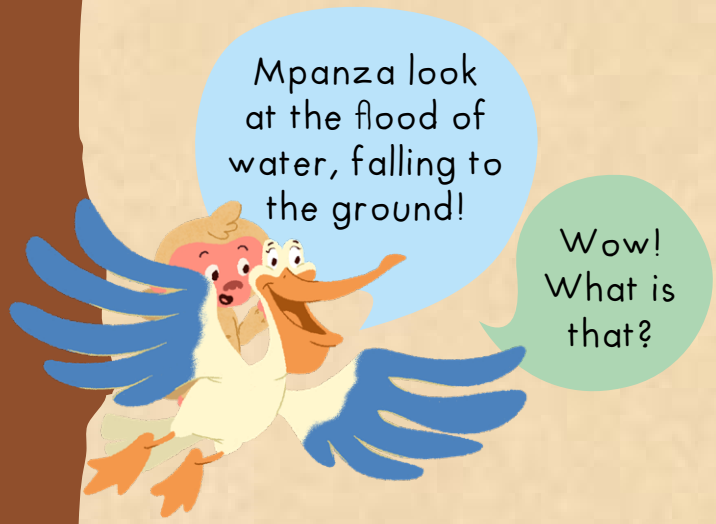




ZIMBABWE

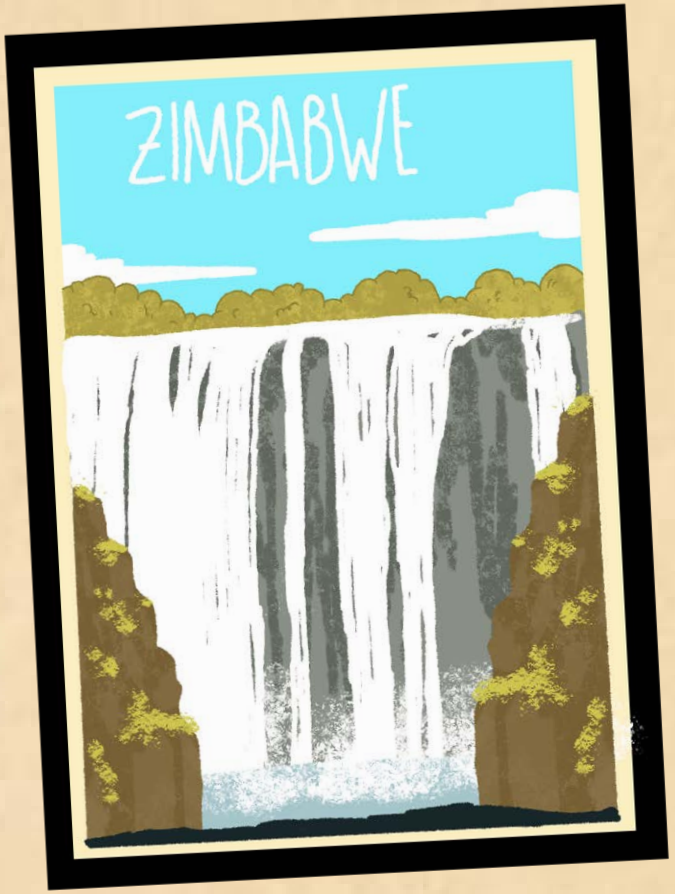


NAHENDA AND KAGUVI



That is called the Victoria Falls, and it is the biggest in Africa. It is found in the beautiful country of **ZIMBABWE** on the Zambezi River, from which the country was named.

