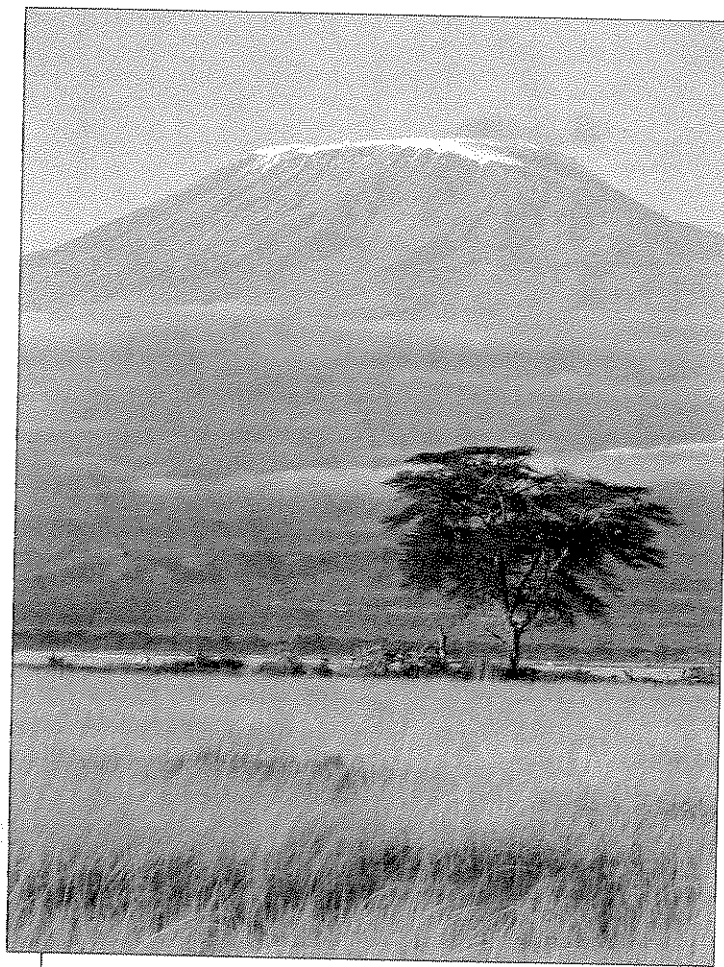


Chapter 3

GEOGRAPHY AND EARLY HISTORY OF AFRICA



Mount Kilimanjaro The vast continent of Africa includes a wide variety of landforms, including mountains. The snow-covered summit of Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, seen here, provides a sharp contrast with the plains at the base of the mountain. **Diversity** How do varied landforms and climate contribute to cultural diversity?

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- 1 The Shape of the Land
- 2 Climate and Diversity
- 3 Early Civilizations of Africa

“**T**here was wind and rain. And there was also thunder and terrible lightning.” So begins a story of creation as told by the Kikuyu people of Kenya. While the land was in darkness, the Creator put up a holy tree. At the foot of the tree, the Creator set the first people—the man Kikuyu and the woman Mumbi. Immediately, the sun rose.

The Creator then took Kikuyu and Mumbi from his holy mountain to the “country of ridges.” There the Creator showed them all the land. He told them,

“This land I hand over to you. O man and woman
It’s yours to rule and farm
in peace, sacrificing
Only to me, your God,
under my sacred tree.”

Through stories like this one, the peoples of Africa explain their roots. The stories differ across the continent because Africans belong to many distinct groups. In this

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unit on Africa, you will learn about the forces from within and from without that have shaped Africa's many cultures.

CHAPTER PERSPECTIVE

In Africa, as elsewhere in the world, people have adapted to many different environments. The story of Kikuyu and Mumbi, for example, describes mountains and ridges that are found in East Africa. In other parts of Africa, stories tell of mighty rivers, flat grasslands, and wide deserts. Such stories show how differences in climate and topography shape cultures.

