

# West and Central Africa



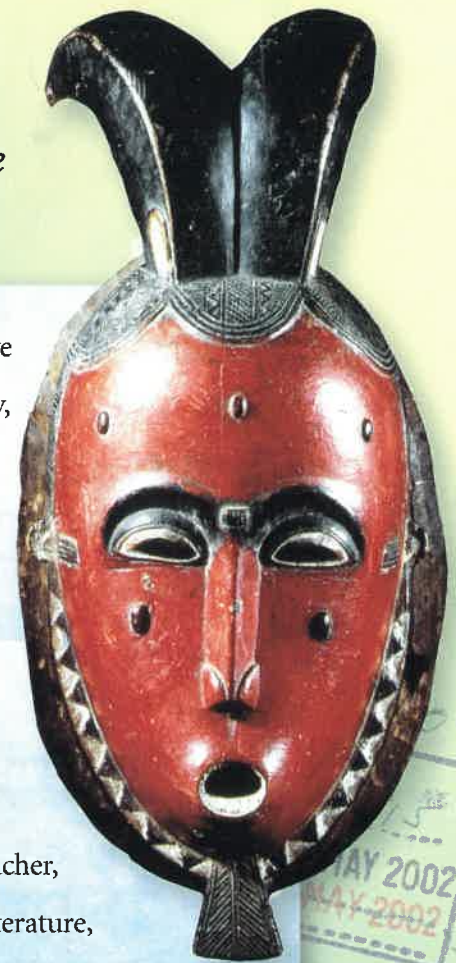
Woman carrying millet in Senegal

*More than 315 million people live in the 24 countries of West and Central Africa. The area stretches from the deserts of Mauritania to the tropical rain forests around the Congo River.*

*Ina kwanna!* (Good morning!) My name is Ousseina. I have an identical twin sister named Hassana. We live in Niamey, the capital of Niger, with our grandmother, parents, and relatives. Every morning my sister and I eat breakfast with my grandmother. My favorite breakfast is millet porridge (a boiled grain) with yogurt and sugar.

When my sister and I were very small, we went to school to learn the Qur'an and the five daily prayers. We learned how to read and write in Arabic. We had to sit neatly in rows on beautiful mats and repeat verses and prayers after our religious teacher, the Malam. Now we go to a different school. In school we study literature, science, geography, history, and math. Some of our friends speak Hausa like us, but others speak a different language of Niger. School lasts from 8:00 A.M. to noon, with a 30-minute break for a snack. If we are hungry we buy mangoes, sugarcane, guavas, or bananas from street vendors. When we are thirsty, we drink baobab fruit juice or lemon and ginger juice. After school we help our grandmother pound spices for dinner, sweep the room, and wash the dishes. Sometimes after we do our homework we go to a friend's house to watch TV.

Mask from Côte d'Ivoire





Section  
**1**

# Natural Environments

**HOLT**

## Geography's Impact

Watch the video to understand the impact of desertification.

**READ TO DISCOVER**

1. What are West and Central Africa's main landforms and rivers?
2. Which climates and biomes are found here?
3. What are some of the region's important resources?

**IDENTIFY**

Sahel

**LOCATE**

- El Djouf
- Niger River
- Lake Chad
- Congo Basin
- Congo River

**DEFINE**

desertification

### Reading Strategy

**READING ORGANIZER**

Create a spider map on a sheet of paper. Label the circle West and Central Africa. Create legs for Landforms and Rivers; Climates, Plants, and Animals; and Natural Resources. As you read the section, write main ideas and supporting details beneath each leg. Include key terms and their definitions.

**internet connect**

**GO TO:** [go.hrw.com](http://go.hrw.com)

**KEYWORD:** SW3 CH22

**FOR:** Web sites about West and Central Africa



## West and Central Africa: Physical-Political





## INTERPRETING THE VISUAL RECORD

Thickets of coastal mangroves, such as these in the Gambia River delta, made it very difficult for early European explorers to reach land in parts of West and Central Africa. Often these explorers had to anchor their ships offshore and use small boats to reach the mainland. **How might the physical environment of this region have influenced the locations of coastal settlements?**



## Landforms and Rivers

Plains and low hills make up most of the landscapes of West and Central Africa. There are also a few highland areas and broad depressions. (See the chapter map.) In the west is El Djouf (JOOF), a desert region in eastern Mauritania and western Mali near the Niger (NY-juhr) River. Lake Chad, on the border of Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria, and Niger, lies in the middle of a depression. To the south is the Congo Basin, a huge, wet tropical lowland in Central Africa. The Congo River drains this region.

The Congo and the Niger are two of Africa's major rivers. As you can see from the map, both rivers follow unusual courses. The Congo's waters flow northward from Zambia, in southern Africa, for hundreds of miles. The river changes course in the northern Democratic Republic of the Congo. From there it flows generally westward and then toward the southwest before entering the Atlantic Ocean. The Niger River's headwaters are not far from West Africa's Atlantic coast. However, the river flows northeast across Guinea and Mali and then southeast through Niger and Nigeria before entering the Gulf of Guinea. Geographers think that the upper courses of these great rivers date back millions of years. At that time, Africa was part of the supercontinent Gondwana. Both rivers probably flowed into large inland lakes. As Gondwana broke up, the lakes drained, and each river cut a channel to the sea.

A low coastal plain runs along the Atlantic shoreline of West and Central Africa. Most of the coastline is straight, with few natural harbors. Large sandbars and mangrove trees line the coasts of Ghana, Nigeria, and Senegal.

✓ **READING CHECK:** **Places and Regions** What is the physical environment of this region like?

## Climates, Plants, and Animals

All of West and Central Africa lies within the tropics. Therefore, most areas are warm throughout the year. There are no major mountain ranges to break up the region's climate pattern. As a result, climate regions form bands that run east to west across the region. Geographers describe this pattern of climates as zonal. (See the unit climate map.)



The tiny country of Gambia lies in an area confined to the navigable river valley of the Gambia River. Gambia extends inland along the river for about 200 miles (322 km) and is only about 15 miles (24 km) wide.

