

## Year 8

### Enquiry Four:

***With what evidence can we challenge Hugh Trevor-Roper's assertion that "Africa had no history prior to European exploration and colonisation"?***



**HISTORY**  
at CMA



CASTLE MEAD  
ACADEMY

# Year 8 Enquiry Four: How far can we challenge Hugh Trevor-Roper's assertion that 'Africa has no history...It is largely darkness'?

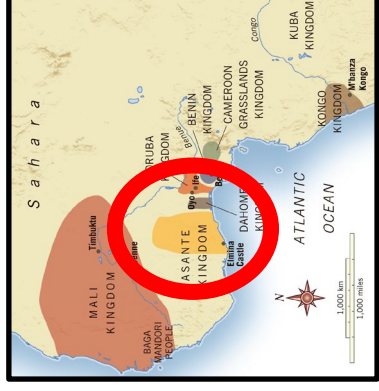
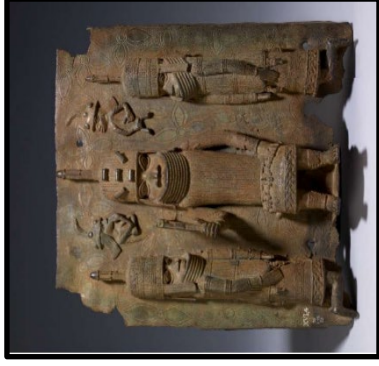
In 1965, historian Hugh Trevor-Roper claimed that 'Africa has no history... it is largely darkness?', suggesting that little of note happened before the Europeans arrived in Africa. In this enquiry, we shall study evidence of four West African Kingdoms that existed before Europeans arrived. We shall consider how they were ruled, how they lived and what they believed to challenge Hugh Trevor-Roper's interpretation.



Malian Empire	
1	<b>Mansa</b> Means King or Sultan. Leader of the Malian people.
2	<b>Empire</b> Reached its 'golden age' in the 14th century. Stretched for 1000s of miles (same distance as America, coast to coast.)
3	<b>Mansa Abubakari II</b> Abdicated the Malian throne in 1312. Believed to have 'discovered' South America
4	<b>Mansa Musa Keita (Pictured)</b> Mansa of Mali from 1312. Had accumulated wealth of \$400 billion dollars. Muslim.
5	<b>1324</b> Mansa Musa's infamous pilgrimage to Mecca, via Cairo.
6	<b>Timbuktu</b> The intellectual capital of the Malian Empire. Established by Mansa Musa.
7	<b>Wealth</b> Came from trading in Gold and Salt.
8	<b>Griots</b> The oral historians of the Malian Empire. Recounted Mali's history through story and performance. Hired by Mansa's to tell the official stories of the region.
9	<b>Songhay Empire</b> Took over the Malian Empire in the 15th century. Invaded in 1591 by the Moroccan Army.

Kongo Empire	
1	<b>Manikongo</b> Means King or Sultan. Leader of the Kongolese people.
2	<b>Empire</b> Formed in 1350. Reached its 'golden age' in the 15th century. So large it was converted into 7 regions, run by governors, chosen by the manikongo.
3	<b>1482</b> Arrival of the Portuguese in the Kingdom of Kongo.
4	<b>Mswissikongo</b> The nobility of the Kingdom of Kongo.
5	<b>Babuta</b> Working free class of people in the kingdom. Often skilled crafts people and farmers.
6	<b>Slavery</b> A key component of Kongolese society. Consisted of war captives.
7	<b>Nzimba Shells</b> The main currency of the region.
8	<b>Catholicism</b> The religion of Kongo after the arrival of the Portuguese. However, conversion had limited success with the ordinary people.
9	<b>Mbanza Kongo</b> Capital City and home of the manikongo.
10	<b>Afonso I</b> Manikongo from 1509. Created a prosperous trading alliance with the Portuguese. Reorganised the slave trade to avoid Portuguese involvement.
11	<b>1665</b> Battle of Mbwilla. Conflict between Portugal and Kongo. Kongo defeated leading to Civil War and the fracturing of the Kingdom.

