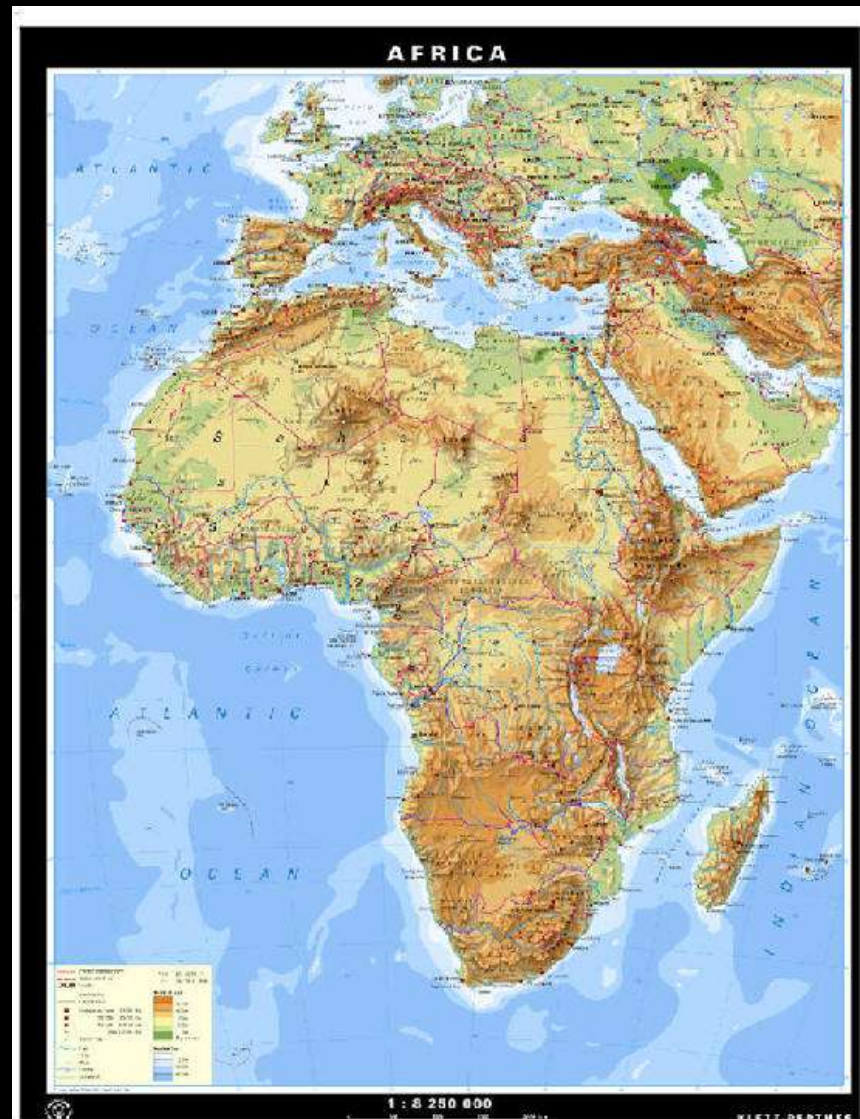


# Africa



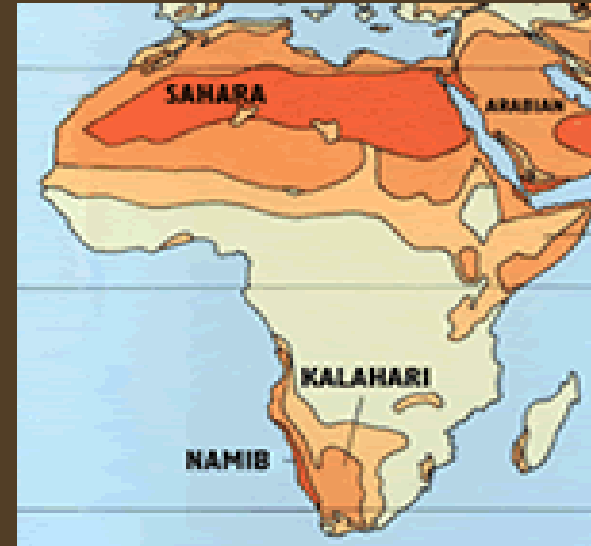
- Africa is a vast continent with a variety of landforms and climates. It is the world's 2<sup>nd</sup> largest continent with 54 countries—more independent nations than any other continent.