**Arid Environments** In the north, areas farthest from the equator have an arid climate. Here, the Sahara extends into northern Niger, Mali, and Mauritania. Along the southern edge of the Sahara is a region of semiarid climate called the **Sahel** (sah-HEL). The vegetation in this area includes scattered trees, shrubs, and grasses. The Sahel extends from Senegal and Mauritania in the west to Sudan in eastern Africa.



### FOCUS ON GEOGRAPHY

**The Sahel** The Sahel only receives about 4 to 8 inches (10 to 20 cm) of rainfall each year. This small amount of rain may vary greatly from year to year. In some years rain is plentiful. In other years there may be almost no rain at all in some areas. When there are several years of below average rainfall in a row, major droughts occur. In the past long droughts in the Sahel have caused widespread famines.

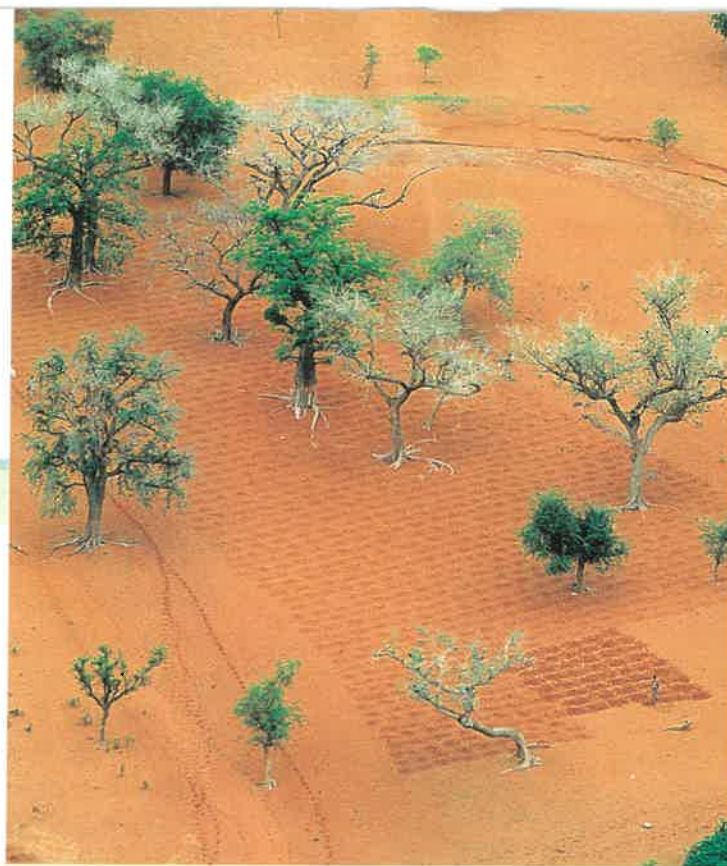
Most people in the Sahel are subsistence farmers. They grow crops like peanuts and grains or raise cattle and goats. In recent years the number of people and livestock has risen. The increase has put pressure on the natural environment, particularly in times of drought. People cut down trees for firewood and clear land for crops. Livestock eat grasses, leaving the soil exposed. When it rains, valuable soil is washed away. This erosion leaves the land barren and makes farming even more difficult.

The combination of droughts and a growing population in the Sahel have caused **desertification**. This means desert conditions have spread into semi-arid or marginal areas. In fact, the Sahara is slowly expanding southward.

✓ **READING CHECK:** *Physical Systems* How have droughts and population growth affected the environment in the Sahel?

**Tropical Environments** South of the Sahel is a zone of tropical wet and dry climate. Northeast winds from the Sahara bring hot, dry, dusty conditions in winter months. Summer winds blow in the opposite direction—from the ocean—and bring rain. Open grasslands with shrubs and small trees are common. Elephants, giraffes, zebras, and other large animals once roamed freely. However, growing human populations and the conversion of grassland into farmland have led to a serious decline in wildlife populations.

The climate zone closest to the equator is tropical humid. Rain falls year-round here, and temperatures rarely drop below 65°F (18°C). Most of Africa's dense tropical rain forests are in this part of Central Africa. Tall trees form a complete canopy in some areas. Canopies are formed by the uppermost layer of the trees, where the limbs spread out. Leaves then block sunlight from reaching plant life on the ground below. This results in areas of open ground underneath the trees. The rain forests are home to a huge number of birds and insects. Monkeys, chimpanzees, and endangered gorillas also live there.



### INTERPRETING THE VISUAL RECORD

*Despite difficult environmental conditions, farmers in Africa's Sahel region attempt to grow crops where they can. Here in Mali, farmers plant their crops under shade trees to protect them from the Sun. However, rainfall is undependable, and the region often suffers from devastating droughts. A long period of drought in the late 1960s and 1970s killed some 100,000 people. How might environmental conditions in the Sahel influence migration and population patterns?*



## INTERPRETING THE VISUAL RECORD

Many of Africa's tropical rain forests are being cut down, which leads to the extinction of plants and animals. Rapid deforestation is a serious problem in Nigeria, where some 12 percent of the country is forested. Nigeria's large and rapidly growing population strains its forest resources as people clear trees for farmland, fuelwood, and timber bound for export. **How might deforestation in Nigeria lead to economic development and environmental change?**



## Natural Resources

West and Central Africa have a wide variety of natural resources. Tropical timber, good soils for farming, and many minerals are found here. (See the unit Land Use and Resources map.) Some countries are world leaders in the production and export of certain farm or mining products.

The most valuable energy resource in the region is oil. Nigeria is Africa's largest oil producer. Smaller but significant oil reserves are found in other countries, such as Gabon and Cameroon. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is rich in minerals, including copper, diamonds, and cobalt. However, political problems and poor transportation systems have kept these resources from being fully developed.

