



# Economies and Cultures

## TERMS & NAMES

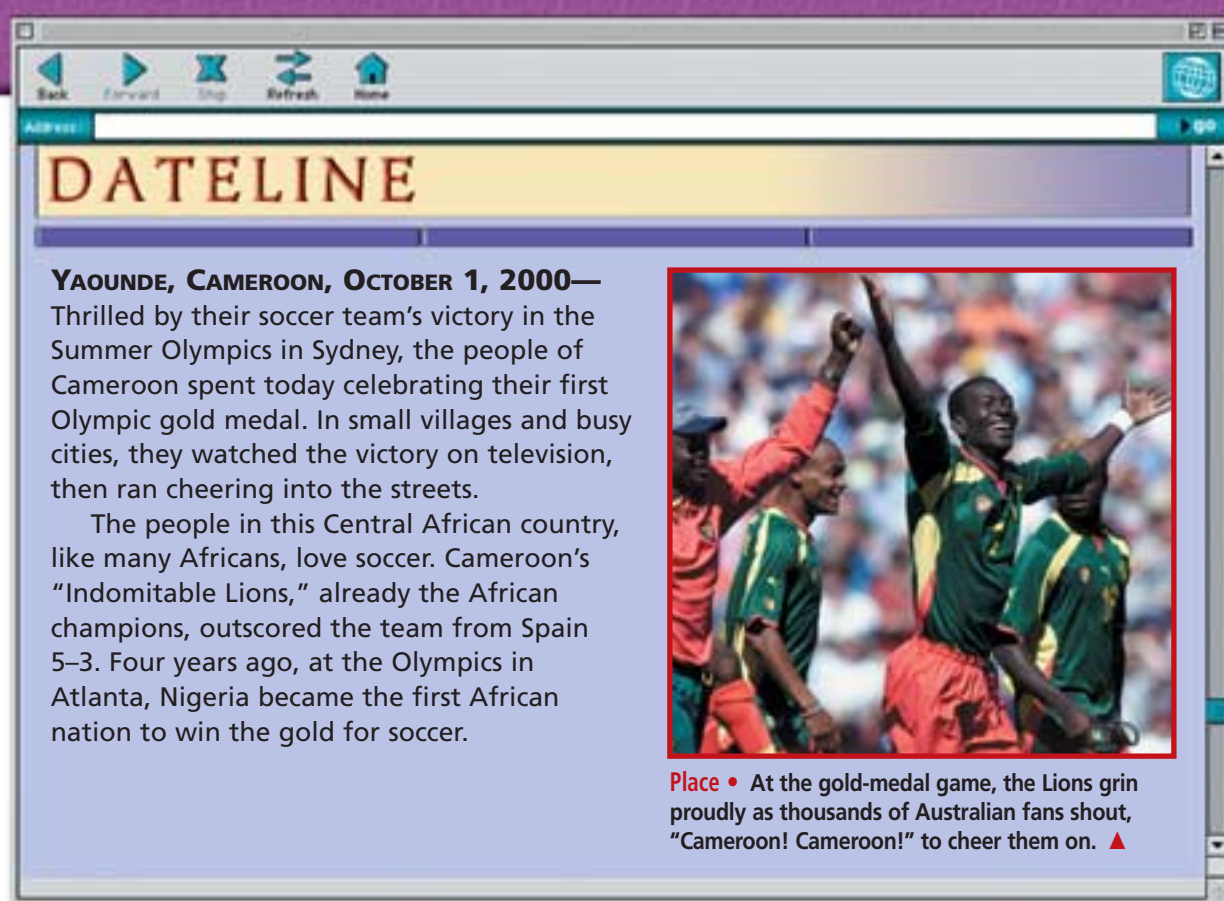
subsistence farming  
cash crop  
rite of passage

### MAIN IDEA

The economies in Western and Central Africa are mostly a mix of traditional and market economies.

### WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Economic development is one of the keys to sustaining democracy in Africa.

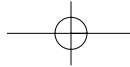


**Culture** • These gold medals are from the 2000 Olympic Games. ▲

## Economies of Western and Central Africa

Many Africans share not only a passion for soccer but also a common economic history. Most African countries once had traditional economies, which followed age-old trading customs. Colonial governments introduced market economies, in which goods were bought and sold. Government-controlled economies, or command economies, became common after independence. Today, most African countries again have market economies.