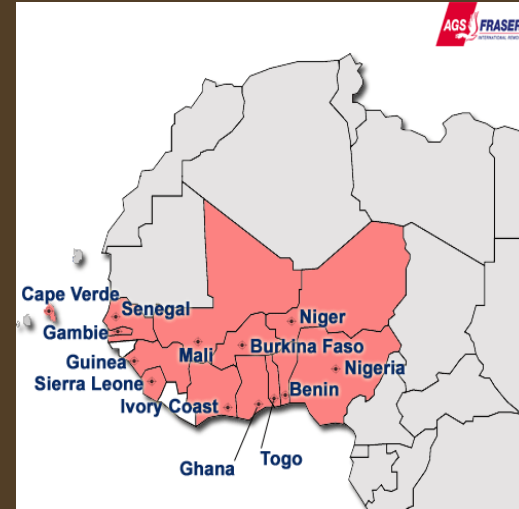
- The continent is bordered by
  - Atlantic Ocean to the west
- Mediterranean Sea to the north
  - Indian Ocean to the east
  - Red Sea to the northeast

- Africa is characterized by *5 distinct regions*. Geographic features give each region its own identity:

1. North Africa—  
Morocco to Egypt—  
historically close  
contact with Europe  
and the Middle East;  
basically desert  
climate



2. West Africa—  
Mauritania to  
Nigeria—historically  
very rich in gold; the  
site of many great  
ancient civilizations  
(Ghana, Mali,  
Songhai)



3. Central Africa—  
includes the  
Democratic  
Republic of Congo—  
on the equator; very  
tropical climate—  
Congo Basin (lush





4. East Africa—includes Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania
- Semi-arid and tropical climate
  - Characterized by the savanna—extensive grasslands w/ a wet and dry season that supports an abundance of wildlife (think in terms of an African safari!)



5. Southern Africa—includes Zimbabwe and South Africa; climate varies; also characterized by the *savanna*.



# Major landforms of Africa:

Major *plateaus* which stretch for hundreds of miles (Ex. Katanga Plateau)



Major *deserts* that stretch for thousands of miles (Ex. Sahara Desert —world's largest; Kalahari Desert)