West Africa is the world's major source of cacao, or cocoa beans. The tree that bears cacao is native to tropical areas of South America. Europeans brought it to West and Central Africa during the Colonial era. Cocoa beans are used to make chocolate. Côte d'Ivoire (koht-dee-vWAHR) is the world's leading producer. Ghana, Nigeria, and Cameroon are also important growers. Coffee, coconuts, and peanuts are also among the region's main exports. These crops grow well in the region's tropical environments.

 **READING CHECK:** *Places and Regions* From what world region did cacao come? How did it get to Africa and what role does it play in the region's economy?



## Review

 **Homework Practice Online**  
Keyword: SW3 HP22

**Identify** Sahel

**Define** desertification

### Working with Sketch Maps

On a map of West and Central Africa that you draw or that your teacher provides, label the countries of the region, El Djouf, Niger River, Lake Chad, Congo Basin, and Congo River. Which river flows through Nigeria before entering the Gulf of Guinea?

### Reading for the Main Idea

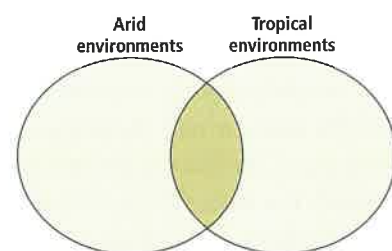
1. **The Uses of Geography** How do geographers explain the irregular course of the Congo and Niger Rivers?
2. **Physical Systems** What factors affect the distribution of climates in this region?
3. **Places and Regions** What are some major resources in West and Central Africa?

### Critical Thinking

4. **Problem Solving** What could be done to try to halt desertification in this region?

### Organizing What You Know

5. Copy the graphic organizer below. Use it to compare and contrast the arid and tropical environments found in this region.



Section  
**2**

# History and Culture

**READ TO DISCOVER**

1. What are the main eras in the history of West and Central Africa?
2. What are some features of this region's cultures?

## Reading Strategy

**PAIRED SUMMARIZING** Read this section silently, making notes as you read. Working with a partner, take turns summarizing the material and your notes. Stop to discuss ideas that seem confusing. Include key terms and their definitions.

**DEFINE**

staple  
millet  
sorghum

**LOCATE**

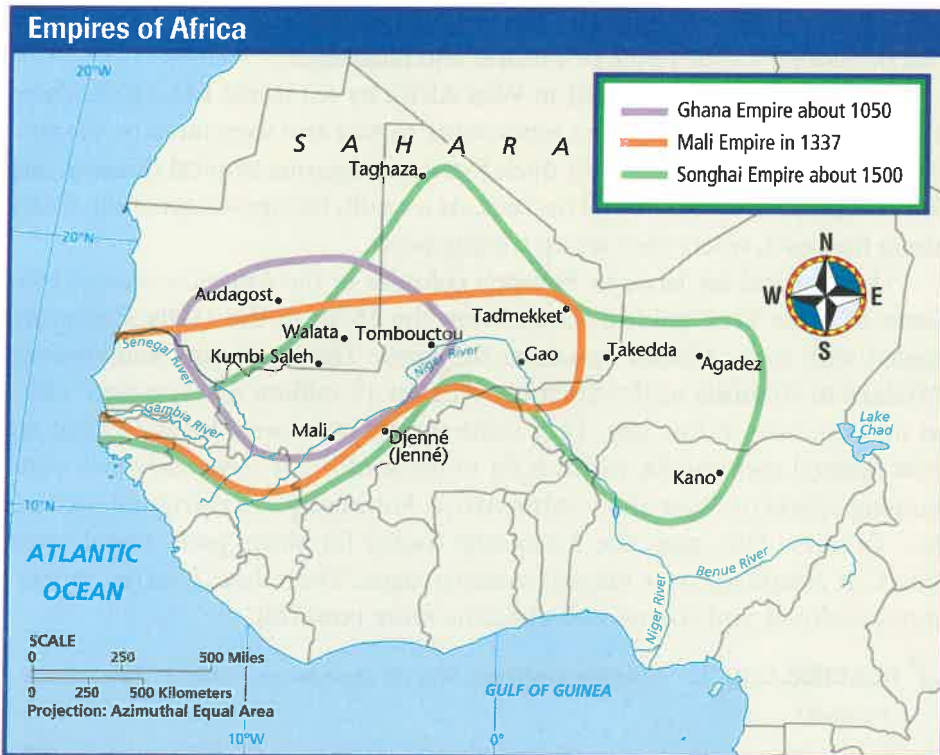
Tombouctou

## History

Great kingdoms once ruled large areas of West and Central Africa. One of the earliest was Ghana in the A.D. 800s. (See the map.) Ghana was a trading state. It exported products like gold and cloth to North Africa. The kingdom also participated in the slave trade. Traders brought to Ghana a variety of products,

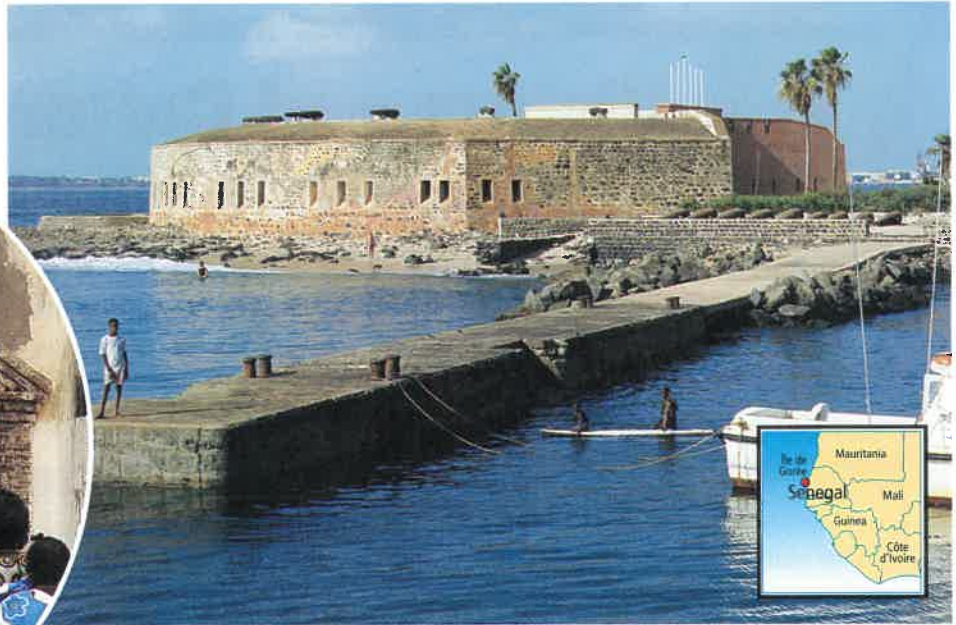


Beautiful gold objects, such as this staff from Ghana decorated with an alligator, have long attracted traders to West and Central Africa.



