



# Diverse Cultures of Africa

**SS7G4 The student will describe the diverse cultures of the people who live in Africa.**

- a. Explain the differences between an ethnic group and a religious group.
- b. Explain the diversity of religions within the Arab, Ashanti, Bantu, and Swahili ethnic groups.
- c. Evaluate how the literacy rate affects the standard of living.

# Ethnic group vs. religious group

- An ***ethnic group*** is a group of people who share **cultural** ideas and beliefs that have been a part of their community for generations. The characteristics they may have in common include **language, shared history, types of food, and a set of traditional stories, beliefs, or celebrations.**
- A ***religious group*** shares a **belief system in a god or gods, with a specific set of rituals and a sacred text.** People from different ethnic groups may share the same religion, though they may be from very different cultures.

# Africa's 4 Ethnic Groups (that we are studying)

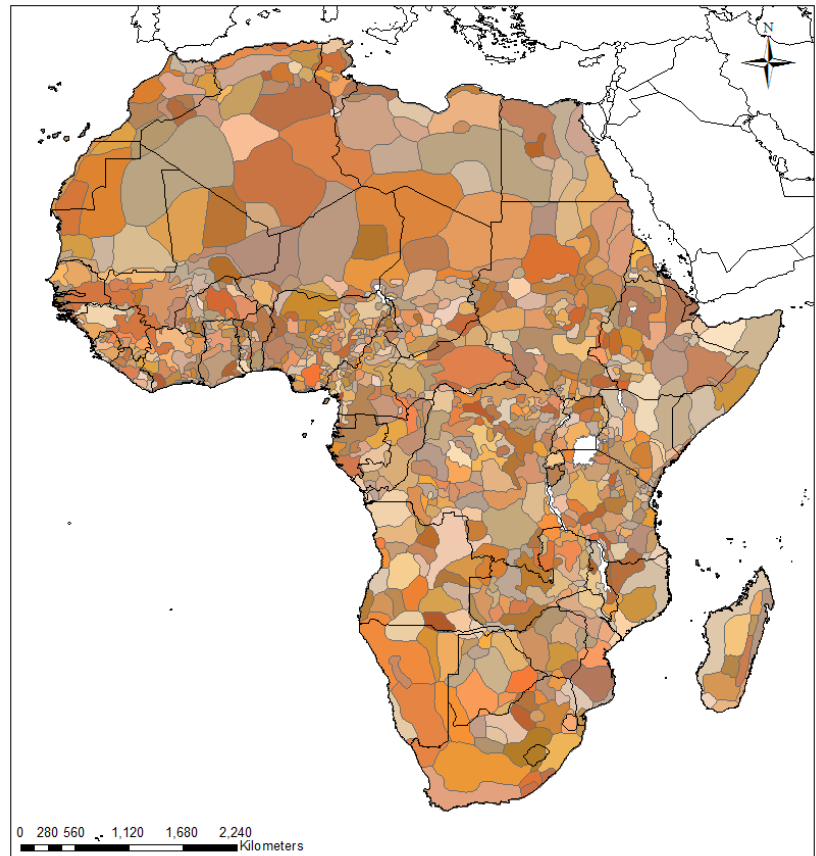
1) Arab

2) Ashanti

3) Bantu

4) Swahili

**Murdock Ethnic Map (1959)**



# Arab



- **Arab** people began to spread into **North Africa** in the late **600s**
- Wherever the **Arabs** went, they took the religion of **Islam** and the **Arabic** language with them
- Arab traders traveled across the **Sahara**, to the **Sahel**, and beyond
- The Arabic language, religion of Islam, and other aspects of Muslim culture became part of Africa



Many Arabs are found in Africa- they make up a majority of the people living **along the Mediterranean coast and in some countries along the Indian Ocean**



# Ashanti

- The **Ashanti** are found in the modern country of **Ghana**.



# Ashanti



- They believe that their kingdom was founded in 1701 with the help of a holy man who produced a **Golden Stool** from the heavens (This stool symbolizes their power)
- Religions
  - The **traditional religion** is centered on a belief in a supreme god, or Nayme.
  - Others religions practiced by the Ashanti include **Christianity** and **Islam**.

