

# Lesson 2 Empires Built on Gold and Trade

## MAIN IDEAS

**Government** A Bantu-speaking group known as the Shona built a strong empire in southeastern Africa.

**Economics** Great Zimbabwe gained power by controlling the trade of gold.

**Government** After the fall of Great Zimbabwe, the Shona people carved out another powerful empire in its place.

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## Rise of the Shona Civilization

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** What was Great Zimbabwe?

### Shona Empire

- **Shona**—Bantu-speaking people who built empire in southeastern Africa
- Empire comprised of zimbabwes—settlements encircled by stone walls

### Great Zimbabwe

- **Great Zimbabwe**—largest Shona settlement and center of the empire
  - covered 100 acres; population of 10,000 to 20,000 people
- Plains for farming, proximity to river helped Great Zimbabwe thrive

### The Great Enclosure

- **Great Enclosure**—largest, most important section of Great Zimbabwe
  - settlement surrounded by high, circular granite walls
  - believed to be residence for kings, queens
- Mysterious 33-foot conical tower still stands amid settlement ruins
  - may have been used for religious worship or for storing grain

## REVIEW QUESTION

What role did geography play in the growth of Great Zimbabwe?

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# Gold Brings Great Wealth

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** How did Great Zimbabwe grow wealthy and powerful?

## Gold and Trade

- Gold was a prized material; traded among Africans, other groups
- Great Zimbabwe grew wealthy, powerful through gold trade
  - location between mines, trade cities gave it control of trade routes
  - empire leaders taxed gold traders who traveled the routes

## Decline of Great Zimbabwe

- Great Zimbabwe eventually declined; abandoned by 1500
- Possible reasons: drought, overuse of farmland, shifting trade routes

## REVIEW QUESTION

How did Great Zimbabwe gain control of the gold trade?

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# A New Kingdom Emerges

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** What empire followed the one at Great Zimbabwe?

## Mutota the Conqueror

- **Mutapa**—name of new empire that replaced Great Zimbabwe c. 1440
- Shona oral tradition says empire founded by Mutota
  - Mutota's army gained control of much of present-day Zimbabwe
  - Mutota's son extended empire from Zambezi River to Indian Ocean

## The Mutapa Empire

- Mutapa Empire grew wealthy from control of gold trade
- Mutapa fell to invaders from Portugal during the 1500s

### REVIEW QUESTION

How did the Mutapa Empire gain its wealth and power?

## Lesson Summary

- The Shona people created a thriving empire in southern Africa, centered around Great Zimbabwe.
- Control of gold-trading routes made Great Zimbabwe rich and powerful.
- After the fall of Great Zimbabwe, the Shona people built another powerful empire known as Mutapa.

## Why It Matters Now . . .

The pre-colonial civilizations at Great Zimbabwe and Mutapa are today a great source of pride to nations in southern Africa.