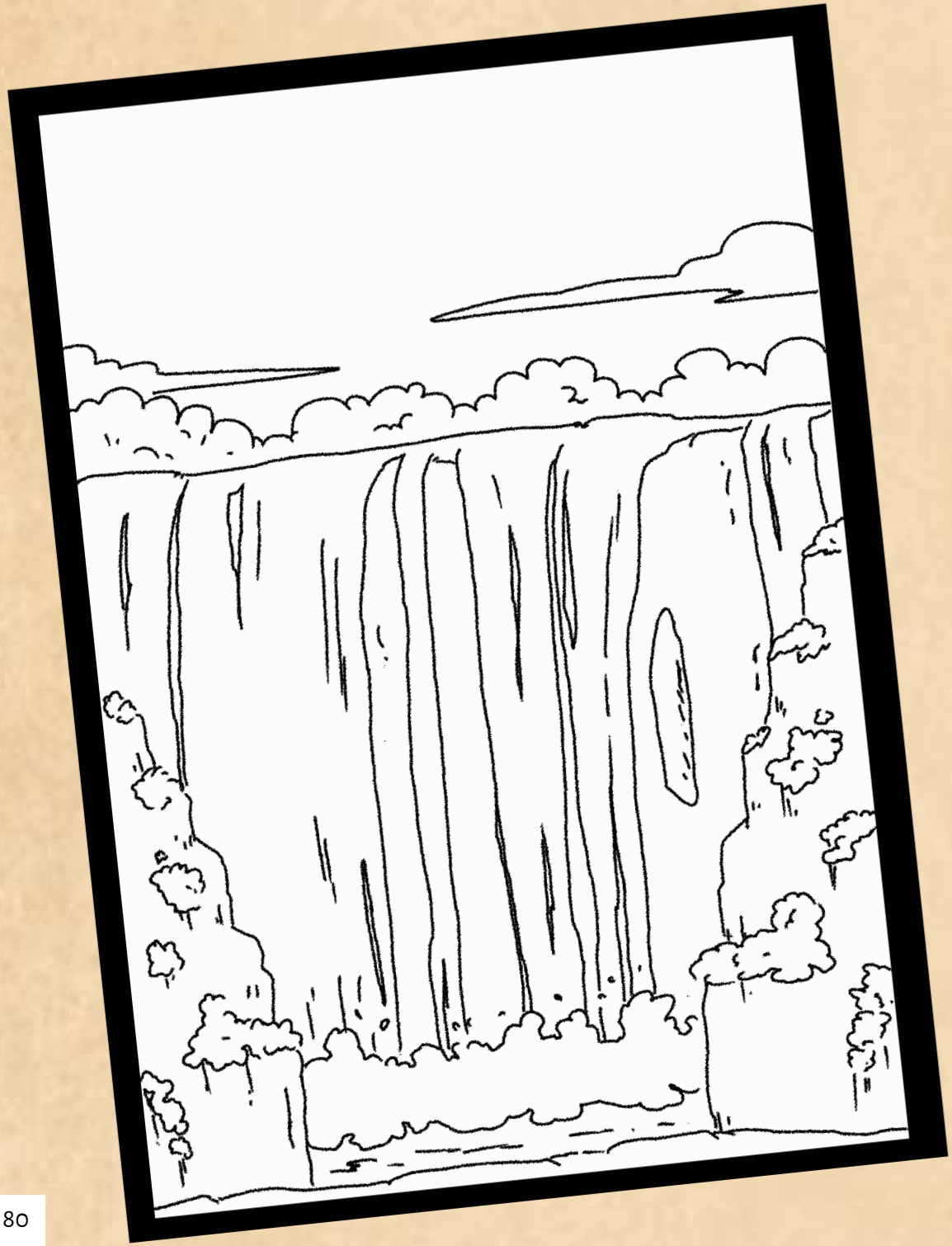
It is also home to the Great Zimbabwe Ruins, which was a centre for the Indian Ocean trade and is now a UNESCO World Heritage site due to its historical significance.



Our story here goes back to 1896, when two brave spirit mediums named *Nehanda*, a female spirit medium and *Kaguvi*, a male spirit medium lived.

