

CULTURES AND PEOPLE OF AFRICA

7th grade Social Studies



WHICH OF THESE PEOPLE IS AFRICAN?

It is generally believed that human life first began on the continent of Africa - some 7 million years ago.

Today, Africa is a continent with a fascinating diversity of peoples, who make up about 10% of the world population. These peoples together make up about 50 nations.

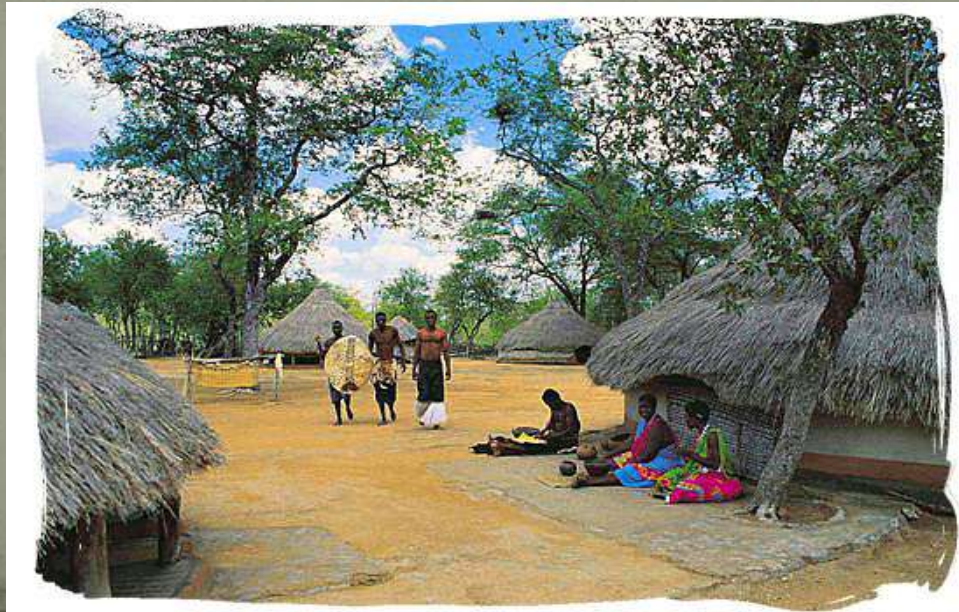
The peoples of Africa are often described in terms of their ethnic background or their languages. There are several thousand ethnic groups in Africa, ranging from the short Pygmies to the tall Maasai, each with its own cultural traditions.

Let's take a look at the people that make up 'the living Africa'!