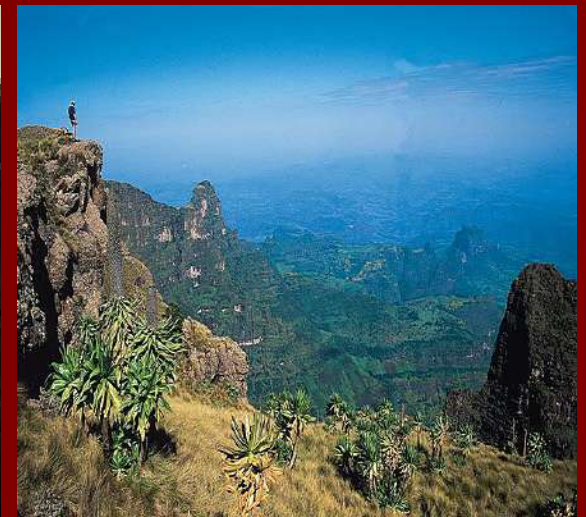




# The Great Rift Valley

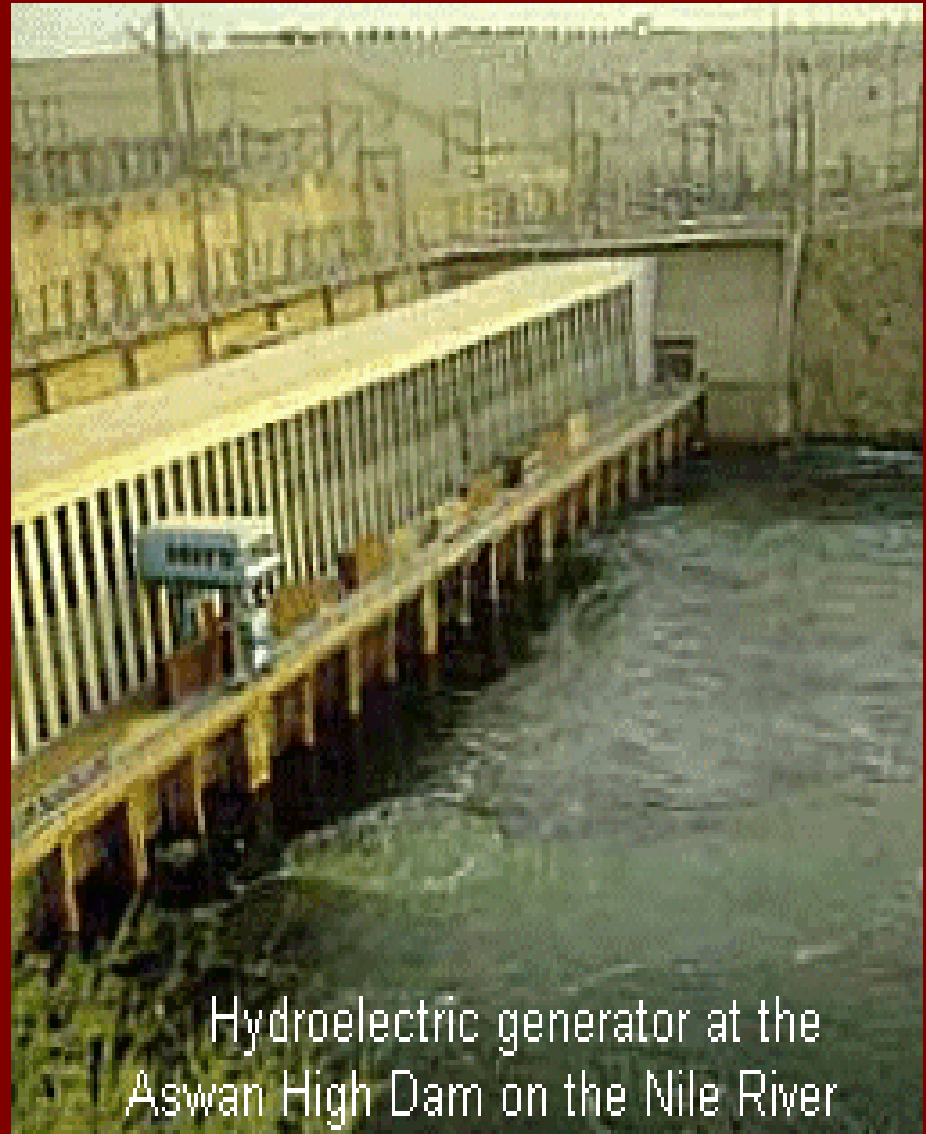
- A giant fault in the earth's surface
- Stretches across Eastern Africa for over 4,000 miles
- Formed millions of years ago
- Rich volcanic ash has preserved human remains (earliest human skeletons found here!)
- Rich in minerals and metals, but very costly to get to!

# The Great Rift Valley in Pictures



Great Rivers—  
sources of  
hydroelectric  
power (energy  
produced by  
running water)

The Nile River in  
Sudan and Egypt—  
4,160 miles—  
world's longest  
river



Hydroelectric generator at the  
Aswan High Dam on the Nile River

# Natural Resources

- Gold
- Diamonds
- Copper
- Cobalt
- Oil
- Rich soil
- Abundant water



- Resources are not evenly distributed
- Poor countries can not develop their mineral resources
- Have allowed foreign countries to invest in mining
- Much of the profit leaves Africa
- Much of Africa is not fertile