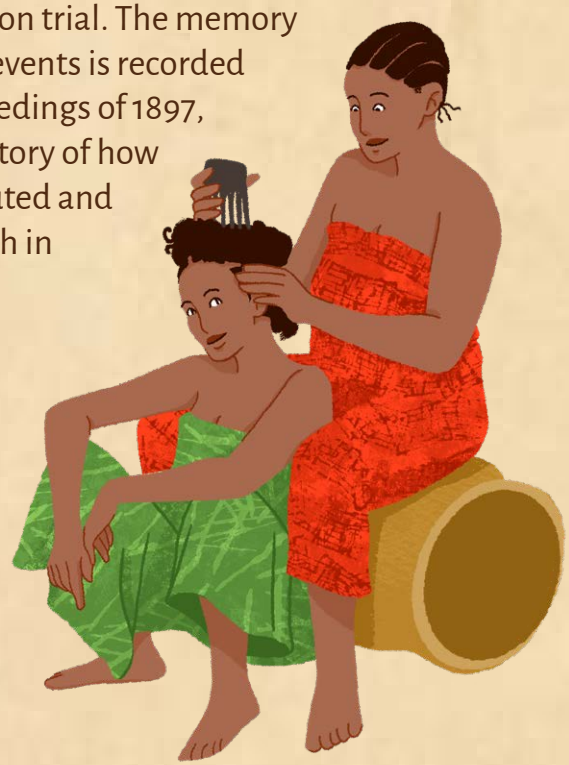


They rallied the indigenous people of Zimbabwe to rise against British colonial rule. They worked side by side, uniting many local chiefdoms to fight in what became known as the *First Chimurenga War* (War of Liberation) between 1896 – 1897.





Indeed, they were. However, because of their courage, Nehanda and Kaguvi were captured and put on trial. The memory we have of those events is recorded in the court proceedings of 1897, and they tell the story of how they were prosecuted and sentenced to death in 1898.





Not in their lifetime, however, they ignited a fire in those they left behind to continue with the fight. Nahenda, at the moment of her execution, refused to give up. She prophesied that her bones would rise again. Then, a century later, her words inspired the Second Chimurenga War, which led to Zimbabwe's independence in 1980.





The records can be found at the **National Archives of Zimbabwe** reminding us of the struggle for freedom in Zimbabawe and that we should always have the courage to stand up for what is right.



