



Linking Past and Present

The Legacy of Africa South of the Sahara

Music

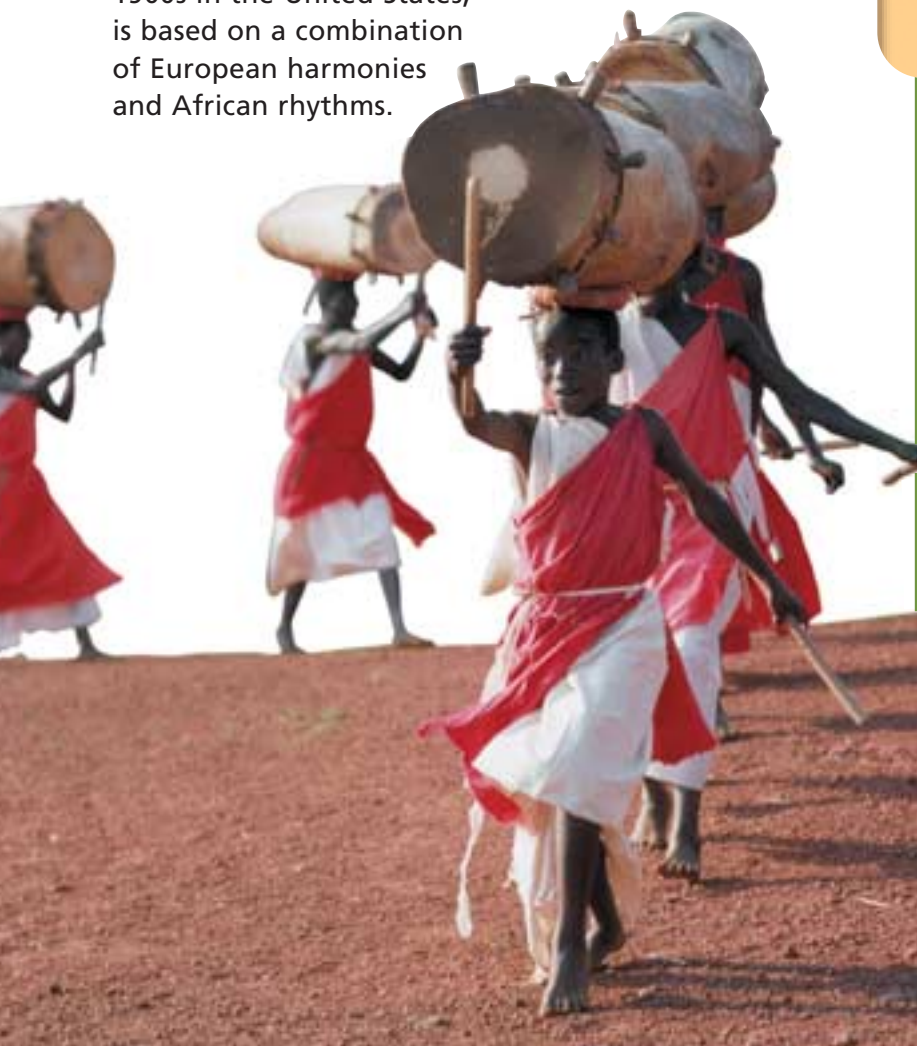
Music has always played an important role in the daily life of Africa south of the Sahara. Characteristic of the music are its complex rhythms. Hand clapping, drums, and iron bells produce different rhythmic patterns. Over the years, the music of Africa south of the Sahara has influenced music around the world. Jazz, a popular type of music that began in the early 1900s in the United States, is based on a combination of European harmonies and African rhythms.

Swahili Language

Swahili, also called Kiswahili, is a widespread language on the eastern coast of Africa. It evolved from the mixing of East African and Arab cultures. Swahili also includes words adapted from the English of British colonists, such as *penseli* (pencil), *basi* (bus), and *baiskeli* (bicycle). Today, it continues to be the language spoken in the business community and is one of the languages of Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda.

Gold

For nearly 1,000 years, Africans south of the Sahara have used their prized possessions—gold and ivory—as signs of wealth and power. They have also traded these valuable materials for other commodities, such as glass, precious stones, and ceramics. Many European settlers came to South Africa to take part in the gold industry. Today, South Africa is the continent's largest gold producer.





Coffee

More than 1,000 years ago, coffee trees grew in Ethiopia. Coffee beans were first used as a food. In the 1400s, coffee as a beverage was popular in Arabia, Egypt, and Turkey. In the following centuries, it was introduced to Europe and to North America. Today, coffee comes in many varieties and blends and is served as a hot or a cold beverage. It is also used to flavor ice cream and other treats.

Sculpture

The earliest evidence of African sculpture outside of Egypt dates from around 500 B.C. in Nok, located in what is now Nigeria. Archaeologists have found baked-clay heads and figures made by the Nok people. In the 1400s, sculptures of kings and thrones were created to show respect for royalty. They also represented the wealth of a region. Today, many African sculptures continue to be based on traditional themes. Artists create sculptures for religious and social purposes as well as for the retail and tourist trade.



Find Out More About It!

Study the text and photos on these pages to learn about inventions, creations, and contributions that have come from Africa south of the Sahara. Then choose the item that interests you the most and use the library or the Internet to learn more about it. Use the information you gather to write a short essay about how what you researched relates to you.



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