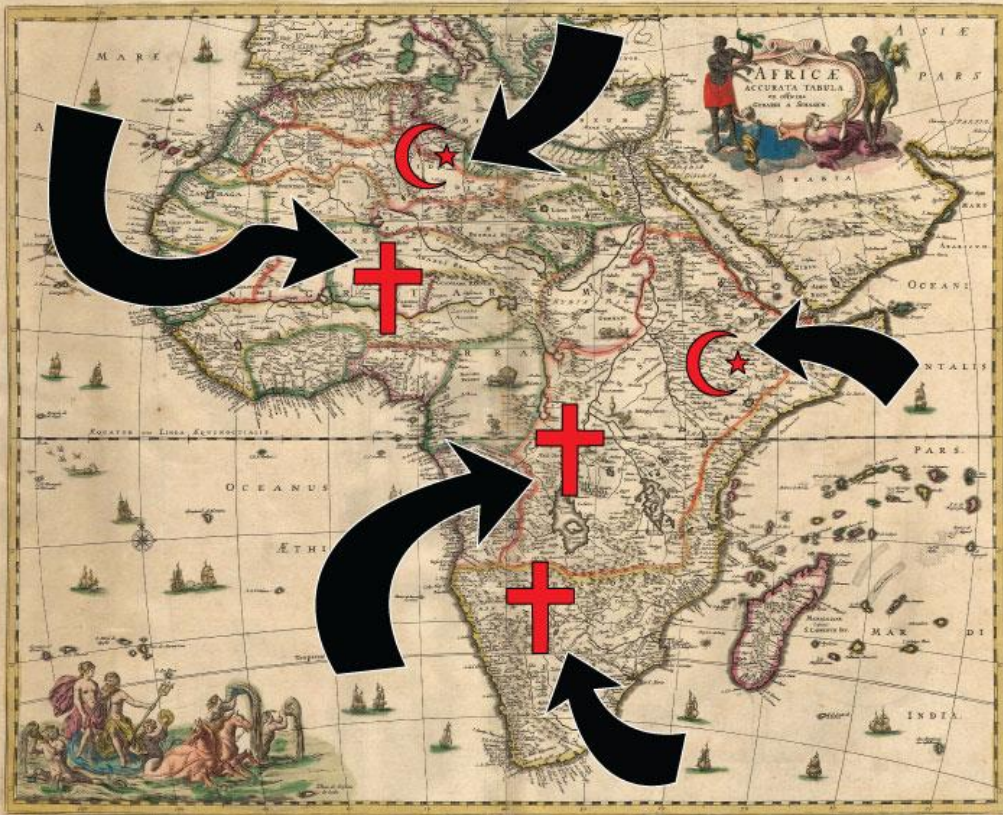
# Bantu

- The **Bantu**-speaking people of Africa migrated in many waves from **the region just south of the Sahara to the central and southern parts of Africa** over **2,000** years ago
- Settled as far south as the southern tip of Africa
- The Bantu migration was **one of the largest movements of people** in Africa's history
- Today, the speakers include many **different ethnic groups** (hundreds of related languages)
- Over **60 million** people in central and southern Africa speak **Bantu**-based languages and share some part of Bantu culture





# Bantu



- Religion
  - **Traditional** religions
    - Animists believe spirits are found in natural objects and surroundings
  - Some are **Christian**, and some are **Muslim**
  - Religion is based on **where they are located** (dominant religion of where they are located)

# Bantu + Arab = Swahili

# Swahili

- The Swahili community developed along the coast of **East Africa** when **Arab and Persian** traders began to settle there and intermarry with the local **Bantu**-speaking population
- The resulting **Swahili** culture is a mix of people who can claim ancestors in Africa, in Arabia, and across the Indian Ocean.
- Swahili is considered a **Bantu** language, but there are many **Arabic** elements in it as well
  - Swahili comes from Arabic and means **“one who lives on the coast”**



# Swahili



- Religions
  - Because of historical contact with Arab traders, most Swahili today are **Muslims**. Islam helped create a common identity for such a diverse group of people.
  - Many among the Swahili also follow **traditional religions/local beliefs** that have been a part of their culture since before the Muslim traders arrived. These local beliefs are known as **mila**. (One belief of mila is that there are spirits that can possess a person.)