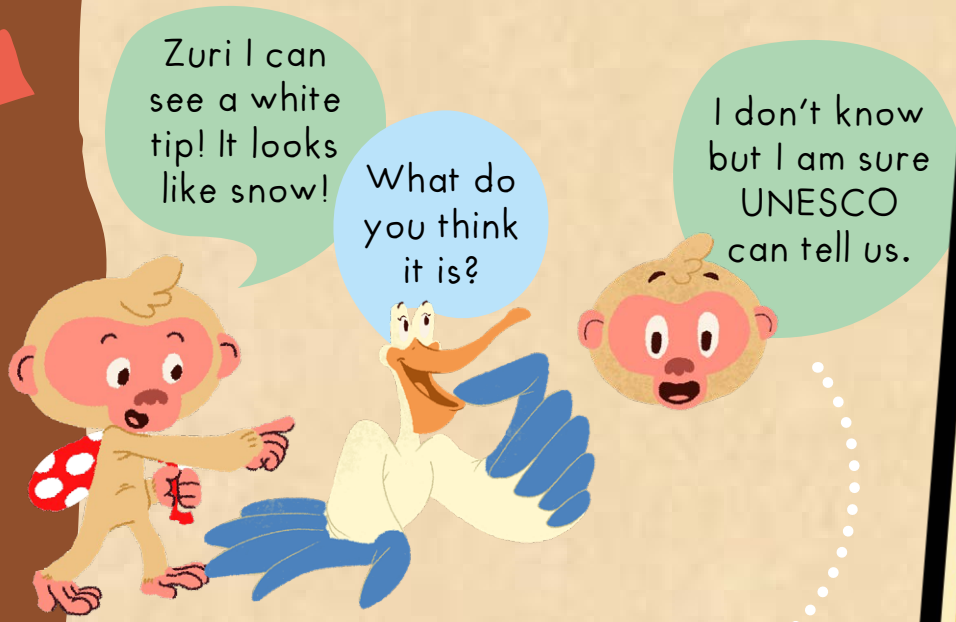




TANZANIA



THE ARAB WRITINGS





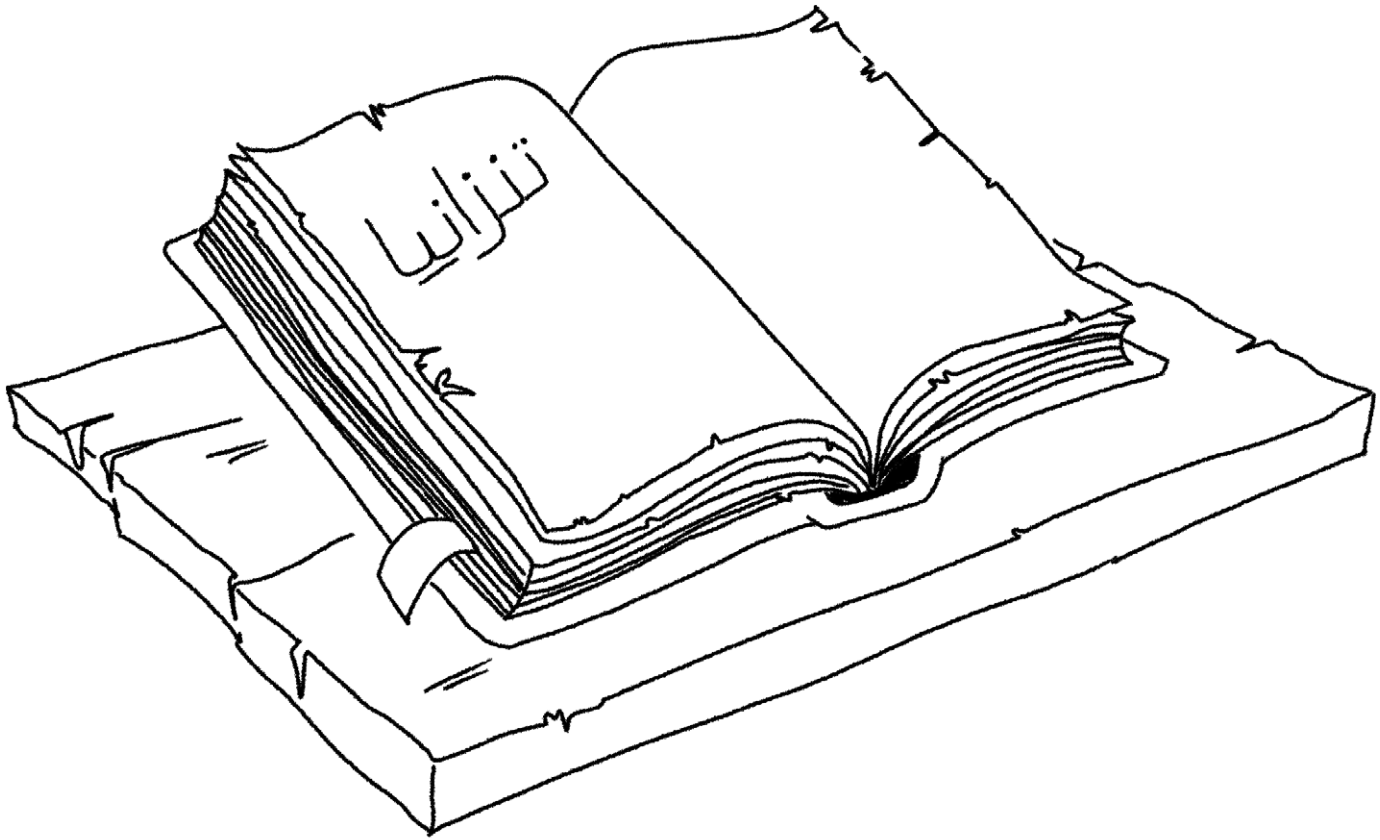
Yes, I can. We are now in **TANZANIA,** home to Mt. Kilimanjaro—the highest mountain in Africa.

The country consists of mainland Tanzania and the island of Zanzibar, which are home to the Swahili people and culture. Kiswahili language has the highest number of speakers in Africa. We will now hear about some of the memories from Tanzania.