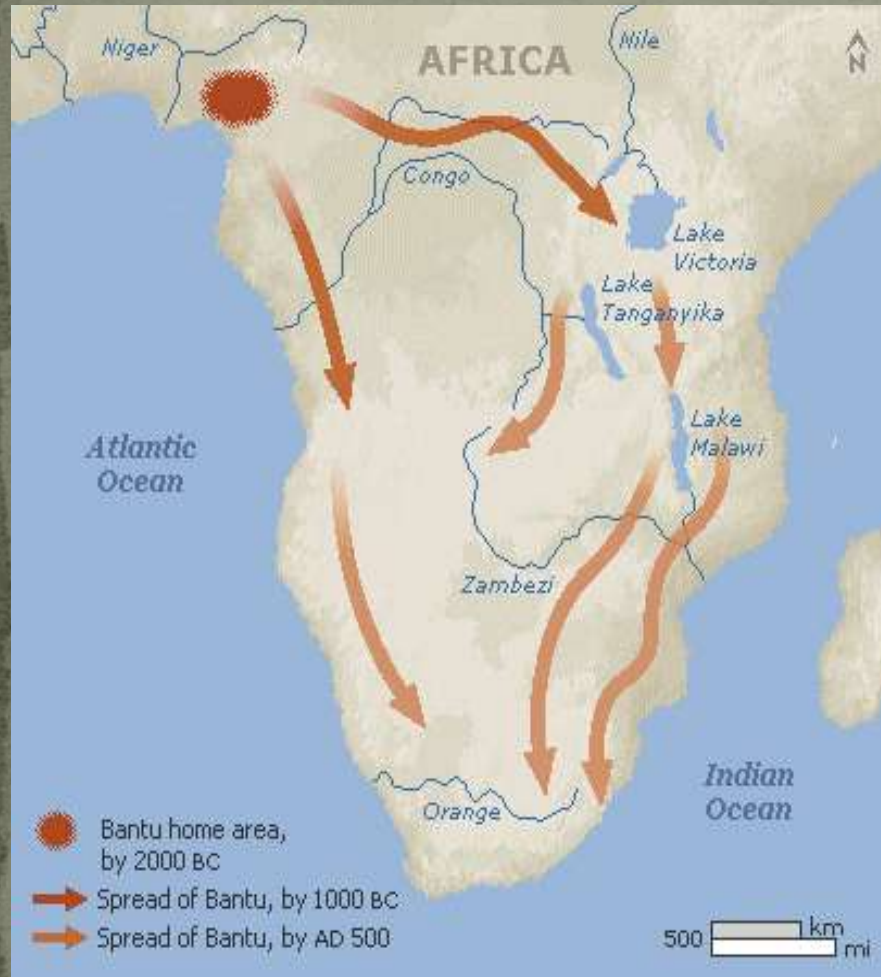
- Each ethnic group has its own distinct language, traditions, arts and crafts, history, way of life and religion.
- There are over 50 countries in Africa, and some of these have 20 or more different ethnic groups living within their boundaries.
- Some of the more widely known ethnic groups in Africa are: Arabs, **Ashanti**, **Bantu**, Berbers, Bushmen, Dinka, Fulani, Ganda, Hamites, Hausa, Hottentot, Kikuyu, Luba, Lunda, Malinke, Moors, Nuer, Pygmies, Semites, **Swahili**, Tuareg, Xhosa, and Yoruba.

Who are the Bantu?

- There are more than 60 million people who speak Bantu as their native language.
- They live primarily in the regions that straddle the equator and continue southward into southern Africa where it is believed they migrated to.



Why did they migrate/move?



- The desert was spreading
- The population was growing which increased the need for more food
- Became one of the largest migrations of African people in history

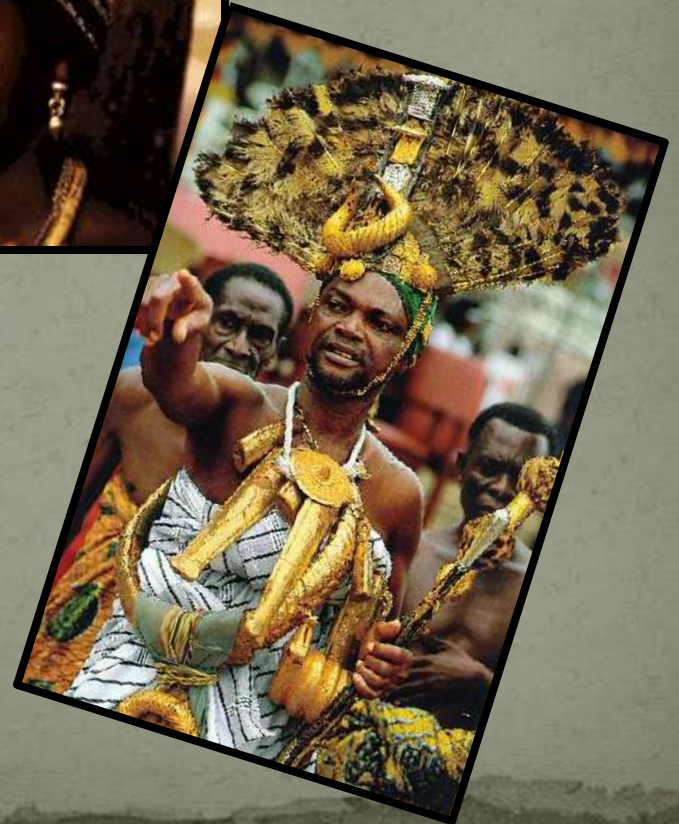
As a result of the Bantu migration?

