The Cultural Geography of
Africa South of the Sahara
Chapter Objectives

- Examine population patterns in Africa south of the Sahara.
- Explain the effect of the movement of people on the region past and present.
- Describe aspects of African culture.
Objectives

- Explain why parts of Africa south of the Sahara are densely populated.
- Name obstacles to economic growth in the region.
- Identify the diverse peoples of Africa south of the Sahara.
- Explain why the region’s cities are growing so rapidly.
Terms to Know

- Sanitation
- Urbanization
- Service Center
A Geographic View

Seasonal fishing camp, central Africa
Geographic Literacy

Many scientists believe that HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, originated in chimpanzees in central Africa. Chimpanzees apparently carry the virus but do not develop AIDS. At the end of 2000, more than 25 million Africans were infected with HIV/AIDS. In several countries more than 20 percent of the adult population has HIV/AIDS.
Rapid Population Growth

- Africa south of the Sahara has the highest birthrate, the highest death rate, the highest infant mortality rate, and the shortest life expectancy in the world.
- The population is projected to double by 2035, but millions of AIDS-related deaths in the next several years could drastically limit population growth.
Rapid Population Growth

- **Population Density and Distribution** The people of Africa south of the Sahara are unevenly distributed over the land.

- Most people are concentrated along the coastal belt of West Africa and along the eastern coast of southern Africa.

- In these areas, access to water is easy, and the soil is fertile.
Rapid Population Growth

- **Population and Food Production** Soaring population growth, combined with economic challenges, has made it difficult for Africa south of the Sahara to feed its people.
- The effects of climate and intensive farming have depleted much of the farmland.
Rapid Population Growth

- **Population and Health Care**  Famine, unclean water, lack of *sanitation*, and the AIDS epidemic are the leading causes of death in the region.
- Governments cannot afford to purchase expensive AIDS drugs to help their people.
- The high death rate means a probable future shortage of workers, which could in turn lead to the closing of industries.
Rapid Population Growth
A Diverse Population

- Africa south of the Sahara is home to more than 3,000 African ethnic groups.
- Other groups in the region include Europeans, Asians, Arabs, and people of mixed backgrounds.
A Diverse Population

- **People Without Borders**  In many parts of Africa, country borders do not affect daily life.
- People often come and go without passports.
- People within an ethnic group share a language and a culture.
- In Africa south of the Sahara, identifying with one’s ethnic group is often more important than loyalty to a central government.
A Diverse Population

- **Growing Cities**
  - Only about 30 percent of Africans south of the Sahara live in cities, but urban areas are growing rapidly.
  
  - Cities offer job opportunities, health care, and public services that Africans cannot get in rural areas.
  
  - Most of the region’s cities lie on the coast, along major rivers, or near areas rich in natural resources.
  
  - African cities include gleaming modern buildings and shopping centers, but city residents often must endure traffic congestion, inadequate public services, overcrowded neighborhoods, and slums that lack water or sanitary facilities.
A Diverse Population
History and Government

Section 2
Objectives

• Describe the main achievements of the ancient civilizations of Africa south of the Sahara.
• Explain how European colonization disrupted African patterns of life.
• Discuss challenges countries of the region faced after independence.
Terms to Know

- Domesticate
- Apartheid
- Universal Suffrage
A Geographic View

Rural community, South Africa
During the 1600s, the Dutch settled the southern tip of Africa. British rule—and settlers—followed two centuries later. Many of the Dutch, now known as Afrikaners, moved north and set up two new territories. In 1899 war broke out between the British and the Afrikaners. Britain won the war in 1902 and by 1910 had united all of South Africa. British and Afrikaner South Africans ran the new country, while the African majority and other non-Europeans faced growing discrimination.
African Roots

- People have lived in Africa south of the Sahara for tens of thousands of years. Cave and rock paintings show that early people were hunters and gatherers, and later people were farmers and herders.

- **First Civilizations** As the climate of northern Africa turned hotter and drier by 2000 B.C., people migrated south to survive.

- In northeast Africa, Egyptian and other civilizations flourished along the Nile River.
African Roots

- **Empires in the West** The West African empires of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai grew rich by trading their gold for salt. These empires flourished for nearly 1,000 years.

- **Bantu Migrations** Bantu peoples spread across central and southern Africa.

- They established states in present-day Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

- Today 60 million Bantu speakers live in Africa.
European Colonization

- In the 1200s European trade with Africans began to awaken greater awareness of the region as a source of wealth. By the 1600s and 1700s, the Europeans were trading with Africans for ivory, gold, textiles, and enslaved workers.
European Colonization

- **The Slave Trade in Africa**  Africa’s slave trade greatly increased when Europeans began shipping enslaved Africans to the Americas to work on large plantations where sugar, tobacco, rice, and cotton were grown.

- Europeans made tremendous profits from the slave trade, while millions of Africans died on the journey.