In the 1800s, Zanzibar thrived as a vibrant crossroads — a bustling trading hub, a centre of learning, and the heart of Swahili culture. From this small island, the Swahili language and Islam spread widely across East and Central Africa. As is the custom of Arabic culture, where writings are important, several manuscripts were written by the Arabs who came to the island.



They wrote about religion, medicine, astronomy, navigation (sailing), poetry, and daily life. Each text was carefully hand-written in beautiful Arabic calligraphy, reflecting the high value placed on knowledge and writing.





Unfortunately, many of these delicate books face the risk of fading with time. To ensure this does not happen, the **Zanzibar Archives** is working with professionals to protect and preserve them, ensuring that their memory educates the coming generations.

GERMAN RECORDS OF TANZANIA

Just like many countries in Africa, Tanzania was also occupied by another country. In the late 1800s, colonial powers raced to claim control of African territories, during what came to be known as the '*Scramble for Africa*'. Germany claimed vast territories and took parts of East Africa, including today's Tanzania, Rwanda, and Burundi.



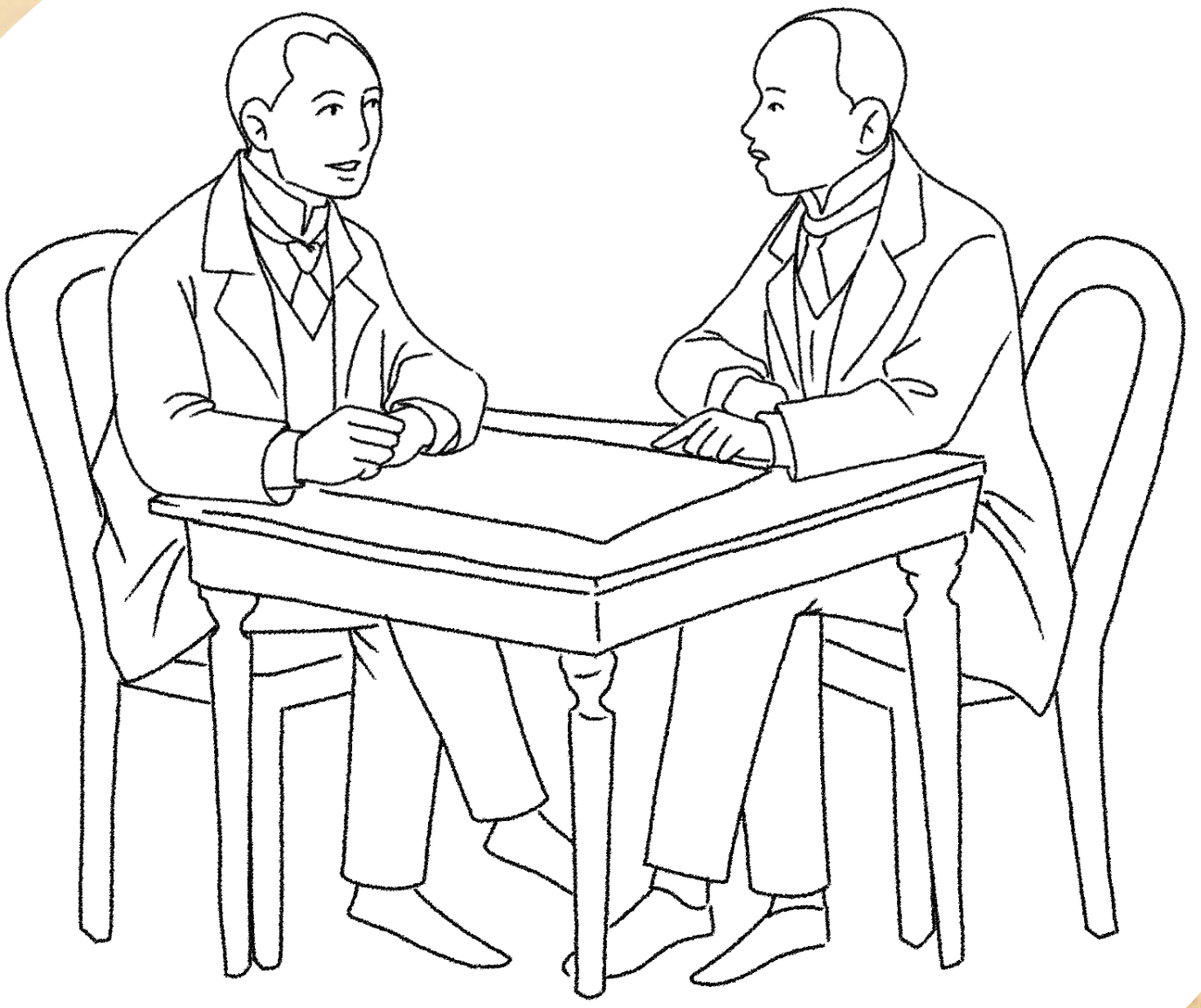