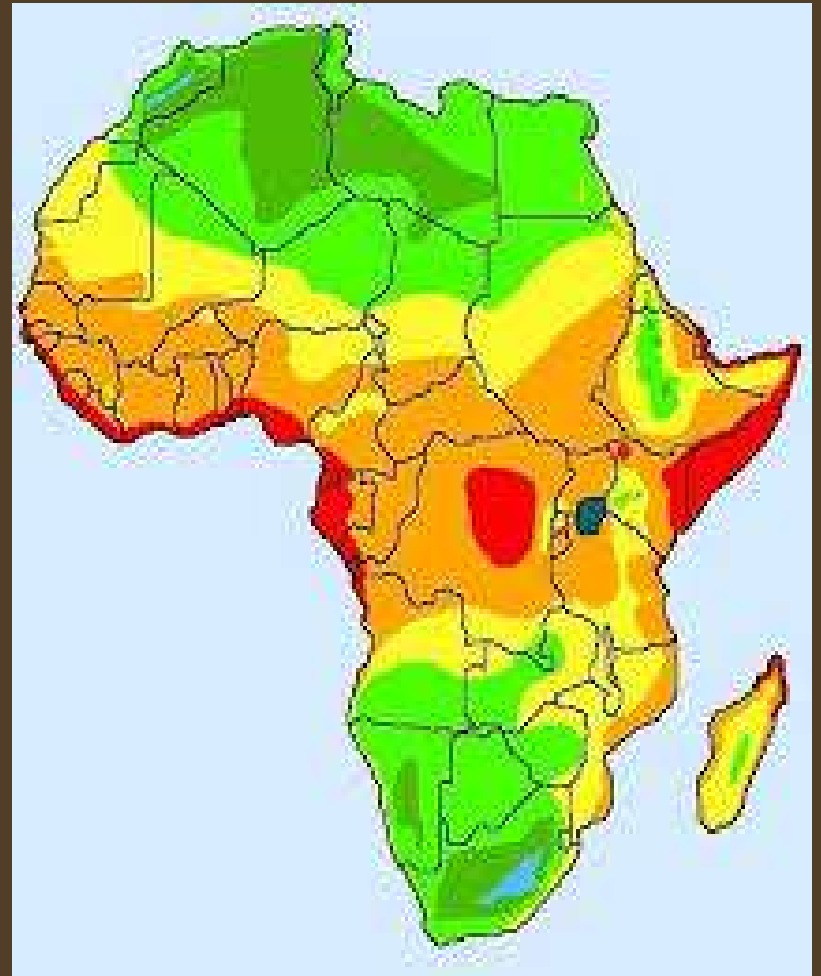


- The Equator runs nearly through the middle of Africa
- 80% of the continent is in the tropics
- Climates are generally warm throughout the year



# CLIMATE ZONES

- The northern and southern hemispheres are mirror images



# Starting at the Equator

- Tropical Wet
- Hot and humid year round
  - Poor soil
- Problem with leaching



- Tropical Wet and Dry
  - Largest zone
- Savanna occupies the region
  - Home to most Africans
    - Drought
  - Many disease-carrying insects breed in tropical climates



- Deserts
- Covers about 40% of Africa
- Sahara – larger than continental U.S.
  - Once had lakes and rivers
- Namib - One of the driest places on Earth





- Moderate  
Mediterranean
- Mild climate and fertile  
soils
- Support crops and  
herding



- Population of Africa
  - 2013 estimate – 1.033 billion
  - Expected to double by 2050
    - Growing rapidly
- Resources influence where people live

- Africa is home to an immense variety of cultures
- Have different histories, religious beliefs, values, and traditions



# I. Family Ties

Family loyalty is a bond that has traditionally held these farming and herding societies together.

**Extended families**—very common in tribal Africa—grandparents, parents, married and unmarried children, their spouses, and other relatives—all living together and “pooling” their labor.

- A system of lineages (distant relatives within a village) and clans (several lineages) varies across Africa and are very complex organizations.

- Kinship ties encourage a strong sense of community and cooperation.