**Year 8 Enquiry Four: How far can we challenge Hugh Trevor-Roper's assertion that 'Africa has no history...It is largely darkness'?**



Benin Empire	
1	<b>Oba</b> Means King or Sultan. Leader of the Benin people. Believed to have divine power.
2	<b>Empire</b> Reached its 'golden age' in the 16 <sup>th</sup> century. Stretched for 40,000 square miles.
3	<b>Edo (City of Benin)</b> Capital City and home of the Oba. Surrounded by 9m high walls that stretched for 16,000km. Designed using fractals and the first city in the world to have streetlights.
4	<b>Benin Bronzes (pictured)</b> Created in Benin. Metal plaques depicting key events and ceremonies of the reign of the Oba. A visual interpretation of Benin's history.
5	<b>1485</b> 'Discovered' by the Portuguese. A prosperous trading alliance was established between the two empires.
6	<b>Slavery</b> All people of Benin were regarded as 'slaves' of the Oba. Oba refused to sell his people to the Europeans.
7	<b>Decline</b> Began in the 1700s. Due to a succession crisis and the Oba refusing to sell slaves to European nations.
8	<b>1896</b> A British delegation of 200 men were massacred in the City of Benin after ignoring warnings not to approach the Oba.
9	<b>Feb 1897</b> 1200 British soldiers stormed Edo. The palace of the Oba was destroyed, along with the city. The Benin Bronzes were stolen and put on display in the British museum.

Asante Empire	
1	<b>Asantehene</b> Means King or Sultan. Leader of the Asante people.
2	<b>Empire</b> Formed in the C15 <sup>th</sup> . Reached its 'golden age' in the C18 <sup>th</sup> .
3	<b>Kumase</b> Capital city and home of the Oba. Established by Asantehene Osei Tutu in 1701.
4	<b>Osei Tutu</b> Osei Tutu united the Akan people against the rule of the Denkyira in 1701. He established Kumase and made himself Asantehene. Created the legend of the Golden Stool.
5	<b>Golden Stool (pictured)</b> Contains the spirit of the Asante nation. A symbol of the lasting power and strength of the Asante Kingdom.
6	<b>Okomfo Anokye</b> Chief priest and advisor to Osei Tutu who conjured the Golden Stool from the heavens. No evidence of his existence.
7	<b>1874</b> British forces invaded Kumase after Asante attacks on their colonies. The Asantehene was destooled and the British take over.
8	<b>1883</b> The Kingdom descended into Civil War.
9	<b>1888</b> Prempe I becomes Asantehene. He united the Asante people and refused to create an alliance with the British.
10	<b>1896</b> The British invade Kumase. Kumase was destroyed and Prempe I was exiled.
11	<b>1901</b> The Asante people, led by Yaa Asantewaa, rebel against British rule. The rebellion was crushed and the British took complete control of the Gold Coast.

# Big Question: Was Medieval Western Africa a kingdom of 'monstrous races'?

## Story

Create a title for each paragraph.

This text tells the story of Mansa Musa and the Malian Empire.

Summarise in 1 or 2 bullet points.

Mansa (meaning Sultan) Musa became Mansa in around 1312, after he was chosen by the previous Mansa. Mansa Abubakari II, gave up the throne of Mali to pursue his desire to know what was on the other 'bank' of the Atlantic Ocean. He never returned.

Under Mansa Musa, the Malian Empire was at its greatest. Its wealth came from gold. This was traded for salt, iron and cloth from North Africa and Europe. During his reign, he accumulated wealth of the equivalent of 400 billion dollars.

Mansa Musa, as a devout Muslim, went on Hajj, a pilgrimage to Mecca. He took with him 60,000 men, 21,000kg of gold, and 100 elephants. On his journey, he went through Cairo in Egypt. He gave so many generous gifts of gold that the Egyptian economy collapsed. His pilgrimage was also an opportunity to recruit some of the world's best Islamic intellectuals and architects for the empire.

On returning to Mali, Mansa Musa built a vast library in Timbuktu. Alongside the library, he built huge, sophisticated madrasas (schools) and mosques (it is said he built a new mosque every Friday!)

His death triggered the unravelling of the Malian empire, and it was absorbed into the growing Songhay empire in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. However, Timbuktu as an important intellectual centre continued.

West Africa continued to thrive under the Songhay rulers until 1591, when it was successfully invaded by the Moroccan army.