- The Bantu intermarried with other people such as the Pygmies.
- Bantu culture became widespread throughout Africa.
- Today over 60 million people speak Bantu-based languages and share some part of the Bantu culture.



Who are the *Ashanti*?

- The Ashanti people are found in the modern country of Ghana.
- Family and the mother's clan are most important – they live in extended families
- Marriage is very important – must have consent of parents and men may have more than one wife



The Golden Stool

- The Ashanti believe that their kingdom was founded in 1701 with the help of a holy man who produced a Golden Stool form the heavens and gave it to the first Ashanti king
- They believe it contains the soul of Asante
- Considered so sacred that no person is allowed to sit on it - it must never come in contact with the earth or the ground
- They believe it represents worship of ancestors, well-being, and the nation of Ashanti





Kente Cloth

- Kente is an Ashanti ceremonial cloth hand-woven on a horizontal treadle loom.
- Cloths come in various colors, sizes and designs and are worn during very important social and religious occasions.
- Kente is more important than just a cloth. It is a visual representation of history, philosophy, ethics, oral literature, moral values, social code of conduct, religious beliefs, political thought and aesthetic principles.
- The original Ashanti name of the cloth was nsaduasoo or nwontoma, meaning "a cloth hand-woven on a loom" and is still used today by Asante weavers and elders.
- However, the term kente is the most popularly used today, in and outside Ghana.

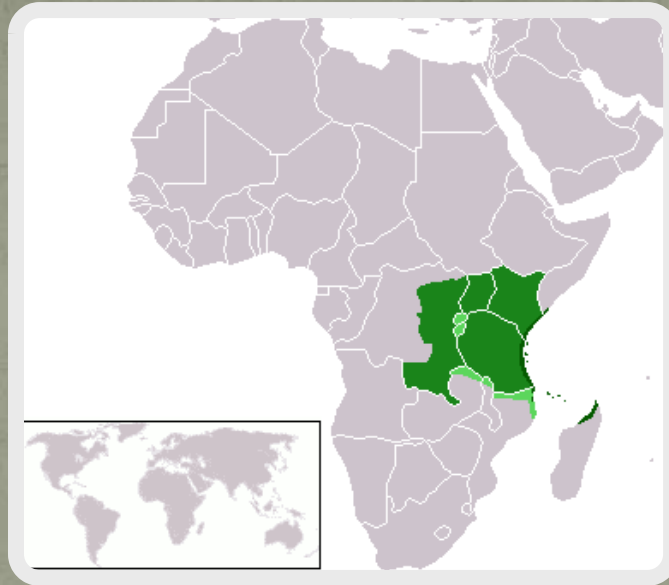
Ashanti Religion

- Monotheistic – belief in one god, **Nayme**.
- Nayme's children, the **Abosom**, represent all the natural powers and forces in the world.
- Traditional Ashanti believe all living things have souls.
- They also believe that witches, demon spirits, and fairies have powers in the lives of men.
- Ancestors are given great respect, and there are a number of family rituals associated with birth, coming of age, marriage, and death.

Other religions practiced in Africa?

- **Christianity** – was introduced by Europeans and American missionaries beginning in the 1800s.
- **Islam** – Arab Muslims began to spread to North Africa in the late 600s AD, when the first Muslim armies arrived in Egypt.
- **Animist** - believe that spirits are found in natural objects and surroundings. They may feel a spiritual presence in rocks, trees, a waterfall or particularly beautiful place in the forest.

SWAHILI



- Arab + Bantu

- *The Swahili community developed along the coast of East Africa (Kenya, Mozambique, and Tanzania) when Arab and Persian (Iran) traders looking for profitable markets began to settle and intermarry with the local Bantu-speaking population*

LANGUAGE/LIFESTYLE/RELIGION

- Language - derived from Bantu and Arabic. It spread much farther than most African languages
- It is one of Kenya's official languages
- It is a Bantu language – but some of its vocabulary shows a communication with Arabs because they use so many Arabic words
- The word “Swahili” means “the coast” in Arabic

- Many customs stem from their Muslim beliefs
- Live mainly in cities and have a modern lifestyle
- Islam is the main religion