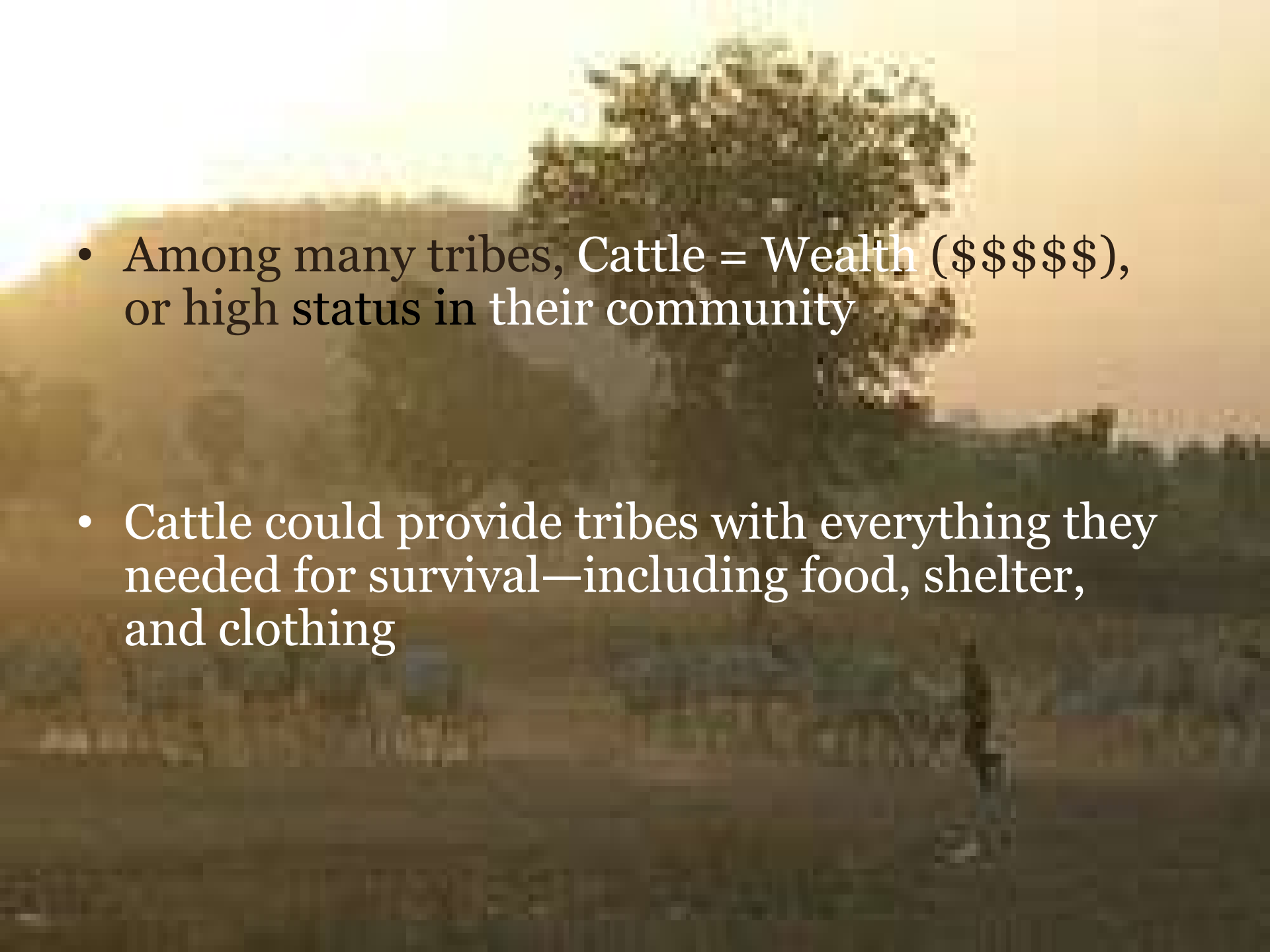




- Most farming and herding tribes are subsistence farmers, whereby they produce enough crops for their own needs with little or no surplus



**Photo One: Farmer Plowing Dry Soil with Oxen, Senegal**  
(Photo from Africa Focus, University of Wisconsin)

- 
- Among many tribes, Cattle = Wealth (\$\$\$\$\$), or high status in their community
  - Cattle could provide tribes with everything they needed for survival—including food, shelter, and clothing

# Inheritance and Descent

- A variety of traditions govern inheritance and descent in African societies
- Some cultures are matrilineal societies, where members trace their lineage through the female line
  - Example...the *Ashanti* believe a child's blood comes from the mother. Therefore, the mother's brother (uncle) has a closer blood relationship to the child than does the father. The child inherits property through the uncle.

- Other African societies are **patrilineal**, with lineage passed through the male line.
- Property and responsibilities are passed to the eldest son



# The Age-Grade System

- The Age-Grade system is used in many African cultures to teach children the value of their society
- It is steeped in tradition and consists of special ceremonies that mark each step to adulthood (*initiation rituals*)
- An age-grade is made up of other young people of the same age in a village

# African Religions

- Religious beliefs and practices reflect the great variety of cultures in Africa...
- **Traditional beliefs**—frequently vary from tribe to tribe—passed on by oral traditions—dancing, singing, and playing music often very common—prayed for good health, steady rain, a rich harvest, etc.

Examples:

- ancestor worship (souls reborn in children)
- every object on Earth is filled with a living spirit
- Supreme Being created all things
- diviners and healers (known as shaman) determined causes of misfortune and used roots and herbs to cure ailments.



- **Christianity and Judaism**—spread down the Nile to Ethiopia around 400 A.D.
- Christian missionaries in the 1800s (during imperialism) set out to replace traditional African religions (most famous = **David Livingstone**)
- 2. In many cases, African Christians formed their own churches with their own unique forms of Christianity
- Example...the *Ethiopian Orthodox Church*

- Islam— dominates the culture of North Africa (Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, and Somalia)— came to Africa by way of Muslim traders from the Middle East.





# Beginnings of the Slave Trade

- Because much of early African history was translated orally and not written, very little is known until the Europeans arrived during the Age of Imperialism...and what is known has likely been influenced greatly by those same Europeans.
- The 1<sup>st</sup> contact between Africans and Europeans took place in the 1400s by the following *Portuguese* explorers.



- As Europeans settled in the “New World” (Americas and the Caribbean), the demand for slaves grew as Europeans required a large labor force to make agriculture in these colonies profitable



- **Result**—the *slave trade* developed in the 1500s off the coast of ***West Africa***, where the Portuguese had initially first made African contacts—near present-day Ghana, Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Gabon.

*Also...devastating effects on the African content, resulting in the loss of both (1.) oral histories and (2.) traditional culture.*