### Activity 1

Read through the **Story** of Mansa Musa and the Malian Empire. For each paragraph, you need to create a 'title' on one side, and a short summary (two bullet points maximum) on the other

# Big Question: Was Medieval Western Africa a kingdom of 'monstrous races'?

## Source

**A** Part of The Catalan Atlas, the first world map, drawn by the Majorcan, Cresques, in 1375. This section depicts Mansa Musa wearing a golden crown and holding a lump of gold.



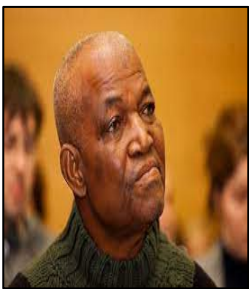
**B** A selection of some of the manuscripts and books located within the library in Timbuktu, built by Mansa Musa in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.



**C** An extract from Leo Africanus, writing in 1500. Here he describes Timbuktu, at the heart of the Songhay empire.

'The inhabitants are exceedingly rich so much so that the present king has married both of his daughters to two rich merchants, The rich king of Timbuktu has many articles of gold and keeps a magnificent ... court. Here there are many doctors ... and other learned men that are well maintained at the king's cost. Various manuscripts and ... books are bought here and sold for more money than any other merchandise.'

## Scholarship



**Professor Gaossou Diawara, 'The Saga of Abubakari II' (2000)**

Various evidence has been gathered that suggests that Abubakari arrived in Brazil in 1312. Whilst the griots have hidden the story (his abdication was seen as a shameful act and not worthy of praise), recent chemical analyses of the gold tips that Columbus 'discovered' found on spears in the Americas shows that the gold probably came from West Africa. There are also written accounts of Abubakari's expedition found in Egypt, in a book written by Al Omari in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

### Activity 2

Look at **sources A, B and C**. In your book, answer the following questions:

1. What can we infer about Mansa Musa from **Source A**?
2. How useful are the manuscripts in **Source B** in challenging the interpretation that Africa is 'without history'?
3. How does **Source C** provide evidence that the Songhay Empire was more advanced than medieval Europe?

### Activity 3

Read through Prof. Gaossou Diawara's **scholarship** about Mansa Abubakari's possible journey to South America in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

In your book, answer the question, 'How does this interpretation challenge the notion that Africa is 'without history'?

# Big Question: What was the impact of the arrival of the Portuguese on the Kingdom of Kongo?

## Story

Create a title for each paragraph.

This text tells the story of the kingdom of the Kongo and the arrival of the Portuguese.

Summarise in 1 or 2 bullet points.



The kingdom of Kongo was visited by Portuguese explorers in 1482. They impressed the manikongo with Portuguese culture so much that both he and his son, Mvemba a Nzinga (Afonso) were baptised and given Christian names. Slowly the whole population started to convert to Catholicism (although this had limited success).

In 1509, Afonso became manikongo. He forged a strong alliance with Portugal. However, he did not like the way in which the Portuguese ignored laws around the slave trade. As a result, in 1526 Afonso re-organised the slave trade, in an attempt to ensure that people were not illegally enslaved. After Afonso's death, this fell apart.

In 1568, a coalition of Kongo peoples ('jagas'), unhappy with the changes in the kingdom, successfully invaded Mbanza Kongo. The manikongo, Alvaro I (Nimi a Lukeni) fled and was forced to ask the Portuguese for assistance. In exchange, he allowed them to settle in Luanda where a slave trading base for Portugal's colonies in Brazil was established. Now the Portuguese could control the currency (nzimba shells) of Kongo, and cause further instability to Kongo through increasing slave raids.

Kongo's relationship with the Portuguese continued to sour, leading to a series of wars culminating in the Battle of Mbwila in 1665. The Portuguese were victorious.

After the defeat by the Portuguese, the Kingdom of Kongo fell into civil war. Mbanza Kongo was abandoned and the Kongo state fragmented into competing rival Mbanzas, who continually raided one another for captives, who could be sold to the Europeans.

### Activity 1

Read through the **Story** of the impact of the Portuguese on the Kingdom of Kongo. For each paragraph, you need to create a 'title' on one side, and a short summary (two bullet points maximum) on the other.

