

ANT192 - Jan 11, 2007 - African Geography

appropriate to have the two together b/c the political geography of contemporary Africa is largely a product of borders that were created during the late colonial period

slide one: how big is Africa?

slides two and three:

from Dakar to easternmost point of the horn is about 4600 miles – it's 4665 mi. to fly from New York to Moscow

slides four and five:

from Tangiers to Cape Town is about the same distance as from Panama City to Anchorage, Alaska

Google Earth?

slide six:

most of the continent is a plateau

10% of land area is <500 ft. above sea level, compared to 54% for Europe and 25% for N. America

has been a land area since Pre-Cambrian times – > 500 million years

images of Drakensberg escarpment

escarpment also in places a kind of cultural barrier

southern Africa – Sotho and Tswana above Drakensberg, Xhosa and Zulu below

slide seven:

main form of land movement has been the faulting that produced the Red Sea and Great Rift Valley

assoc. with lakes, volcanoes

extends through > 70 degrees of latitude, contains some of the deepest lakes

slide eight

rivers and basins: Niger, Nile, Zambezi, Congo empty into the ocean

but surrounding Lake Chad and Kalahari have no outlets

one implication of elevated plateau for development is that Africa doesn't have the riverine transport networks like the Mississippi & St. Lawrence in N. America or Danube in Europe only Niger and Zambezi are without waterfalls, other large river systems plunge downward at the escarpment, making navigation from the sea impossible (BC 18-19)

river travel from coast fairly small by comparison – e.g. Gambia important to W. African trade, strategic location in French and British colonial disputes

lakes, rivers played into internal trade networks

slide nine

five vegetational zones

1) Mediterranean - in Med. and in S. Africa – Cape Town – region of commercial fruit production, wineries

- 2) forested areas - along equator and coastlines – tropical rainforest ranging to open wooded areas, in E. Cape seaboard they tend to follow streambeds depending on soil conditions
- 3) N and S of forests is savanna – rolling stretches of tall grass with intermittent bush and scattered trees, broad gentle valleys
- 4) further from equator encounter dry lands – Kalahari and Sahara – semi-arid regions more like American southwest merging into much drier conditions

western half of the map looks like four neat parallel bands

eastern half looks chaotic

reason is that effects of altitude on vegetation are more important here than latitude (N-S) position

Ruwenzoris, Kilimanjaro have permanent ice & snow fields

vegetation highly variable - areas which look more like northern New England or Scottish Highlands than anything you'd associate with Africa

slide ten

related to rainfall

generally summer rainfall, two rainy seasons near the equator

in forested areas rain can be fairly even distributed, but usually a short dry season

SA – Cape Town is winter rain, most of the country is summer rain

rainfall more consistent in wetter areas; drier areas can vary 20-40% or more from year to year, rain here is also spatially heterogeneous

slide eleven population density

some of highest and lowest in the world

largely correlated with areas of high rainfall

slide twelve intensive farming in Rwanda

... as I pointed out in the first class, Africa has tremendous linguistic diversity

In 1970 Jack Berry in a book entitled *The African Experience* wrote "Why Africa should be the most multilingual area in the world is a challenging question which can only be answered by conjecture" (403)

slide 13: cultural and biological diversity together

other physical / environmental factors that in sweeping terms have affected African history

slide 14

soils

tropical soils with little humus (decomposed vegetable matter)

unlike temperate climates where decomposition stops for half the year because of seasonal cooling, it goes on year round in the tropics

typical humus content of 1.8 % of total volume, compared to 10-12% in Ohio or 16% in some of richest US farmland in Iowa

shifting cultivation the main response

“long-fallow” systems

relies on cultivating one piece of land, then allowing it to fallow
cultivation times 2-5 years, fallow 8-20 depending on locale, population density, other
cultivation techniques, intercropping, labour, markets
historically – though not in all places in all times, and increasingly less so

historically labour, more than access to land, has been the source of wealth
control over people – as laborers, clients, supporters more important than control over land
changes in many places over the colonial period, but there are still many parts of Africa
where seasonal labour bottlenecks – e.g. getting enough people to hoe your maize field and
pull up weeds – can be critical

slide 15 - resettlement

mentioned in Cooper reading
why in the 1930s?

