

Unit 5 SG 3

Culture & Religion

I. Sub-Saharan Africa in General

- A. Characteristics that many Africans have in common today:
 - 1. Livelihood - subsistence & export farming; export of raw materials such as timber & minerals
 - 2. Legacy of colonization - result of Berlin Conference
 - 3. A young population due to low life expectancies & the AIDS pandemic among working-age people
 - 4. Large families due to several factors

II. Language

- A. There are several language families spoken in SSA
 - 1. Afro-Asiatic - Arabic
 - 2. Niger-Congo - Swahili was the lingua franca of trade
 - 3. Indo-European (brought by colonists) - mainly French & English
 - a. Afrikaans is a hybrid language spoken in southern Africa. A mixture of local languages & Dutch



*Note: less than 20% of languages shown due to space.

III. Religion

- A. Pre-colonial Period
 - 1. The main religion collectively is called Animism. Contains human, natural, and spiritual forces.
 - a. Human success or failure dependent upon nature spirits; reverence of ancestral spirits
 - b. Land is a communal possession to be used responsibly
 - c. Large families seen as a blessing & childlessness as a tragedy.

- B. Islam
 - 1. Islam spread in to west Africa via contact through trade routes. [Ghana, Mali, & Songhai salt-for-gold trade.](#)
 - 2. In eastern Africa, Arab traders established trade ports. From 700s-1500s, ivory, gold & about 5 million slaves exported to Arabia, Persia (Iran), and China by Arab traders.
 - 3. Ethiopia is the only country in the region that resisted conversion and [remains mainly Christian to this day. There is also a small cadre of Ethiopian Jews.](#)

- C. Christianity
 - 1. Ethiopia - Christianity was introduced in the 1st century AD.
 - 2. Colonialism - European colonists brought Christianity to Africa from the 1500s-1900s.

III. Culture

- A. Pre-colonial - Great Empires
 - 1. East Africa - Aksum (50-937 AD)
 - 2. West Africa
 - a. Ghana (750-1078 AD)
 - b. Mali (1230-1600 AD)
 - c. Songhai (1400s-1500s AD)
 - 3. South Africa - [Great Zimbabwe](#) (1450-1629 AD)

- B. European traders
 - 1. Started in 1400s along the coast of west Africa.
 - 2. Exchanged guns, alcohol, & sugar for slaves, gold, ivory, & palm products.
 - 3. Parts of west African coast called “Ivory Coast,” “Gold Coast, “ & “Slave Coast.”
 - 4. By the 1600 & 1700s the triangular trade route of slaves-molasses-rum was in full swing. [An estimated 12 million Africans brought as slaves to the Americas.](#)

- C. The Colonial Period (1800-1900s)
 - 1. Started in the late 1800s at the Berlin Conference in 1884-1885. SSA was carved up by the UK, France, Belgium, Germany, Spain, & Portugal.
 - 2. No Africans were consulted about the boundaries drawn by the European nations. However, these boundaries in many cases still exist and thus have had long lasting effects.

- 3. In south & east Africa many Europeans chose to make permanent settlements. This led to the building of infrastructure that has led this region to be more economically developed.
- 4. In west & central Africa, plantations for the growing of cash crops such as cacao & palm oil. Most colonists here stayed only long enough to exploit the natural resources and then returned to Europe

- D. Independence occurred in many of the countries after the end of WWII.
 - 1. South Africa gained its independence in 1910.
 - 2. After WWII, starting in 1957 in Ghana and ending with Namibia in 1990, the rest of the African nations received their independence.
 - 3. Nationalism was the main factor for the push for independence. Some transitions were peaceful (Ghana) & some were very, very bloody (Kenya, Mozambique, & Angola).

- E. Present-day Africa
 - 1. Most new African nations were unprepared for independence which has led [to poor economic development.](#)
 - a. Constant conflicts between rural & urban leaders, this led to dictatorships in many countries. Opposition leaders were “removed.”
 - b. Military interventions overthrew some new governments.
 - c. [Self-serving leaders & corrupt governments grew in many countries - kleptocracies.](#)

Kleptocracies

- D.R.C. - Mobutu Sese Seko, backed by the U.S. overthrew Communist PM. Built up family positions had several private bank accounts, and was deposed in 1997.
- [Equatorial Guinea](#) - Teodoro Obiang worth \$600 million in a country where most people live in poverty



- 2. Legacies left by colonialism
 - a. In South Africa, [apartheid](#) was established in 1948. It separated ethnic groups & relocated black Africans to “homeland” areas.
 - (1) Black Africans were regarded as laborers for the white population.
 - (2) African National Congress (ANC) established to fight apartheid - leader: Nelson Mandela
 - (3) [The U.S. & other world nations placed economic sanctions on S.A. to force them to end apartheid.](#)
 - (4) Ended in early 90’s with first open elections in 1994



- b. In Rwanda, in 1994, the genocide of nearly 1 million people occurred. [Why?](#)
 - (1) Two major tribes, the Hutu (farmers) & the Tutsi (ranchers) skirmished with one another, but intermarriage existed.
 - (2) Belgian colonists created resentment by deposing Hutu chiefs and elevating Tutsi chiefs. They issued identity cards with everyone's ethnic tribe. The majority Hutus were subjugated and mistreated by the minority Tutsis until independence.
 - (3) Hutus won most elections and Tutsis were discriminated against. Many fled as refugees to neighboring countries such as the DRC.
 - (4) The president of Rwanda was assassinated and the Hutus began the planned and systematic murder of Tutsis. Civil war broke out and the Tutsis won with the help of exiled Tutsis returning home.

- c. In Nigeria, the oil deposits along the central-western coastal regions of Africa, [including the Niger Delta have caused major issues for that country.](#)
 - (1) Shell & BP began drilling in 1951. Other oil companies such as Chevron also began pumping oil in the 1960s.
 - (2) Civil war broke out from 1966-1970. The new government in 1971 “nationalized” the oil industry. The government seized the oil wells and platforms from the oil companies (mainly through business deals & threats) and from that point on it was run by the government and Nigeria joined OPEC.