# Big Question: What was the impact of the arrival of the Portuguese on the Kingdom of Kongo?

## Source

A

Kongo Raffia cloth, woven for ceremonial occasions. Portuguese explorer Duarte Pacheco Pereira declared this cloth, *'so beautiful that those made in Italy do not surpass them in workmanship.'*



B

Marble portrait bust of Antonio Manuel, ambassador of the Kongo kingdom in Rome.



C

Carving of a figure of an enthroned woman nursing a child. She is wearing a mpu woven cap, traditionally a male symbol of power and authority



## Scholarship



Alisa LaGamma, an Art Historian and Curator in an interview in 2015

Manikongos were very proactive and strategic about their engagement with the world ... an illuminated book of coats of arms gives us a snapshot of the great world powers at that moment in history. We get the sense that Kongo is a player in the world, with a vigorous correspondence underway between Mbanza Kongo and major European capitals.

### Activity 2

Look at **sources A, B and C**. In your book, answer the following questions:

1. What does **Source A** suggest about the skills of Kongoese weavers and how they compared with Europeans?
2. How does **Source B** suggest that African peoples were considered important in C16th Europe?
3. What does **Source C** reveal about the role and status of women in Kongo society?

### Activity 3

Read through Alisa LaGamma's **scholarship** about the Manikongos in the sixteenth century.

In your book, answer the question; How does LaGamma's scholarship challenge the interpretation that 'Africa had no history'?

# Big Question: Why are the Benin Bronzes in the British Museum?

## Story

Create a title for each paragraph.

This text tells the story of the rise and fall of the kingdom of the Benin.

Summarise in 1 or 2 bullet points.



Oral traditions describe Benin as reaching its 'golden age' in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. When the Portuguese first "discovered" the city in 1485, they classified the vast kingdom as one of the most beautiful and best planned cities in the world.

Under Oba Ozolua (c.1481-1504) prosperous trade was established with the Portuguese. Trade focused on the exchanges of cloth, leopard skins, palm oil and coral beads, for brass and copper armrings and guns which allowed the Obas to continue their military expansion of their empire. The relationship with the Portuguese continued to flourish, with ambassadors from Benin being sent to Lisbon in 1514, and Portuguese schools set up in Benin City.

From the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the European focus on Africa began to shift to the slave trade. However, the Obas were unwilling to sell men who were vital for warfare. This meant that Benin's position in trade became weaker and this resulted in the reduced prosperity of the kingdom.

The decline of Benin accelerated in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In c.1608, Oba Ohuan died without an heir, precipitating a hundred year succession crisis. By 1700 the increasing rise of slave trading elsewhere in West Africa meant that trade continued to decline, and eventually the Oba's agreed to partake in the trade of slaves.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the British attempted to set up a trade agreement with Benin, which was unsuccessful. A British delegation of 200 were sent to Benin but they ignored warnings not to approach the Oba and were massacred. In February 1897, 1200 British soldiers arrived and Benin was destroyed. They did not believe the objects of art they discovered were from an African kingdom, so amazed were they at the artistic skill! The Oba was deposed and died in exile and the Benin artworks were taken back to Britain. In 1914 the British restored the monarchy and the palace in the City of Benin was rebuilt, where it still stands to this day.

### Activity 1

Read through the **Story** of the rise and fall of the Kingdom of Benin. For each paragraph, you need to create a 'title' on one side, and a short summary (two bullet points maximum) on the other.



# Big Question: Why are the Benin Bronzes in the British Museum?

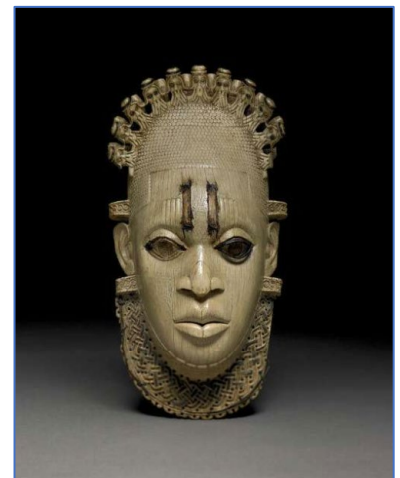
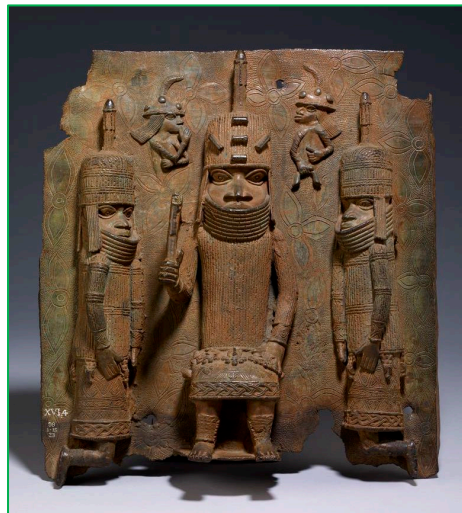
## Source