Yes, it was. The Germans also documented the memories of that period of history while in Tanzania. Their records include documents that existed before the First World War (1914-1918) and district political administration papers on public works, education, and land issues during this colonial period. This was necessary to show the progress they were making in the colony.

The **Tanzania National Archives** keeps these memories safe and can be accessed by anyone who would like to understand more about the role played by Germans in shaping the history of Tanzania.



Very true Zuri and if we do so, then the whole world to live in peace.







ETHIOPIA



THE STORY OF A GREAT LAND



Friends, we are now on our last story.



Good question Mpanza. We will now hear about the oldest independent country in Africa, never colonized, and which has a unique calendar of 13 months, the only one in the world. It is also known as the birthplace of coffee, being the leading coffee-producing country in Africa. Welcome to the great land of **ETHIOPIA!**

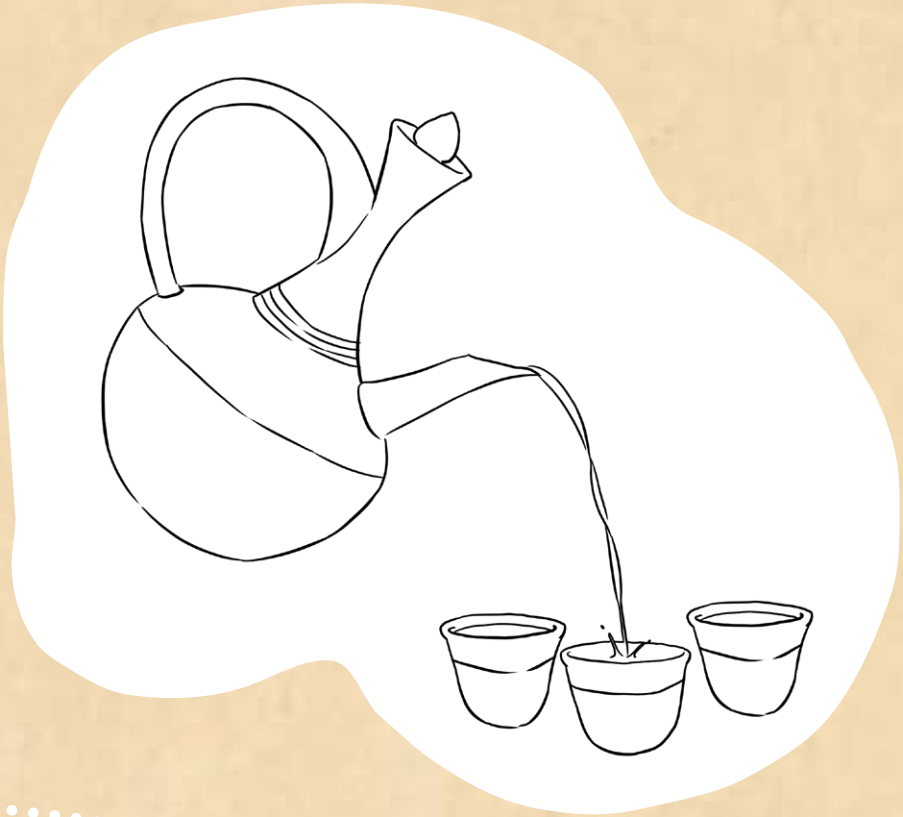




Ethiopia has some of the world's oldest and most precious manuscripts. These manuscripts were written in unique alphabets using the *Ge'ez* and *Amharic languages*, showing how advanced the people of Ethiopia were in language and literature.