**INTERPRETING THE MAP** Ghana, Mali, and Songhai were all great trading empires in West Africa that grew rich from trade between tropical areas to the south and arid regions to the north. Which areas of West Africa did all three empires control?





#### INTERPRETING THE VISUAL RECORD

*The slave trade greatly affected the human geography of West and Central Africa. It altered settlement patterns, economic systems, and cultural landscapes, and caused widespread human suffering. Slaves were often held captive in coastal forts and prisons in places such as Ghana (left) and Senegal (right) before they were taken to the Americas on ships. How do you think the slave trade in West and Central Africa shaped the distribution of culture groups around the world?*

such as salt. Islam also spread to the region along trade routes. Over time, rulers of many West African kingdoms became Muslim.

Many empires rose and fell here over the centuries. For example, Mali replaced Ghana as the most powerful kingdom during the 1200s. The city of Tombouctou (tohn-book-TOO) (also called Timbuktu) became an important center of trade and education during this time.

To the south lived the people of the tropical rain forests. Forest peoples traded less with distant lands. This was partly because the rain forest provided them with many different resources. Also, the dense vegetation of the forest made it difficult to travel long distances. Forest peoples lived in small groups and developed a wide range of cultures and languages.

European explorers arrived in West Africa by sea in the late 1400s. These Europeans were searching for a water route to Asia and were lured by the gold trade. They found an area with thick forests, dangerous tropical diseases, and few navigable rivers or natural harbors. As a result, Europeans generally stayed along the coast, where they set up trading posts.

The demand for labor in Europe's colonies in the Americas changed the focus of trade from gold to slaves. From the 1500s to the 1800s, Europeans traded with some African kingdoms for slaves. The Europeans sold enslaved Africans to colonists in the Americas. At least 10 million Africans were taken to the Americas in this way. They came mostly from areas between what are now Senegal and Angola, which is far to the south. The slave trade had wide-ranging effects on West and Central Africa. For example, it disrupted societies and families. Also, guns the Europeans traded for slaves gave coastal forest states an advantage over interior savanna states. Over time, interior savanna states declined, and coastal states became more powerful.

 **READING CHECK:** *Human Systems* Why did forest peoples not trade more with distant lands?

**The Colonial Era** By the mid-1800s the slave trade was coming to an end. Europe was industrializing, and countries there wanted minerals and tropical farm products they could not produce at home. The climates and soils of West

and Central Africa were good for growing many of these products, such as cocoa, peanuts, and rubber. As a result, many European countries sought political control over African territories.

During the colonial period many West and Central Africans quit subsistence farming and started working for wages. Some worked on plantations. Others moved to cities. Unlike most precolonial settlements, these new colonial cities were located along the coast. These locations offered better connections to Europe and the Americas.

**The Postcolonial Era** Africa's colonial era lasted less than 100 years. In 1957 Ghana became independent. Other countries soon followed. By 1976 all African countries in this region were independent.

Although the colonial era was relatively short, it had a major effect on West and Central Africa. Before the colonial era most people in the region were subsistence farmers. Afterward, many worked in the new commercial economy. Local economies had been based on trading gold, salt, and ivory. They now depended on the export of minerals and farm products. Modern medicine and infrastructure improved many people's lives, particularly in cities. However, people also faced new and difficult problems. For example, many earned low wages or were unemployed. Also, rival ethnic groups had to share power in newly independent countries. This caused serious political rivalries.

✓ **READING CHECK:** *The Uses of Geography* How did the colonial era affect the economies of countries in West and Central Africa?

## Connecting to

## HISTORY

### The Colonial Scramble

In 1884, European powers met in Berlin to settle colonial disputes in Africa. The conference set up rules designed to govern how outside powers took control of African lands. In a short time European countries had divided most of Africa among themselves. The French, British, and Belgians took most of West and Central Africa. Portugal, Spain, and Germany also claimed colonies in the region. (See the map.)

The effects of the European scramble for colonies can still be seen in Africa. Borders there today are largely those drawn by Europeans. When creating these borders, the colonial Europeans ignored Africa's existing states, ethnic groups, and natural environments. Some colonies included many different peoples. These peoples spoke many different languages and dialects. New borders also blocked traditional migration and trade routes. These borders created political problems, particularly when African colonies won independence. They also left a number of African countries landlocked. These problems remain a difficult challenge facing Africans today.

**Summarizing** How did the scramble for European colonies shape the borders and countries of modern Africa?

Results of the Berlin Conference (1884–1885)







Nigeria has more than 250 ethnic groups, each with its own language. Linguists think that most Nigerian languages have been spoken in about the same places for thousands of years.

#### INTERPRETING THE VISUAL RECORD

*Most people in West and Central Africa live in rural areas and practice subsistence agriculture. Nomadic lifestyles are found in dry northern environments such as the Sahel. Why might a nomadic lifestyle be common in the arid conditions of the Sahel?*

## Culture

West and Central African societies are very diverse. Like the rest of Africa, peoples here reflect three major cultural influences. Those influences are traditional African cultures, Islam, and European culture. These influences have been called Africa's triple heritage.

**People, Languages, and Settlement** Most of the languages spoken here belong to the Niger-Congo language family. Within this family there are hundreds of different languages. Arabic is also spoken in northern areas. During the colonial era, English and French became lingua francas in much of Africa. These languages are still widely used in the region today.