**A** Lourenco Pinto, a Portuguese ship's captain, describing Benin City in 1691

*Great Benin where the king resides is larger than Lisbon [...] The city is wealthy and industrious. It is so well governed that theft is unknown and the people live in such security that they have no doors on their houses.*

**B** A pendant mask, carved from ivory. It represents the Queen Mother, Idia who was mother of the great warrior Oba Esigie (1504-1550). It was worn by the Oba during important ceremonies.

**C** Bronze plaque depicting a seated Oba flanked by two kneeling supporters. The two figures at the top of the plaque represent Portuguese traders visiting the Oba.



## Scholarship



**Ron Eglash, a Mathematician. Here he discusses the design of Benin City which was based on fractals (2007)**

“When Europeans first came to Africa, they considered the architecture [...] disorganised and [...] primitive. It never occurred to them that the Africans might be using a form of mathematics they hadn't even discovered yet.”

### Activity 2

Look at **sources A**, **B** and **C**. In your book, answer the following questions:

1. What does **Source A** suggest about how the Portuguese viewed the city of Benin in the 17<sup>th</sup> century?
2. What does **Source B** reveal about the role and status of the Queen Mother in Benin?
3. What does **Source C** suggest about the influence of the Portuguese on the Benin Obas?

### Activity 3

Read through Ron Eglash's **scholarship** about the mathematical design of Benin City. In your book, answer the question;

How does Eglash's scholarship challenge the interpretation that African history is 'largely darkness'?

# Big Question: How did a golden stool unite the Asante Kingdom?

## Story

Create a title for each paragraph.

This text tells the story of the fall of the kingdom of the Asante.

Summarise in 1 or 2 bullet points.

The British colonised territory south of the Asante empire in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, with the plan of expanding their control on the slave trade. This territory was rich in gold and trading opportunities, and the abundance of slaves within the Asante Kingdom allowed the industry to flourish until the abolition of the slave trade by the British in 1807.

Asante had become rich and powerful in part because of the trade in slaves so when the trade was outlawed the economy floundered. Trade in other goods continued, but gold started flowing out of the kingdom at a great rate. Not only that, people of a lower class within the Asante kingdom were grasping the opportunity to make money by trading with the Europeans – it was a direct challenge to the authority of the Asantehene.

The pressure on the Asantehene, Kofi Karikari intensified and he attacked European colonies and took a number of Europeans prisoner. On 4<sup>th</sup> February 1874, a British Expeditionary force led by Garnet Wolsely marched into Kumase in retaliation. The British ransacked the palace of the Asantehene and burned the city to the ground. Kofi Karikari was destooled, throwing the state into a period of instability. It was the first time in the history of the kingdom that an army had invaded Asante and won.

A new Asantehene, Mensa Bosa in reaction to this instability became increasingly authoritarian. People increasingly migrated from Asante and there was an increase in rebellions. Mensa Bosa was deposed in 1883, and the Asante Kingdom descended into brutal civil war.

Civil War ended in 1888, when 16-year-old Prempe I was chosen to be Asantehene. He fought to reunite the kingdom uniting them under the imagery of the golden stool; that the people were stronger together than they were apart. The British asked Prempe to accept a protectorate but he rejected them.

In 1896, the British returned to Kumase, wanting gold-rich Asante as their colony. Prempe was captured and exiled. The British took possession of the Kingdom of Asante, however they failed to acquire the golden stool. The British sought it without success, but eventually the Asante gave it to them – a fake one; they buried the real one. By keeping the real stool, the power of the Asante was seen to have lived on, and they felt like they had never surrendered to the British.