As you read, look for these chapter themes:

- ▶ Geographic features have influenced where people live in Africa and contributed to the cultural diversity of the continent.
- ▶ Since earliest times, people, goods, and ideas have crossed the physical barriers that divide Africa and separate it from other regions.
- ▶ Recent evidence suggests that the first humans lived in Africa.
- ▶ The fertile Nile Valley supported one of the world's first great civilizations.

Literature Connections

In this chapter, you will encounter passages from the following works.

- "Creation Story," Kikuyu tale
- "A Hymn to the Nile," from the Papyrus Scrolls

For other literature suggestions, see Connections With Literature, pages 804–808.

1

THE SHAPE OF THE LAND

FIND OUT

- What is Africa's relative location in the world?
- How have landforms influenced movement across Africa?
- What natural resources are important to African nations?

Vocabulary escarpment, cataract, hydroelectric power

Thousands of years ago, hot ash and melted rock spewed out of the earth, creating a giant mountain. Today, Mount Kilimanjaro towers 19,340 feet (5,895 m) over northeastern Tanzania. Kilimanjaro stands almost on the Equator. Yet, because of the mountain's great height, its summit is covered with snow all year round.

Mount Kilimanjaro is a spectacular sight. It is just one of the wide variety of landforms that make up the African continent.

A Vast Continent

Africa is the world's second-largest continent, the biggest after Asia. It is more than three times the size of the United States. It also contains more independent nations than any other continent on Earth—54 in all.

Location. Africa is centrally located on the Earth's surface. It straddles the Equator, extending for thousands of miles north and south of that line. The continent stands between two major oceans. To the west is the Atlantic Ocean and to the east lies the Indian Ocean. The Mediterranean Sea in the north and the Red Sea in the northeast also border Africa.

Although oceans set Africa apart from other regions, they also link it with the rest of

the world. In ancient times, ships sailed along the Mediterranean and Red Sea coasts. These ships carried people, goods, and ideas between Africa and Europe and the Middle East. As you will read in Chapter 4, seasonal winds also allowed traders to sail from Africa across the Indian Ocean to South Asia. Today, Africa's location places it squarely in the center of world transportation routes.

Regions. Africa, like other continents, has many distinct regions. The main regions are North Africa, West Africa, East Africa, Central Africa, and Southern Africa. Geographic features give each region its own identity, although great variety also exists within each region. Regional differences contribute to the diversity of African peoples.

North Africa stretches from Morocco in the west to Egypt in the east. Because of its location, it has always had close contact with Europe and the Middle East. At the same time, North Africa is closely linked to the regions south of the Sahara. These regions are sometimes referred to as sub-Saharan Africa.

South of the Sahara, West Africa bulges into the Atlantic. It includes many nations, from Mauritania to Nigeria. Central Africa includes the large nation of Zaire, on the Equator. In East Africa, the largest nations are Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. The region of Southern Africa stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian Ocean and includes Zimbabwe, Zambia, and South Africa. (See the map on page 62.)

Landforms

Most of Africa is a vast plateau. Toward the edges of the continent are mountain ranges, such as the Atlas Mountains in the northwest and the Drakensberg Mountains in the southeast. Narrow plains fringe the coasts.

Plateaus. The plateaus of Africa lie at different elevations. The highest plateaus are in the east and south. The continent then tilts gradually downward toward the west and north. Large basins, swamps, and lakes are scattered across the plateaus.

As you move from the plateaus toward the coast, the land drops sharply. In places,

escarpments, or steep cliffs, divide the plateau from the coastal plain. These changes in elevation affect the course of Africa's rivers. As rivers flow from the plateau to the coast, they tumble over a series of cataracts, or large waterfalls, and rapids.

Over thousands of years, Africans have migrated across the plateaus. Traders followed well-traveled routes through parts of the continent. The land, however, discouraged early Europeans who tried to explore the continent. When they tried to sail up rivers, they found the way blocked by cataracts.