Most West and Central Africans live in rural areas or small villages and rely mainly on farming. However, the populations growing the fastest are those in the cities. In most countries, the largest city is the capital. Except in landlocked countries, capitals are generally located on the coast. Most were set up as ports and government centers during the colonial era.

**Religion and Education** Islam is the main religion in the Sahel. However, many Christians live to the south, between the Sahel and the Atlantic coast. Many people also practice traditional African religions. These people believe that spirits—particularly the spirits of their ancestors—play an important part in their lives. People seek advice and help from spirits in times of trouble or sickness. Ancestral spirits are also honored in ceremonies.

Literacy rates are generally low throughout West and Central Africa. Only a small percentage of people in most countries finish high school. Very few have the chance to go to college. The main obstacle to education is poverty. In many poor families, parents need their children to work. Older children often take care of their younger brothers and sisters so their parents can work. At home, parents and elders provide what education they can for their children. The children learn about family and group traditions and about growing crops or raising animals. Many children do not have the opportunity to learn skills like reading and writing.





West and Central Africans have a rich tradition of dance. Here in Cameroon, Juju dancers dressed as forest animals perform a dance about the destruction of the forest.

**Food, Traditions, and Customs** Most people in the region produce their own food. Some grow only a few **staple** crops. Staple crops are the main food crops of a region. Such crops in West and Central Africa include cassava, corn, and yams. **Millet** and **sorghum** are also staple crops here. These two grains are resistant to drought, growing well in dry areas like the Sahel. In the cities many people eat foods introduced from other countries. For example, bread has become an important staple in some places. However, the wheat needed to make bread does not grow easily here. As a result, wheat and other introduced food crops must be imported.

Customs and traditions differ among the region's many ethnic groups. For example, the lifestyles of Muslims in the north differ greatly from those of rain forest peoples in the south. Generally, societies are based on extended families. Families consist of several households, including the head of the family, his wife or wives, their unmarried children, and their married daughters and their husbands and children. Members of the extended family work together to support the household and take care of older people and young children.

✓ **READING CHECK:** **Places and Regions** How is Africa's triple heritage reflected in the culture of the region?

## Section 2 Review

**Define** staple, millet, sorghum

**Working with Sketch Maps** On the map you created in Section 1, label Tombouctou. On which river is Tombouctou located?

**Reading for the Main Idea**

1. **Human Systems** What did kingdoms in West and Central Africa trade with people in North Africa?

2. **Places and Regions** Where will you find most capital cities in the region's countries that are not landlocked? Why?

3. **Human Systems** What are the most common religions practiced here?

**Critical Thinking**

4. **Drawing Inferences and Conclusions** In what ways do you think the physical environment influenced cultural patterns and the distribution of culture groups in West and Central Africa?

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**Organizing What You Know**

5. Copy the time line below. Use it to list major events and periods in West and Central Africa's early history, colonial era, and postcolonial era.





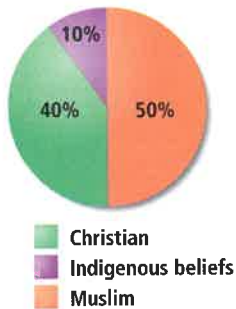
# Geography for Life

## Nigeria's Ethnic Diversity

Some countries, such as France and Japan, have a dominant culture and a clear national identity. In contrast, a national identity is hard to find in Nigeria, Africa's most populous country. Nigeria was granted full independence from Great Britain in 1960. After enduring years of harsh and corrupt military rule, Nigerians adopted a new constitution in 1999. That same year, an elected civilian government came to power. Although Nigeria's government is becoming more democratic, ethnic conflicts are still a major challenge.

To understand the country's politics, we must study Nigeria's diverse people and cultures. Nigeria has 36 states and more than 250 ethnic groups. Each group has unique customs, languages, and traditions. A strong Muslim presence dominates the north. The Hausa and Fulani together are the largest Muslim groups. Other major ethnic groups of the north include the Kanuri. Christian influence is strong in the south. The Yoruba people dominate the southwest. About half of them are Christian, but half are Muslim. The mainly Roman Catholic Igbo (Ibo) are the largest ethnic group in the southeast. The Ibibio and other peoples also live there in large numbers.

### Religions in Nigeria



Source: Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook 2003*

Some ethnic groups in the country want regional independence and a larger share of local wealth. Yet Nigeria's leaders fear that granting these requests would divide the country. Religious conflict has also appeared. For example, some northern states want to apply Islamic law to criminal offenses. Islamic law, called sharia, has long been used as the basis of family law in northern Nigeria. Sharia bans alcohol and allows severe punishments, such as cutting off a hand, for certain crimes. While officials say sharia would apply only to Muslims, many Christians are concerned.

Since military rule ended, hundreds of Nigerians have died in ethnic and religious fighting, particularly in the



cities. Many more people have fled the violence by returning to their ethnic or religious homelands.

The previous military government might have stepped in to end the conflicts. Some observers say the military could use the ethnic clashes as an excuse to retake power. Others say that the army is now too weak and that most Nigerians would fight to defend democracy. Because no easy solution to the conflicts exists, Nigerians are finding they must learn to live with their differences.

### Applying What You Know

- 1. Summarizing** Why is Nigeria unstable even though its military government has been replaced by a democratically elected government?
- 2. Making Predictions** Do you think Nigeria will eventually split into several countries? Why or why not? How might democracy help Nigeria's diverse peoples live with their differences?



# Section 3

## The Region Today

### READ TO DISCOVER

1. How economically developed are West and Central African countries?
2. What major challenges do the countries face today?

### Reading Strategy

#### DEVELOPING VOCABULARY

Find unfamiliar words in this section. On a sheet of paper, write down what you think each word means. Use context clues to help figure out the meaning. Look each word up in a dictionary to verify its meaning. Then, write an explanation of how the words relate to the section's topics.