## Agriculture in Western and Central Africa

### Reading Social Studies

**A. Clarifying** Is subsistence farming done for profit or need?

Most people in Western and Central Africa are farmers. Many practice **subsistence farming**. That is, they grow food, such as millet and sorghum, mainly to feed their own households. During the colonial era, European and African business owners started large plantations. They grew tropical crops—sugar cane, coffee, and cacao—for export. A crop grown only for sale is called a **cash crop**.

**Edible Exports** Have you eaten or used anything from Africa today? Chances are you have. Côte d'Ivoire (koht dee•VWAHR; formerly Ivory Coast) is the world's largest producer and exporter of cacao beans, which are used to make chocolate. Coastal West African countries also export coffee, bananas, pineapples, palm oil, peanuts, and kola nuts. Central African countries produce coffee, rubber, and cotton. These exports bring many African countries income for development, such as building roads and schools.

## African Artisans

Although the majority of people are farmers, some have other jobs. Some people craft items out of metal, leather, or wood. These workers make things such as iron hoes, leather shoes, and beautiful pieces of art. Other people are entertainers and musicians. Musicians act as the historians in some traditional African societies. Their skills and stories are passed down from generation to generation.

## African Minerals

Almost every type of mineral in the world can be found somewhere in Africa. Valuable minerals exported from Central and Western Africa include diamonds, gold, petroleum, manganese, and uranium. Many Africans earn their living by working in mines.

**Culture** • Kente cloth, exported from West Africa, has become popular in many non-African countries. ▼

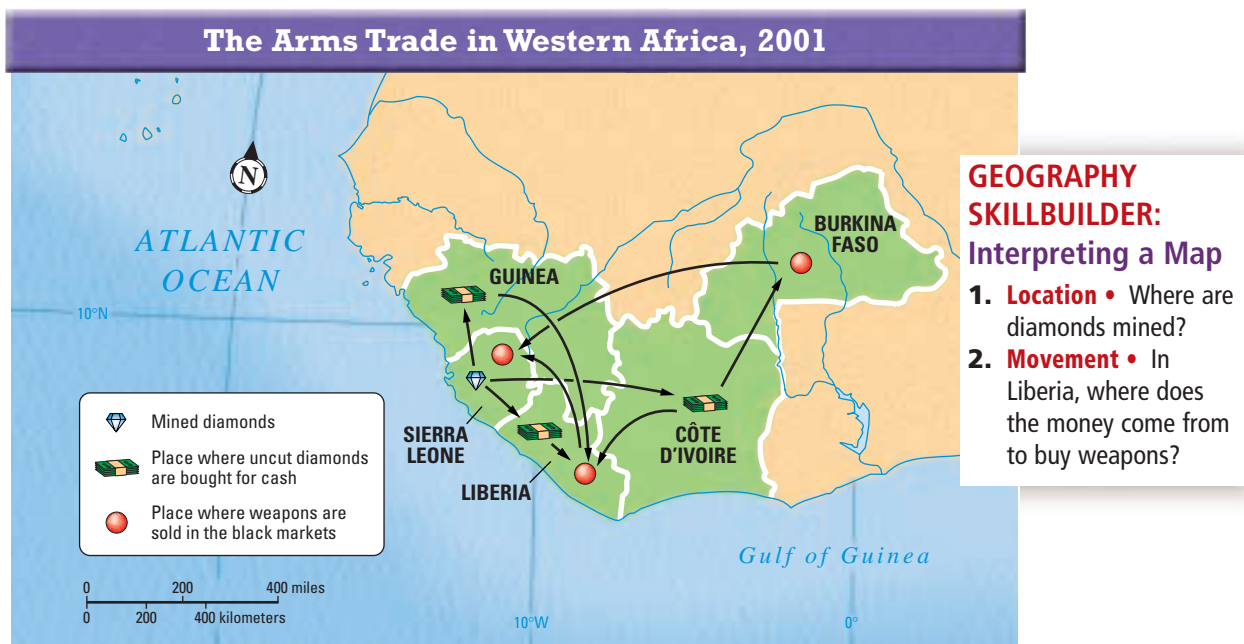
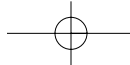
### Connections to Science

**Disappearing Tusks** Ivory from African elephant tusks has been used to make items such as piano keys, jewelry, and billiard balls. Many elephants have been killed for their tusks, which you can see below. To protect elephants, ivory products were banned internationally in the 1980s. However, the demand for ivory is still so great that people continue to hunt elephants illegally for their tusks.