Great Rift Valley. The Great Rift Valley slices through the eastern part of the continent. This giant fault, or break, in the Earth's crust runs from the Red Sea to the Zambezi River. The valley—actually a series of mountains and valleys—was formed millions of years ago. (See the feature at right.)

Flanking the Rift Valley are high, clifflike walls. Over centuries, rich soils from the highlands have washed down into the valley. As a result, the region contains some of Africa's most fertile farmland. The Rift Valley is rich in minerals and metals, but mining and transportation are difficult. The sheer cliffs, high mountains, and deep valleys make building roads and railroads costly and dangerous.

Rivers

The rivers of Africa provide fish, water for irrigation, and a means of transportation. They are also a source of hydroelectric power, energy produced by moving water. Today, African nations are constructing dams across rivers to supply cities and industries with electricity.

The Nile. Flowing for 4,160 miles (6,695 km) northward across Africa, the Nile River is the longest in the world. The Nile has played a key role in human development. As you will read, one of the earliest civilizations developed in the fertile Nile Valley of northeastern Africa.

Until recently, the Nile flooded each year. The flood waters deposited silt in the river valley, adding nutrients to the soil. The rich farmlands along the Nile supported a large population.



The Great Rift Valley

After sailing over the Great Rift Valley in a hot-air balloon, a visitor commented:

“The view of the Rift made a tremendous impression on me, partly because I was terrified. . . . Mountains often have cliffs, but not, in general, a succession of steep descents. The ground fell away dramatically, as if giant steps had been carved in the rock.”

The Rift is a split in the African continent. It extends 4,000 miles (6,437 km) from the Middle East southward along East Africa to Mozambique.

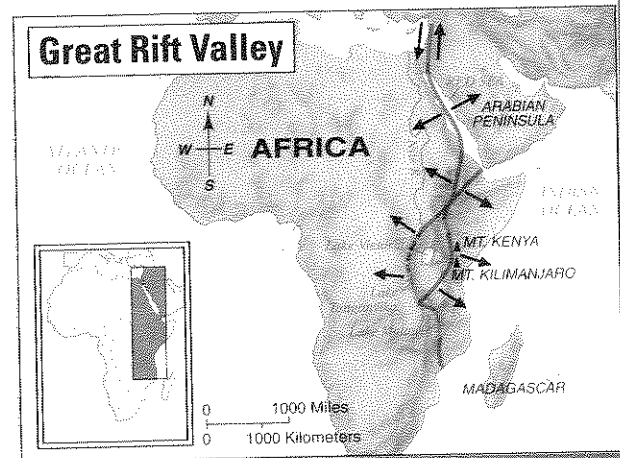
Several natural forces have formed the Great Rift Valley. According to scientists, the plates that make up the Earth's crust have moved apart over millions of years, creating the deep gap. (The island of Madagascar may have split off from Africa in the same way.) Erosion has deposited rich soil in the base of the valley. Volcanic activity has created mountains, such as Mount Kilimanjaro and Mount Kenya.

Technology has changed the yearly flooding of the Nile. In 1970, Egyptians completed the massive Aswan Dam, located on the upper Nile. The dam supplies hydroelectric power. It also created a vast lake that stores water for irrigation. The dam, however, has been a mixed blessing. It traps the rich

The rift zone supports a wide variety of economic activities. The volcanic soil provides fertile farmland. Two of the Earth's deepest lakes—Lake Tanganyika and Lake Malawi—cover the western branch of the rift along the border of Zaire. The lakes are a rich source of salt and soda ash. Steam and hot springs lie below the surface of the valley. In the future, scientists hope to harness these sources of clean energy.