### DEFINE

dual economies

### LOCATE

Lagos  
Kinshasa  
Abidjan  
Accra  
Douala

## Level of Development

West and Central Africa is a region of developing countries. On average, people here earn less and live shorter lives than people in other parts of the world. They also have lower levels of education. (See the unit Fast Facts table.) Some countries are better off than others. For example, Gabon is one of the richest countries in Africa because of its oil reserves. In contrast, landlocked Mali is among the poorest countries in the world. It lies in the Sahel region and has few resources.

The countries of West and Central Africa have **dual economies**. In a dual economy, some goods are produced for export to wealthy countries. Meanwhile, another part of the economy produces goods and services for local people. For example, cash crops like rubber and cocoa or minerals like diamonds and bauxite might be produced and exported. On the other hand, subsistence farmers produce food for their own use. Street vendors and local markets sell clothing, food, and services to passersby.

**Agriculture** In the Sahel grasslands, farmers raise cattle and goats and move their herds in search of grazing lands. In tropical rain forest areas, cassava, millet, and yams are all staples. Farmers there have long planted several different crops in a single field. This kind of farming works well in tropical environments. If one crop is damaged by disease, other crops provide enough food for people to survive. Because different crops mature at different times, farmers do not have to harvest all their crops at once or keep food in storage.

The development of market economies under colonialism affected traditional farming. Plantations and ranches made it hard for herders to move their animals around to different grazing lands. Thus, herders have been forced to stay in one place. This leads to overgrazing and soil erosion. In turn, herders cannot keep as much livestock as in the past. As a result, they either have to migrate to more fertile areas or to the cities.

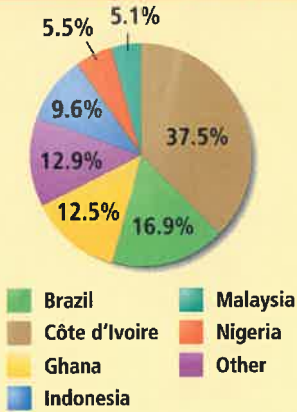
✓ **READING CHECK:** *Human Systems* How has the development of market economies affected agriculture in the region?



*In a dual economy, goods like rubber are produced for export (above), while other goods are produced for local people (below).*



## World Production of Cacao



Source: Rand McNally Goode's World Atlas

### INTERPRETING THE GRAPH

West and Central Africa is the world's major source of cacao. About how much of the world's cacao comes from Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Nigeria combined?

### INTERPRETING THE DIAGRAM

Cacao beans are processed into liquid paste, which is then used to make cocoa powder, chocolate, and other products. The production of chocolate is what type of economic activity?

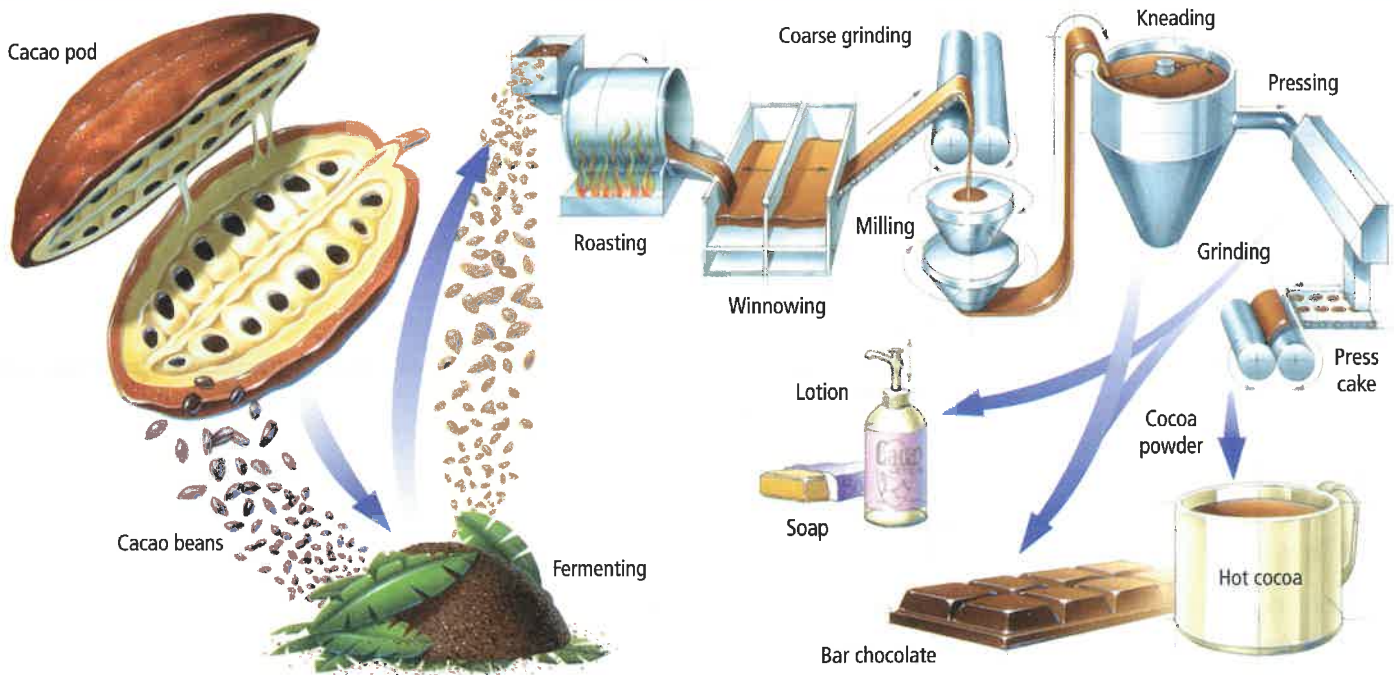
**Economic Activities and Global Trade** Most of the region's countries export primary rather than secondary goods. For example, Côte d'Ivoire exports cocoa beans, but the manufacture of chocolate often takes place in the developed countries. Similarly, Guinea exports bauxite, but the manufacture of aluminum takes place elsewhere.