- The loss of so many young Africans to the trade was a major setback to the societies they left behind.
**European Colonization**

- **Europe Divides and Rules**  By 1914, all of Africa except Ethiopia and Liberia was under European control.
- European colonizers established colonial borders that often cut across ethnic homelands.
- European missionaries promoted Christianity and European culture, which often weakened traditional African ways.
- Colonists established plantation economies in place of the village-based African economies.
From Colonies to Countries

- By the mid-1900s, educated Africans had launched independence movements.
- During the second half of the 1900s, African colonies became independent countries.
- They faced great challenges in building stable governments and productive, balanced economies.
From Colonies to Countries

- **Nigeria: A Colonial Legacy**  British-ruled Nigeria included several different ethnic and religious groups within its boundaries.

- When Nigeria became independent in 1960, ethnic and religious differences inherited from the past soon erupted in civil war.

- Today, even though the civil war is over, these differences still plague Nigeria as it moves from military rule to democracy.
South Africa: Road to Freedom  Until the 1990s, the South African government’s apartheid policy denied black and other non-European South Africans many opportunities and basic freedoms.

Internal unrest and international protest helped to end apartheid. In 1994, South Africa held its first election in which all adult citizens were allowed to vote.

Nelson Mandela became South Africa’s first black president.
Cultures and Lifestyles

Section 3
Objectives

• List languages spoken by people in Africa south of the Sahara.
• Identify the major religions in Africa south of the Sahara.
• Describe art forms developed by peoples of the region.
• Examine similarities and differences in the lifestyles of people in the region.
Terms to Know

- mass culture
- lingua franca
- oral tradition
- extended family
- clan
- nuclear family
A Geographic View

Rashaida woman of Eritrea
Geographic Literacy

Wole Soyinka of Nigeria, who received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1986, grew up immersed in the stories, myths, and rites of the Yoruba people. Educated in Nigeria and in Europe, he uses the cultural patterns of both areas in his literary works. Nadine Gordimer, a South African of European heritage, was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1991. One of her most popular novels, July’s People (1981), examines the relationships between black and white South Africans.
Languages

- In Africa south of the Sahara, more than 800 languages are spoken.
- African-based languages make up the largest linguistic group.
- Each African ethnic group often has its own language; there are over 800 Bantu-based languages alone.
- The Sudanic peoples of the northwest and northeast corners of the region speak Afro-Asiatic languages.
Languages

- Europeans brought their languages with them; as a result, many people throughout the region speak French and English.

- Derived from the dialect of early Dutch settlers, the Afrikaans language—spoken in South Africa—also contains words from English, French, German, and African languages.

- The people of Madagascar speak Malayo-Polynesian languages.
Religions

- Most people in the region are Christians or Muslims.
- Christianity was established in Ethiopia in the second century, but did not spread widely until the coming of European missionaries during the colonial period.
- Muslims ruled West Africa during the 1400s and 1500s, and West Africa today has a large Muslim population.
Religions

- Traditional African religions include characteristics such as reverence for ancestors and belief in a supreme creator.
- Religious faith is central to everyday life, and conflicts sometimes develop between competing religious groups.
Religions
Education

- **Educational Advances**  Before the colonial era, most African children were apprenticed to trades rather than sent to school.

- Europeans brought formal schooling to the region.

- The number of students enrolled in universities increased rapidly in the late 1900s.

- Today, the region’s literacy rate is about 60 percent.
Education

• In rural areas, many people are too poor to send their children to school.

• **New Ways of Learning**  Computers and the Internet may eventually help to educate people in the region, but currently computer access is limited.
The Arts

- African arts often express traditional religious beliefs.
- Textiles, pottery, and masks are typical African mediums.
- Music, dance, and storytelling are important parts of everyday life.
- Africa south of the Sahara has a rich tradition of oral literature.
- In recent times written literature has become prominent as well.
Varied Lifestyles

- **Extended-family** households are common in the region.
- Both traditional and Western dress can be seen in Africa’s large cities.
- People tend to marry within their ethnic groups.
Varied Lifestyles
Summary – Section 1

- The uneven distribution of the 673 million people in Africa south of the Sahara is linked to the region’s physical geography.
- The spread of AIDS has significantly impacted health and economic development in the region.
- Africa south of the Sahara is urbanizing faster than any other region in the world.
- Thousands of ethnic groups make up the population of Africa south of the Sahara.
The movement of different groups, including the migrations of Bantu peoples, helped shape the history of Africa south of the Sahara.

From the A.D. 700s to the 1600s, powerful trading empires arose and prospered in West Africa.

European colonization cut across traditional ethnic territories.

Most of the countries in Africa south of the Sahara won independence in the second half of the 1900s.
Summary – Section 3

- The many languages of Africans south of the Sahara contribute to the diversity of the region.
- The peoples of the region are followers of Christianity, Islam, or traditional African religions.
- The various art forms created by Africans south of the Sahara have influenced cultures around the world.
- Although they have diverse lifestyles, most peoples in the region value family ties, and many live in extended families.