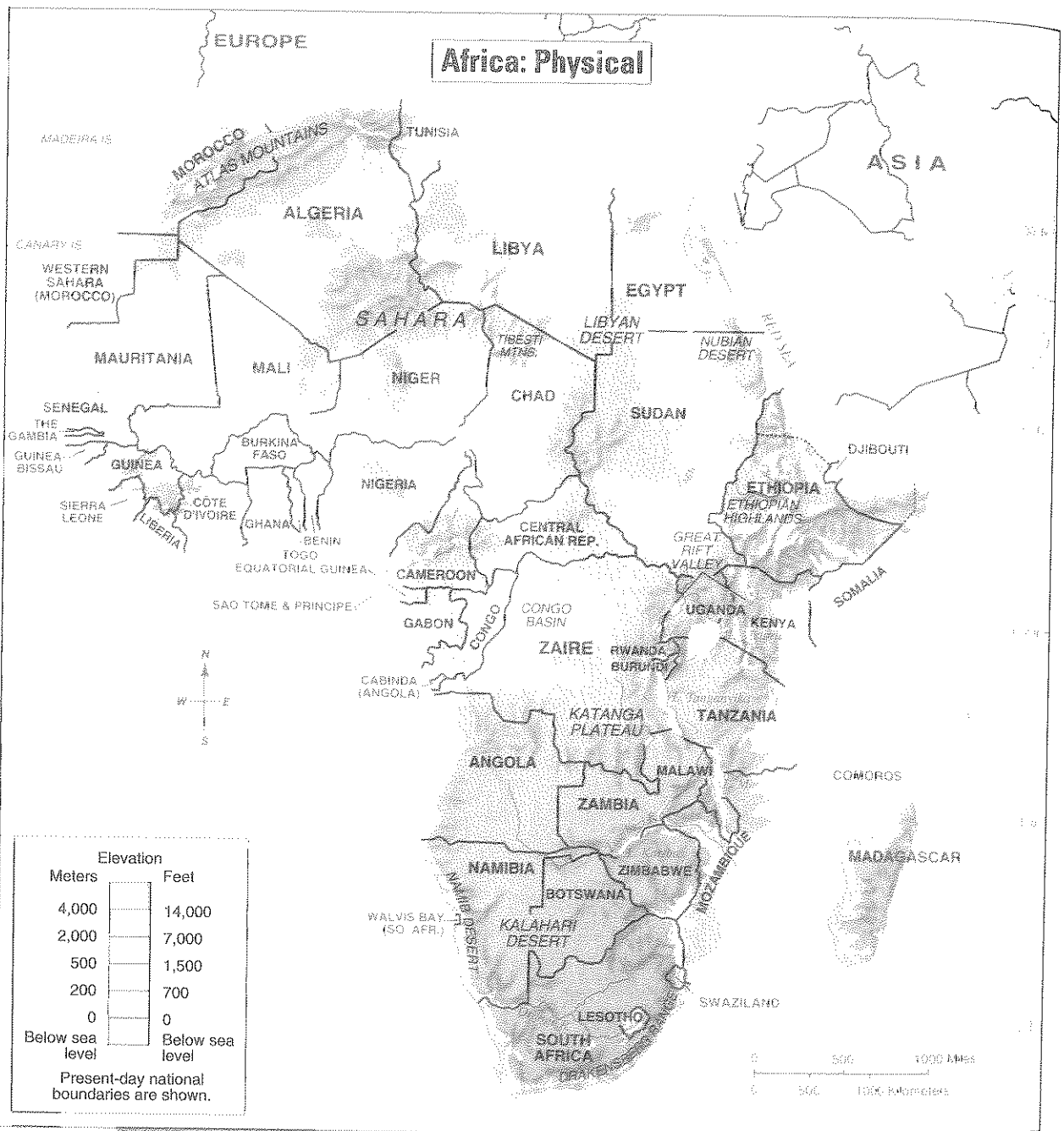
Other scientists are interested in the region for a totally different reason. The rich volcanic ash is a good agent for preserving bones. Archaeologists have dug up the world's oldest human fossils in the Great Rift Valley, leading to the theory that this may be the site of the origin of all humans.

1. What natural forces have helped create the Great Rift Valley?
2. **Forecasting** If shifting continues in the Great Rift Valley, how might the map of Africa look in 40 million years?



silt that once renewed Egyptian soil, so farmers in the lower Nile Valley now must buy fertilizer.

