

## Cultural Geography of Africa

### Rural Villages



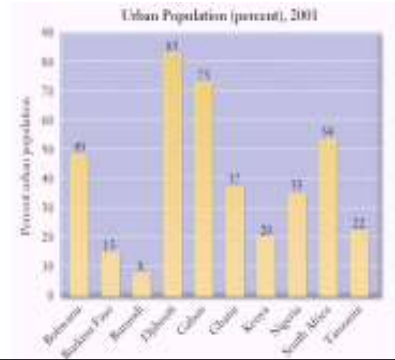
- Traditional homes in East Africa
- Maasai people



- Traditional West African home
- Grass roof
- Wood walls with clay plastering

### Urbanization

- Many African countries have seen huge growth in cities



### Urbanization: an African city Modern buildings next to a shantytown



### Urbanization



Capetown, South Africa  
✓ A very modern city

## Urbanization



That still struggles with poverty  
 > Capetown is surrounded by shantytowns

## Urbanization

Problems of urbanization:  
 Poverty  
 Shantytowns: overcrowding  
 Sanitation: sewage and clean water  
 Unemployment  
 AIDS  
 Orphaned children  
 Crime  
 Drugs



## Gender relations

- Most African societies are patriarchal
- Some are matriarchal
- Women and children are very important



## Marriage

Traditionally:

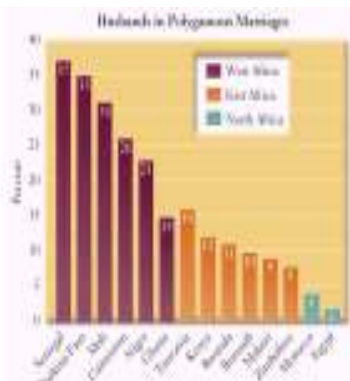
- Most marriages were arranged by families
- Bride wealth: in order to marry, a man must give valuable gifts to a woman's family

A bride wealth ceremony



## Gender Relations

While polygamous marriages are less common today, they are still common in many areas of Africa



## Gender roles

- Women are responsible for:
- Farming, gathering food
- Food preparation
- Taking care of the kids
- Education of the kids
- Keeping the house



## Gender roles

- Men are responsible for:
  - Hunting
  - Protecting the family
  - Leadership
  - Herding
  - Farming



## Age grade system

- All boys or girls born in the same year
- Went through the same rituals as a group
- Ceremonies that marked the journey becoming an adult



"Jumping the Bull" ceremony in Ethiopia

## Lineage and clan systems

- Extended families are very important
- Often share housing in compounds, groups of homes next to each other
- Lineage: family groups that trace their ancestors back to a common ancestor
- Several lineages formed a clan
- Clan systems united people together
- Encouraged cooperation



## Food

- Traditional African foods vary from culture to culture
- Rice, beans, cassava, maize, meat all are common
- Coastal areas eat a lot of seafood
- Eating insects is still common in many cultures



Sausage and maize porridge

Worms!

Rice and beans with porridge

Goat head, beans, rice, porridge

Rice and beans with porridge

## Clothing

- Clothes styles vary among cultures
- West African Kente cloth
- Each color and every pattern has a meaning
- Religious, family, social, political, health, wealth
- Modern Ghanaians wearing traditional kente cloth
- Kente cloth is usually worn for ceremonies, festivals, and other sacred occasions.



### Clothing

- Each culture developed different ways of making cloth and clothing
- Cotton weaving
- Leather and fur
- Bark fabric
- Plant fiber fabric
- Embroidery
- appliqué

### Ethnicity

- Africa has 100's of different ethnic groups
- Modern country boundaries forced people of different groups to live together

### Ethnic conflicts have raged across Africa after independence and continue today

Ethnic violence in Kenya 2008

- Tutsi victims of genocide in Rwanda

### Religions of the World

### African Religions

Many religions are practiced in Africa  
Most common:

- > Islam
- > Christianity
- > Indigenous religions

Some areas also have communities of Jews and Hindus

### Indigenous Religion

- West Africa has the highest rates of those who follow traditional religions
- East Africa and Southern Africa also have significant numbers of people who follow traditional religions

## Indigenous religions

- Most traditional belief systems were monotheistic as well
- Many did believe in spirits or lesser Gods
- Many believed that the spirits of ancestors could help or harm
- Had to honor the dead



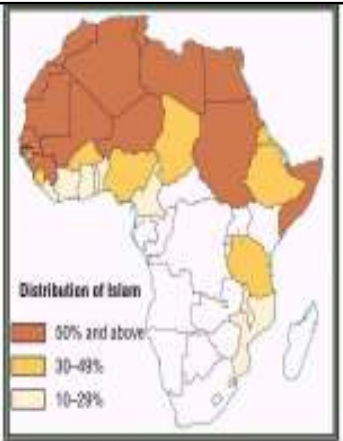
## Indigenous religions

- Diviners acted as interpreters between people and heaven
- Healers sought to help the sick
- Used herbs and native plants in addition to spiritualism to heal



## Islam and Africa

Islam is the fastest growing Religion in Africa  
 ❖ It is spreading quickly in areas that were Christian or followed traditional religions

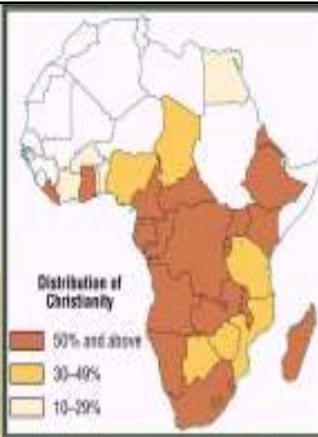


## Nigerian Mosque



## Christianity and Africa

- Central, Southern and East Africa have high number of Christians
- Some African cultures combine Christian beliefs with native traditional beliefs



- Coptic Christians in East Africa and Ethiopian Christian Church are among the oldest Christian groups in the world



## Oral traditions

- Culture and traditions are passed down through storytellers
- Griots remember the stories from the past and teach children about the culture through song, stories and poetry



## Music and dance

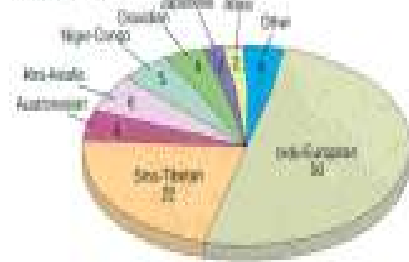
- Music is a very important part of traditional African cultures
- Music accompanies ceremonies and rituals
- Music and dance are not thought of as separate: they are done together
- Drumming
- String instruments
- American banjo and guitar developed from African influences
- Jazz, blues, rock, hip hop all are based on African rhythms and beats



## Classification of Languages

### LANGUAGE FAMILIES

(Percentage of people speaking them)



## African Languages

A wide variety of languages are spoken throughout Africa



## Official Languages

English is commonly spoken in many African countries



## People of Africa

- The Maasai, famous as herders and warriors, once dominated the plains of East Africa
- For the Maasai, cattle are what make the good life, and milk and meat are the best foods
- Today, they also need to grow crops.



- Maasai society is organized into male age-groups whose members together pass through initiations to become warriors, and then elders.
- They have no chiefs, although each section has a Laibon, or spiritual leader, at its head.
- Maasai worship one god who dwells in all things, but may manifest himself as either kindly or destructive.
- Many Maasai today, however, belong to various Christian churches.



The piercing and stretching of earlobes is common among the Maasai



Bridal necklaces made of beads

- Warriors shield for lion hunting



Lion hunting



- Maasai warriors getting ready to hunt lions

People of Africa

People of Africa

People of Africa