Many countries in the region depend heavily on only a few main exports. This practice has two major disadvantages. First, it makes economies vulnerable to changes in the price of their main exports. For example, about 95 percent of Nigeria's export earnings come from selling oil. When the price of oil drops, the Nigerian economy suffers. Likewise, if the price of cocoa falls, the economy of Côte d'Ivoire can be hurt. Second, the export of primary goods is less profitable than the export of manufactured goods. For example, it is more profitable to sell peanuts processed into peanut butter and oil than to sell raw peanuts. Manufacturing does take place in some areas. However, most West and Central African countries do not have adequate facilities to process their primary products. As a result, they miss out on much of the wealth their raw materials create.

**Cities** In the early 1960s there were very few large cities in West and Central Africa. Only a handful of cities had populations greater than 300,000. After independence, however, cities grew very rapidly. For example, Lagos, Nigeria, grew from 760,000 people in 1960 to 4.5 million by 1980. Today some 13 million people live there. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kinshasa, which had a population of 450,000 in 1960, has about 5 million people today. Other large cities include Abidjan in Côte d'Ivoire, Accra in Ghana, and Douala in Cameroon.

This rapid urban population growth has caused housing shortages. Many people live in crowded shantytowns without electricity or running water. In sharp contrast to the poor shantytowns are more prosperous downtown areas. These areas often look similar to the downtown areas of European cities. They

## Cacao: From Field to Consumer



have busy roads full of cars and buses. Tall buildings dominate the central city. Neon signs and billboards advertise international products like soft drinks and electronics.

**READING CHECK:** *Places and Regions* What types of goods are West and Central Africa's most important exports?

## Issues and Challenges

The countries of West and Central Africa face many challenges. Economic development is probably the most important challenge. Issues like population growth, health care, political problems, and protecting the environment all affect development.

The region's population is growing rapidly. This rapid growth has caused many problems. Since independence, agricultural production has not kept pace with population growth. In some places, food production has even declined. Food shortages and malnutrition have become more common.

Recently, many countries have suffered wars and conflicts. In the past 10 years alone, civil wars have been fought in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. Thousands of people have been killed in these civil wars.

Destruction of the natural environment is a serious problem. Lumber companies harvest tropical rain forests for timber. Grasslands are cleared for farming. Such clearing has led to the extinction of some plants and animals. In the Sahel, desertification has degraded the land. As a result, people have migrated southward in search of farmland and food.

One of the most serious problems facing the region is disease. Malaria has long been a problem. In addition, HIV—the virus that causes AIDS—has spread rapidly. There is no cure for HIV infection, and treatments are very expensive. Poor, malnourished, and poorly educated people are particularly vulnerable to the disease.

**READING CHECK:** *Places and Regions* What challenges does the region face?



With about 13 million people, Lagos, Nigeria, is one of the 15 largest cities in the world. As in many cities in developing countries, the population of Lagos is growing rapidly.

## Section 3

## Review

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**Define** dual economies

### Working with Sketch Maps

On the map you created in Section 2, label Lagos, Kinshasa, Abidjan, Accra, and Douala. Which city has grown to about 13 million people today?

### Reading for the Main Idea

**1. Places and Regions** What level of development do all the countries share?

**2. Human Systems** What disadvantages do West and Central Africa's countries face when they depend on just a few exports?

### Critical Thinking

**3. Supporting a Point of View** Who do you think benefits the most from a dual economy?

**4. Analyzing** How is economic development in West and Central Africa tied to population growth, health care, political problems, and environmental change? How might rapid urbanization make some of these problems worse?

### Organizing What You Know

**5.** Copy the chart below. Use it to list some major challenges the countries of West and Central Africa face. In addition, suggest some possible solutions to these challenges.

Challenges	Possible solutions



## CITIES & SETTLEMENTS

# The Tuareg: A Nomadic Way of Life

**Human Systems** How hard would it be to give up a way of life that your family has treasured for generations? This is the question facing many Tuareg (TWAH-reg), a nomadic people of North and West Africa. For more than 1,000 years they have raised camels, goats, and sheep in the Sahara. However, climate and politics are threatening to end the Tuareg's traditional way of life.

### The “Blue Men” of the Sahara

As many as 1 million Tuareg live in Africa. Countries with Tuareg populations include Algeria, Burkina Faso, Libya, Mali, and Niger. Over the centuries, many have settled in towns in the Sahel. However, many others still live in the desert. These Tuareg graze their herds on sparse desert plants. When the plants in one area are gone, they move to a new area. Generally, the Tuareg spend only about two weeks in one place. “My father was a nomad, his father was a nomad, I am a nomad,” one herder explains. “This is the life that we know. We like it.” Fiercely independent, the Tuareg call their ancient way of life *adima*, meaning “far from town.”

The Tuareg's independent spirit can also be seen in the arrangement of their desert camps. Tuareg travel together in small groups of relatives and friends. In camp, however, group members live apart. Each family's tent is several hundred yards away from the others. Visiting is common, but Tuareg generally do not share food or care for another family's livestock. Their diet consists mainly of fruits and grains people get through trade or from other Tuareg who farm in oases. Goat milk and cheese provide protein. On special occasions, a sheep or goat is slaughtered to provide meat.

Tents are made from goat skins that are sewn together and stretched over a rectangular frame. Inside,



*Tuareg men wear blue veils in the presence of women and strangers, although this practice is less common in cities.*

family members sleep on carpets or mats. A sheepskin blanket provides warmth on chilly desert nights. Family tents belong to Tuareg women. When a woman marries, she receives a tent made by her female relatives.

Tuareg men wear cloth veils wrapped around the face and head. Because these veils are traditionally dyed blue, Tuareg are sometimes called the Blue Men. The veils help protect against windblown desert dust. Long robes are also practical in the desert. They keep sweat from evaporating too quickly, which helps protect against dehydration.

Class divisions are important in Tuareg society. A family's position is passed down from father to son. Many Tuareg oasis dwellers are members of the servant classes. Their role is to provide food and other items needed by the upper-class herders of the desert.

*These Tuareg boys are making toy camels. Camels have long been an important part of the Tuareg's nomadic way of life.*







*The campsites of Tuareg nomads have tents and animals such as donkeys and chickens.*

Living as a nomad is a sign of high status among the Tuareg and is their preferred way of life.