In the 1800s, European explorers became fascinated with the idea of finding the source of the Nile. In daring expeditions, they competed to reach the headwaters of the great



MAP STUDY

Africa is the second-largest continent in the world. Most of its land is a plateau.

- 1. Location** What two rivers come together to form Africa's longest river?
- 2. Region** (a) Which parts of Africa have the highest elevation? (b) Which parts have the lowest elevation?
- 3. Drawing Conclusions** In what parts of Africa do you think most people live to day? Check your answer by referring to the map on page 782.

river. In time, they traced the river's various sources in the highlands of East Africa.

Other key rivers. The Zaire (zah EER) River drains a huge area in Central Africa. The river is fed by many tributaries on both sides of the Equator before emptying into the Atlantic Ocean. The Zaire carries an enormous volume of water, and it provides hydroelectric power. Only part of the river, however, can be used for transportation. Waterfalls and rapids prevent boats from traveling all the way to the ocean.

The Niger River rises in the West African nations of Sierra Leone and Guinea. It first flows north toward the Sahara, where it forms a large inland swamp. Then it turns southeast and plunges from the plateau toward the sea. Along the Niger, farmers pump water to irrigate crops of rice and millet. Local residents pole long, pointed boats through the waters and use nets to catch fish. Large riverboats carry passengers and cargo along the deeper sections of the Niger.

The Zambezi River in Southern Africa is fed by sources in Angola and Zambia. As it de-

scends to the sea, the Zambezi rushes over Victoria Falls. The Zambezi forms the border between Zimbabwe and Zambia, where Lake Kariba and the huge Kariba Dam are found. The dam provides hydroelectric power to both nations.