Because elephants born without tusks are not hunted, they live and reproduce. Often their offspring are tuskless. Biologists have noted that about 30 percent of African elephants are now tuskless—an impressive increase from 1 percent in the 1930s.







**Diamonds for Weapons** Africa's mineral wealth is sometimes used to help fund wars. During Angola's civil war, the government used income from oil exports to buy weapons, while rebel forces traded diamonds for guns. Diamonds have also been exported illegally to support brutal wars in Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In Sierra Leone, diamonds were smuggled out of the country in small envelopes and sold to buy weapons for rebel forces. World diamond markets are working to prevent the sale of "conflict diamonds."

## Ways of Life in Western and Central Africa

In Western and Central Africa, hundreds of different ethnic groups speak more than 1,000 languages. People practice many different religions, including Islam and Christianity. Most Africans live in small villages, but more Africans are moving to large, crowded cities, such as Lagos, Nigeria, or Accra, Ghana. City living has put strains on traditional African family life and culture.

**Family Structure** Society in Western and Central Africa is based on extended families that include children, parents, grandparents, and other close relatives such as aunts and cousins. Some ethnic groups trace ancestry through the mother's family; others, through the father's family. People share both work and free time with their family.

### Reading Social Studies

**B. Making Inferences** What aspects of city life do you think would put new strains on Africans from small villages?





**Place** • Many African extended families live in compounds such as this one. In addition to living areas, there are storage buildings and an open space for community life. ◀

## Social Status

In many African societies, older people have higher status and more influence than younger ones. For example, when men of the Igbo people in Nigeria gather for discussions, they sit in order of age. The eldest men are served food and drink first. In some African communities, each age group has different responsibilities. Men of the most senior rank settle legal disputes and police the village. Female elders punish behavior that harms women, such as unfair treatment by husbands.



**Seats of Art** In Central and Western Africa, artists—not carpenters—make the most valued piece of household furniture: the stool. The Ashanti of Ghana believe that a person’s spirit flows into a stool each time the person sits on it. Because of this, each individual in a household has his or her own stool. Nobody else is allowed to sit on the stool.

Each stool is decorated with special carvings that indicate the person’s social status. The stools of the Luba people living in the Democratic Republic of the Congo reflect the importance the Luba place on their ancestors. Like the one at the right, most Luba stools feature a carving of an important ancestor of the owner.



## THINKING CRITICALLY



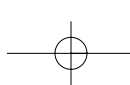
### 1. Recognizing Important Details

What do you think is the symbolism of the carved person holding up the seat of the stool?

### 2. Drawing Conclusions

Why do you think the artist made this figure a woman?





**Culture** • These young boys of the Ituri forest in the Congo dance in outfits made of straw and woven cords during a rite of passage. ►



Because age is so important, a special ceremony, which is called a **rite of passage**, marks the transition from one stage of life to another. A major rite of passage occurs when young men and women are recognized as adults. However, this tradition is dying out in parts of Africa. Some younger people are gaining higher status because they have skills that are needed. For example, as people move to cities, educated youths who can speak a European language are highly valued.

## SECTION 2 ASSESSMENT

### Terms & Names

1. **Identify:** (a) subsistence farming (b) cash crop (c) rite of passage

### Taking Notes

2. Use a chart like this one to list characteristics of this region's economy and way of life. How might the economy affect how people live?

Economy	Way of Life

### Main Ideas

3. (a) What types of economies are present in Western and Central Africa?  
 (b) How is the use of Africa's mineral resources both beneficial and harmful to Africans?  
 (c) How is African family structure similar to and different from American family structure?

### Critical Thinking

#### 4. Drawing Conclusions

Do you think Africans will continue to have rites of passage in the future? Why or why not?

#### Think About

- ♦ how city life is affecting African societies
- ♦ other societies around the world

### ACTIVITY -OPTION-

Many Americans participate in rites of passage, such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals. Pretend you are studying American culture. Make a **poster** illustrating an American rite of passage.