slide 16 - minerals

artisanal mining of gold & trade dates back to C12
from W Africa, from Ethiopia (to Mediterranean), from Zimbabwe (to Asia); 12th century
Chinese ceramics found in ruins of Great Zimbabwe and in the archaeological sites
described by Pritchett
1880s gold discoveries in South Africa
1980s S Africa producing > 70% of world's gold

copper trade also widespread; at the time of Vasco de Gama's visit to E African coast in
1498, copper objects from what is now Zaire/Zambia were available for sale there
again, as Pritchett points out there's evidence of standardization of units, i.e. as money, in
Central Africa C14-15

also ironworking widespread across the continent; Pritchett fills in some of this detail for
Central Africa

diamonds beginning in 1860s in SA; about 80% of world diamond production

slide 17 -diseases

up to 50% of Europeans died from lack of immunity
some victories
yaws – skin disease related to syphilis, nearly wiped out in 1950s
smallpox eradicated
immense reduction in “river blindness,” spread by fly in W. Africa
yellow fever – effective vaccine

schistosomiasis still widespread – water-borne parasite with gradual symptoms
malaria - still serious - anti-malarial campaigns also have env. consequences – as much DDT
sprayed in Zimbabwe (about the size of Texas) as in US & Canada combined

slide 18 -- aids

note correlation with areas of mineral concentration
Cooper discussed rise of labor migration in conjunction with mines

prevalence of labor migration probably the overwhelming reason for spread of HIV/AIDS on such a large scale in Africa

slide 19:

sleeping sickness - spread by tsetse fly - rarely affects humans but destructive to livestock – tsetse areas typically forested, humid areas – leading large swathes of Africa where people don't keep domestic livestock; also deforestation policies in colonial period

pause here and look over slides to reinforce previous points
take questions on the map quiz

slide 20

slave trade

geographic impact primarily Senegambia / SL, Ghana to Angola (to the Americas)
Mozambique (to French plantations on Mascarene Islands, other sites in Indian Ocean); also Zanzibar, Swahili coast, and Middle East

US, Great Britain, Denmark abolished trade in 1st decade of 19th century

continued into Cuba and Brazil until 1850s-60s

#s: 400-500k to N America

200k to Europe

4-5 million to Caribbean

Spanish S America 500k

Guiana 500k

Brazil 4-5 million

also estimated that up to 9 million slaves died in transit

1 million to N Africa

.5 million to middle east

.7 million to India, other parts of Asia

hugely important in terms of long-term demographic history, consequences for reorienting internal trade networks (as Pritchett describes), stimulating internal warfare – periods of chronic warfare in 18th-19th century, with slaves being traded for firearms

with African participation – widely documented – would have been virtually impossible for Europeans to organize it without African assistance given high death rate and technology available

period of large-scale direct colonialism began ca. 1870s

South Africa the exception here because it had had permanent European settlement since 1652

beginning of “competitive annexation” – “The Scramble for Africa”

period of rising nationalism in Europe, also industrialization

lots of capital – seeking investment opportunities

and new military technologies - rifles used in 77-78 frontier war had triple the range of Xhosa firearms

extending reach inward, constructing railways for extracting minerals, plantation crops

improved medical technology – still before the age of antibiotics but it was discovered that

quinine was effective in preventing malaria, which dramatically increased survival rate of colonizers

Berlin Conference of 1884-1885

copy Boh and Curtin map p. 223

as in Pritchett's example, these lines split ethnic groups

Maasai in Kenya and Tanzania

Bakongo in Portuguese, French and Belgian colonies

Azande in British and Belgian

British empire reflects colonial interests in India – controlled Suez Canal and Cape of Good Hope, major points on the routes to India

animated map of African history

Q. for next class:

The authors for this class (Cooper, Rodney and Berman) and the last (Southall and Vail) describe a range of different effects of colonialism on Africa. Which of these do you see as the most significant for contemporary Africa?

up to you to define significance...