By 1901 the Asante were no longer willing to tolerate the foreign occupation. Yaa Asantewa the mother of a fierce Asante military leader took leadership control of the Asante people, proclaiming that if the men of the kingdom would not defend the people, then the women would rise to the challenge. She launched an offensive to reclaim the capital but despite early victories, the superior fire power of the British was overwhelming. The defeat cemented the British claim on the Gold Coast.

### Activity 1

Read through the **Story** of the rise and fall of the Kingdom of Asante. For each paragraph, you need to create a 'title' on one side, and a short summary (two bullet points maximum) on the other.

# Big Question: How did a golden stool unite the Asante Kingdom?

## Source

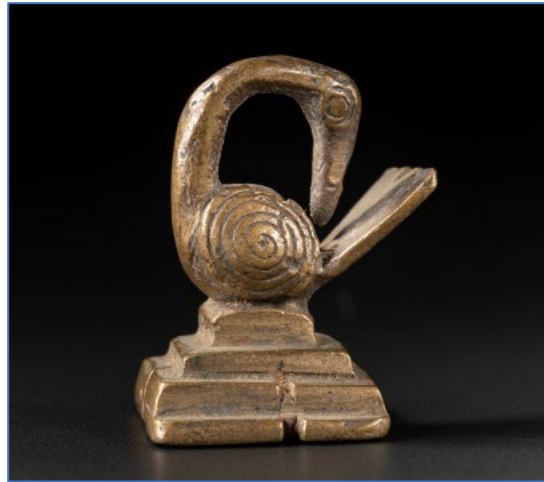
A

Thomas Bowditch, an English traveller and writer who visited the Asante Kingdom in the 1800s, and wrote about his visit. Here he describes a Asante festival.

*The King, his tributes, and captains, were resplendent in the distance, surrounded by attendants of every description...At least 200 large umbrellas, or canopies...were sprung up...being made of scarlet, yellow cloths and silks, crowned on top with crescent pelicans...and swords of gold.*

B

An Asante gold weight carved into the shape of a Sankofa bird. This weight represents a unit and was used to measure gold dust, the currency of the region. The Sankofa, which is always depicted looking backwards, means 'don't forget your roots' or 'use what is behind you'.



## Scholarship



**Dr Wilhelmina Donkoh (2012) describing the establishment of the Asante Kingdom**

This battle with nature, and with the climate, became a defining feature of these societies. That human beings could live here at all, let alone construct a sophisticated agricultural society, was seen as an enormous achievement.

### Activity 2

Look at **sources A and B**. In your book, answer the following questions:

1. Using **Source A** describe two features of an Asante festival in the 1800s?
2. How does **Source B** provide evidence to challenge the interpretation that Africa has 'no history'?

### Activity 3

Read through Wilhelmina Donkoh **scholarship** about the establishment of the Asante Kingdom.

In your book, answer the question;  
How does Donkoh's scholarship challenge the interpretation that African history is 'largely darkness'?

30 years before The African empire of Mali under King Mansa Musa reached its height

# meanwhile, elsewhere...



The Mappa Mundi map of the world was created in Hereford Cathedral

## KEY INFORMATION:

The Mappa Mundi was created around \_\_\_\_\_. It is the largest surviving medieval example of a \_\_\_\_\_ of the World. It shows the lack of knowledge and understanding that Europeans had of the world, and the continent of \_\_\_\_\_.



“Whereas Europe is shown on the Mappa Mundi with its rivers and cities clearly marked and illustrated, the continents of Asia and Africa, which lay beyond the knowledge of the map’s creator, are depicted as the realms of monstrous races... At the fringes of Africa...are the strangest of all the monstrous races, the Blemmyes, a people who have no heads, but faces upon their chests.On the coast of Ethiopia can be found the Marmini people, who each have four eyes which can gaze in four different direction simultaneously. Near them are... the Agriophagi [who] apparently ruled under a cyclops king.” (D. Olusoga, *Black and British: a forgotten History*)

1. What does the map reveal about medieval European understanding of Africa?

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1. What is the Mappa Mundi?

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2. What can be found on the Mappa mundi?

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3. When and where was it created?

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Does the Mappa Mundi challenge any ideas you had about medieval Europeans?

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Useful websites, videos and podcasts

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ndijfk-ayul>

<https://www.themappamundi.co.uk/>

<https://www.herefordcathedral.org/mappa-mundi>

This ‘meanwhile, elsewhere’ was designed by:

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