They tell us wonderful stories about the kings and queens of Ethiopia like the famous Ethiopian *King Menelik II*. There are letters written between Ethiopian emperors and famous world rulers like Queen Victoria of the United Kingdom.

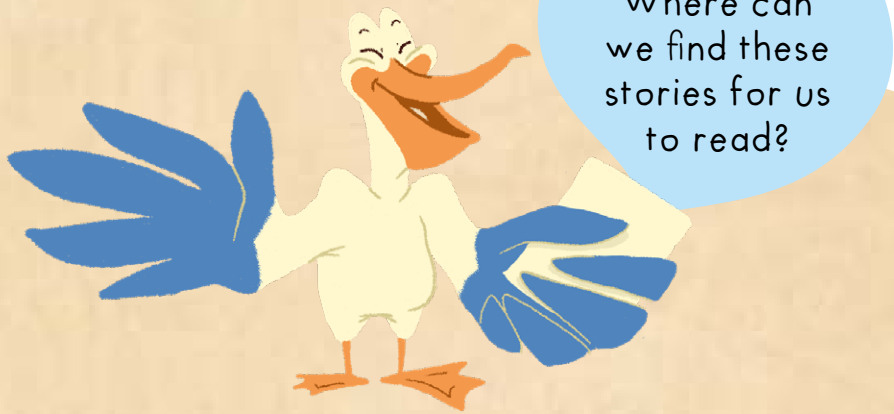




Among these manuscripts is the first printed book in Ethiopia, created in 1513, and the beautiful Christian texts carefully written on *vellum* hundreds of years ago. Vellum is a special writing material made from thin sheets of animal skin that was used in the olden days before paper was invented.







At the **National Archives and Library of Ethiopia,** where they are protected and preserved. There, you can learn more about the history and celebrated traditions.

Friends, this marks the end of our long journey around our homeland Africa!



Yes we are Mpanza and I hope you have learnt many things about Africa and that you have enjoyed colouring your way through the memories we shared.







Very good, friends. UNESCO will continue to encourage all African countries to keep their written memories alive and we hope we can count on you to help us in this quest.



Until next time....

Mpanza and Zuri finally returned home, and they perch on the tallest tree overlooking the whole continent.





The glowing book rested between them, its pages turning with the evening breeze.

Because the story of the continent never ends, it grows brighter each time someone remembers.

COLOUR THE COUNTRIES YOU HAVE DISCOVERED SO FAR



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Senegal

Burkina Faso

Ghana

Benin

Nigeria

Cabo Verde

Ethiopia

Zanzibar Island

Tanzania

Mauritius

Angola

Madagascar

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News


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AFRICA'S MEMORY OF THE WORLD - A COLOURING BOOK FOR CHILDREN



Mpanza and Zuri are two friends curious to learn more about their homeland, Africa. Their journey takes them across the continent, from the West Coast, through the South and all the way to the East Coast. They come across places with colourful and vibrant cultures, interesting stories, and moments that help them understand Africa's rich history and beauty. Together, they travel, explore, and colour their way through Africa's vast landscapes and cultures — and learn along the way. Would you like to join them? Pick up your colours and come along on this exciting adventure through Africa!

The UNESCO Memory of the World Programme, established in 1992, aims to safeguard humanity's documentary heritage and ensure its accessibility for future generations. The Programme encourages people — especially the young and future generations — to access and raise awareness about the importance of preserving documentary heritage as invaluable and precious parts of our shared history. This colouring book brings that mission to life for children, offering a playful introduction to Africa's documentary heritage inscribed in the Memory of the World Register.

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