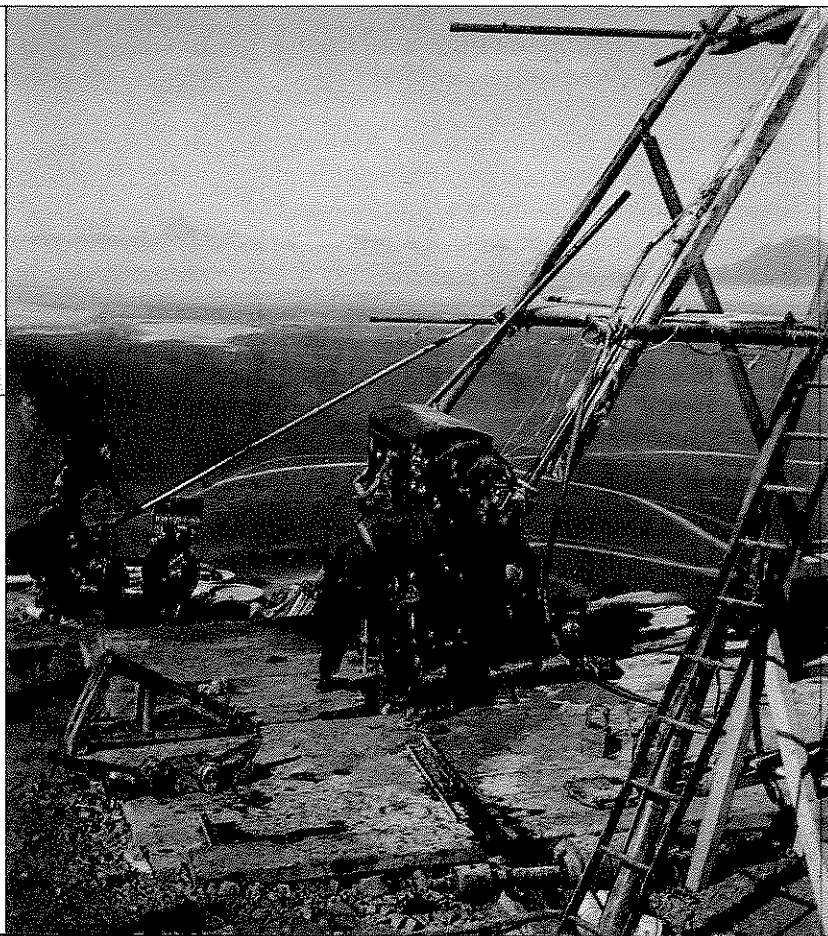
Natural Resources

Africa's rivers are a source of precious metals. For more than 2,000 years, people in Africa have sifted through riverbeds to uncover gold and diamonds. They have also mined gold from pits deep below the surface. For centuries, West Africa served as a major source of gold for Europe. The desire to discover gold was one cause of European interest in Africa.

Mineral exports. Today, African nations sell many other valuable resources to the industrial world. Zaire and Zambia have huge deposits of copper. South Africa, Zaire, and Botswana are among the world's leading suppliers of platinum and cobalt. Nigeria and Angola have built offshore oil platforms to

Mining Mineral Wealth Many African nations depend on the export of natural resources for income. Pictured here is a mining operation in Mauritania, a nation of West Africa. Mauritania earns three fourths of its national income from its export of iron ore.

Interdependence How do Mauritania's natural resources link it to other nations?



pump oil from underwater sources. Libya, Algeria, and Gabon also have oil deposits.

Some African countries lack the money to develop their mineral resources. As you will read in Chapter 5, they have allowed foreign companies to invest in mining and other ventures. As a result, much of the profits from these resources flow out of Africa.

Uneven distribution. Although Africa is rich in natural resources, those resources are unevenly distributed. Only a few African nations, for example, have oil to export. The rest must rely on expensive imported oil.

Some countries, like Uganda, have relatively few mineral resources but have rich soils and abundant water. The fertile soils of the Great Rift Valley allow Ugandan farmers to produce a variety of crops. Much of Africa, however, is not very fertile. In addition, uncertain rainfall often makes farming difficult.

SECTION REVIEW

- 1. Locate:** (a) Atlas Mountains, (b) Great Rift Valley, (c) Nile River, (d) Zaire River, (e) Niger River, (f) Zambezi River.
- 2. Identify:** (a) Aswan Dam, (b) Kariba Dam.
- 3. Define:** (a) escarpment, (b) cataract, (c) hydroelectric power.
- 4.** (a) Describe the relative location of Africa. (b) How has Africa's location both set it apart and linked it to the rest of the world?
- 5.** (a) How have the landforms of Africa encouraged movement of people and goods? (b) How have they discouraged movement?
- 6.** What resources do African nations export to the world?
- 7. Defending a Position** Some people believe the Aswan Dam is a major achievement. Others consider it a sad mistake. What evidence would you give to support each argument?
- 8. Writing Across Cultures** Look at physical maps of Africa and the United States. Make a list of all the African countries that have the same landforms as your state.

2

CLIMATE AND DIVERSITY

QUESTIONS

- How do climates differ across Africa?
- What ways of life did Africans develop?
- How do Africa's languages reflect its cultural diversity?

Vocabulary

If you visit Africa, you can probably leave your winter coat home. Africa is the most tropical of all the continents. Temperatures in most parts of Africa are generally warm or hot.

Rainfall, however, varies greatly from one part of Africa to another. To a large degree, it is rainfall—or lack of it—that determines climate on the continent. Indeed, the people of Botswana consider rainfall so important that they call their money *pula*, which means “rain.”

The Roles of Latitude and Elevation

The Equator runs nearly through the middle of Africa. As a result, 80 percent of the continent is in the tropics, the area between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn. Because of this tropical location, African climates are generally warm throughout the year.

The coolest regions of Africa are found in the highlands. Because temperature drops as elevation increases, temperatures in the highlands are considerably lower than in low-lying regions. For example, Accra, Ghana, on the West African coast, has hot, humid weather. Temperatures reach the 80s F. On the other hand, Nairobi, Kenya, lies at about the same latitude as Accra but is 5,300 feet (1,615 m)