### **A Changing Way of Life**

In recent years it has become harder for the Tuareg to maintain their nomadic lifestyle. Some governments in the region have limited movement across their borders because of warfare and unrest. As a result, some Tuareg cannot travel to much-needed grazing lands.

Environmental changes have also disrupted the Tuareg's way of life. For example, rainfall in the Sahara has decreased in recent decades. Since the 1960s two major droughts have dried up already scarce water resources and reduced grazing areas. The lack of water has nearly wiped out the herds of many Tuareg. Some nomads have been forced to settle near towns. They survive by gardening and selling crafts and camel rides to tourists. However, for many Tuareg the lure of their traditional life never dies. "Each time I earn a little money I buy a goat or a sheep," says one former nomad. "I save up so that I can have enough animals to return to the desert."

Still, others fear that the old ways are gone forever. This fear has weakened the Tuareg's resistance to

government education for their children. For generations the Tuareg viewed schools as a government program designed to limit their movement. Now, however, many believe that education will free their children from a way of life they fear has no future. Some nomadic groups even let government teachers travel with them in the desert. Schools have also been set up at water sources in the desert. Even so, many Tuareg children still refuse to accept that they will not live as their parents and grandparents did. "I like taking care of camels," one 15-year-old insists. "I don't know the world. The world is where I am."

### **Applying What You Know**

- 1. Summarizing** How is the Tuareg's traditional nomadic life changing? What is causing these changes?
- 2. Analyzing Information** Why do you think some Tuareg are determined to maintain their traditional way of life?



Review the video to answer the closing question:  
*What are some of the ways desertification can be slowed, stopped, or even reversed?*

### Building Vocabulary

On a separate sheet of paper, explain the following terms by using them correctly in sentences.

desertification	sorghum
staple	dual economies
millet	

### Locating Key Places

On a separate sheet of paper, match the letters on the map with their correct labels.

El Djouf	Tombouctou
Niger River	Lagos
Congo Basin	Kinshasa
Congo River	Abidjan



### Understanding the Main Ideas

#### Section 1

- Places and Regions** In which latitudes are the countries of West and Central Africa located? How does this affect the region's climates?
- Physical Systems** What is the environment of the Sahel like?

#### Section 2

- The Uses of Geography** How did Islam spread into West and Central Africa?
- Places and Regions** In which part of West and Central Africa is Arabic spoken?

#### Section 3

- Places and Regions** How has rapid population growth affected cities in West and Central Africa?

### Thinking Critically

- Supporting a Point of View** What evidence do you think geographers may have used to support their theory that the Congo and Niger Rivers once flowed into large inland lakes? What tools might geographers use to study this theory?
- Making Generalizations** How might being landlocked affect economic development, settlement, and population distribution in some countries in the region? How might it influence political conditions in a country?
- Analyzing Information** How did the colonial history of West and Central Africa affect cultural, economic, and political characteristics of the countries there?

### Using the Geographer's Tools

- Analyzing Maps** Look at the map of Empires of Africa in Section 2. How are the names of these empires related to countries in the region today?
- Interpreting Diagrams** Analyze the cacao diagram in Section 3. Why do you think the manufacture of chocolate from cacao takes place in countries outside this region?
- Preparing Tables** Use the pie graph of world cacao production in Section 3 to create a table that ranks the leading producers of cacao in Africa from highest to lowest. In which part of Africa are these countries found?

### Writing about Geography

Imagine that you are a researcher studying how farmers in the Sahel might adapt best to the difficult climate conditions. Compare techniques that farmers use in other semiarid regions of the world. Which might be useful in the Sahel? Why? Write a short report for a research journal explaining your suggestions. When you are finished with your report, proofread it to make sure you have used standard grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation.



### SKILL BUILDING

#### Geography for Life

##### Analyzing Data

**Places and Regions** Use the unit Comparing Standard of Living and Fast Facts table to study the life expectancies, literacy rates, and per capita GDPs of countries in West and Central Africa. What patterns do you see? Is there a wide range of figures from country to country? What do you think are reasons for this?

## Interpreting Maps

Use the transportation map below to answer the questions that follow.

### Transportation Map of Côte d'Ivoire



1. According to the map, what transportation facilities does the country's capital have?
  - a. airport, railroad, roads
  - b. seaport, railroad, roads
  - c. airport and seaport only
  - d. road and airport only

2. Which city do you think may be the country's busiest transportation center? Why?

## Building Vocabulary

To build your vocabulary skills, answer the following questions.

3. *Millet* is
  - a. a type of hammer used to build homes in the region.
  - b. an army unit stationed only in capitals of the region.
  - c. a drought-resistant grain grown in the Sahel.
  - d. a state in Nigeria.
4. Some people in the region grow only a few *staple* crops, such as yams or corn. In which sentence does *staple* have the same meaning as it does in the sentence above?
  - a. The staple of this cotton is not fine enough.
  - b. Milk is a staple in the production of chocolate.
  - c. Please staple together the reports on crops grown in Central Africa.
  - d. The starch from cassava, a staple in West Africa, is used to make bread.

## Alternative Assessment

### PORTFOLIO ACTIVITY

#### Learning about Your Local Geography

##### Individual Project: Research

Research imported food crops in your area. First, look at what major food crops are produced in your area. Then list common foods that must be imported from other places. A trip to a local grocery store may help you figure out what these imports are. Often, the produce sections in grocery stores give the origin of imported foods. Once you have your list of imported foods, research where these items are produced. Do they come from other regions, states, or countries? Are some foods imported from great distances? Why do you think these foods are imported and not grown locally?

#### Internet connect

**Internet Activity:** [go.hrw.com](http://go.hrw.com)  
KEYWORD: SW3 GT22

Access the Internet through the HRW Go site to research the impact of political and ethnic conflict, economic development, and human migration on the Congo Basin. Then write a report in which you describe how the above factors have affected the people as well as the ecosystem in the region. Use standard grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation.