

# Migration

## CASE STUDY: Bantu-Speaking Peoples

### MAIN IDEA

#### CULTURAL INTERACTION

Relocation of large numbers of Bantu-speaking people brings cultural diffusion and change to southern Africa.

### WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Migration continues to shape the modern world.

### TERMS & NAMES

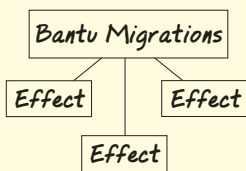
- migration
- push-pull factors
- Bantu-speaking peoples

**SETTING THE STAGE** Human history is a constantly recurring set of movement, collision, settlement, and more movement. Throughout history, people have chosen to uproot themselves and move to explore their world. Sometimes they migrate in search of new opportunities. Other times, migration is a desperate attempt to find a place to survive or to live in peace.

### TAKING NOTES

#### Analyzing Causes and Recognizing Effects

Identify causes and effects of specific events related to Bantu migration.



## People on the Move

As an important pattern in human culture, migrations have influenced world history from its outset. **Migration** is a permanent move from one country or region to another.

**Causes of Migration** Aside from the general human desire for change, the causes of migrations fall into three categories: environmental, economic, and political. In the early history of human life, environmental factors were most likely the strongest. Later, economic and political causes played a greater role. For example, in the 15th century, the Ottomans' drive for power pushed them to move all over the ancient world to create a massive empire. As the world became more industrialized, more people moved to cities where work in factories was available. Elsewhere, religious or ethnic persecution supported by governments often drove groups of people to flee in order to survive. Seventeenth-century European settlers were pulled to America by the hope of religious tolerance, land for farming, or better economic conditions.

When looking at migration, historians and geographers speak of **push-pull factors**. These factors can either push people out of an area or pull them into an area. An example of an environmental pull factor might be abundant land that attracts people. On the other hand, the depletion of natural resources forces people away from a location—a push factor. Employment or the lack of it is an economic push or pull factor. Political conditions such as freedom or persecution can encourage people to move or to stay where they are. Urbanization also causes migration because job opportunities and other

▼ A mask of the Kuba, a Bantu-speaking people, from Congo and Zaire



Migration: Push-Pull Factors		
Push Examples	Migration Factors	Pull Examples
Climate changes, exhausted resources, earthquakes, volcanoes, drought/famine	Environmental	Abundant land, new resources, good climate
Unemployment, slavery	Economic	Employment opportunities
Religious, ethnic, or political persecution, war	Political	Political and/or religious freedom

**SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Charts**

- Developing Historical Perspective** Are environmental factors still a cause of migration in the modern world? Explain.
- Analyzing Causes** Which cause do you think is most important in modern migrations? Why?

benefits attract people. The chart above shows how causes of migration are related to push-pull factors.

**Effects of Migration** Life in a newly populated area changes because of the influx of new people. The results of migration may be positive or negative.

- Redistribution of the population may change population density.
- Cultural blending of languages or ways of life may occur.
- Ideas and technologies may be shared.
- People’s quality of life may be improved as a result of moving.
- Clashes between groups may create unrest, persecution, or even war.
- Environmental conditions may change, causing famine or depleted natural resources.
- Employment opportunities may dry up, creating unemployment and poverty.

Migration changes the lives of those who migrate and also of the people in communities where they settle. Both groups may need to make adjustments in the way they live. Some adjustments may be relatively easy to make. For example, more advanced technology may improve living conditions. Other adjustments may be more difficult and may occur over a longer period of time. One of these adjustments may include language. **A**

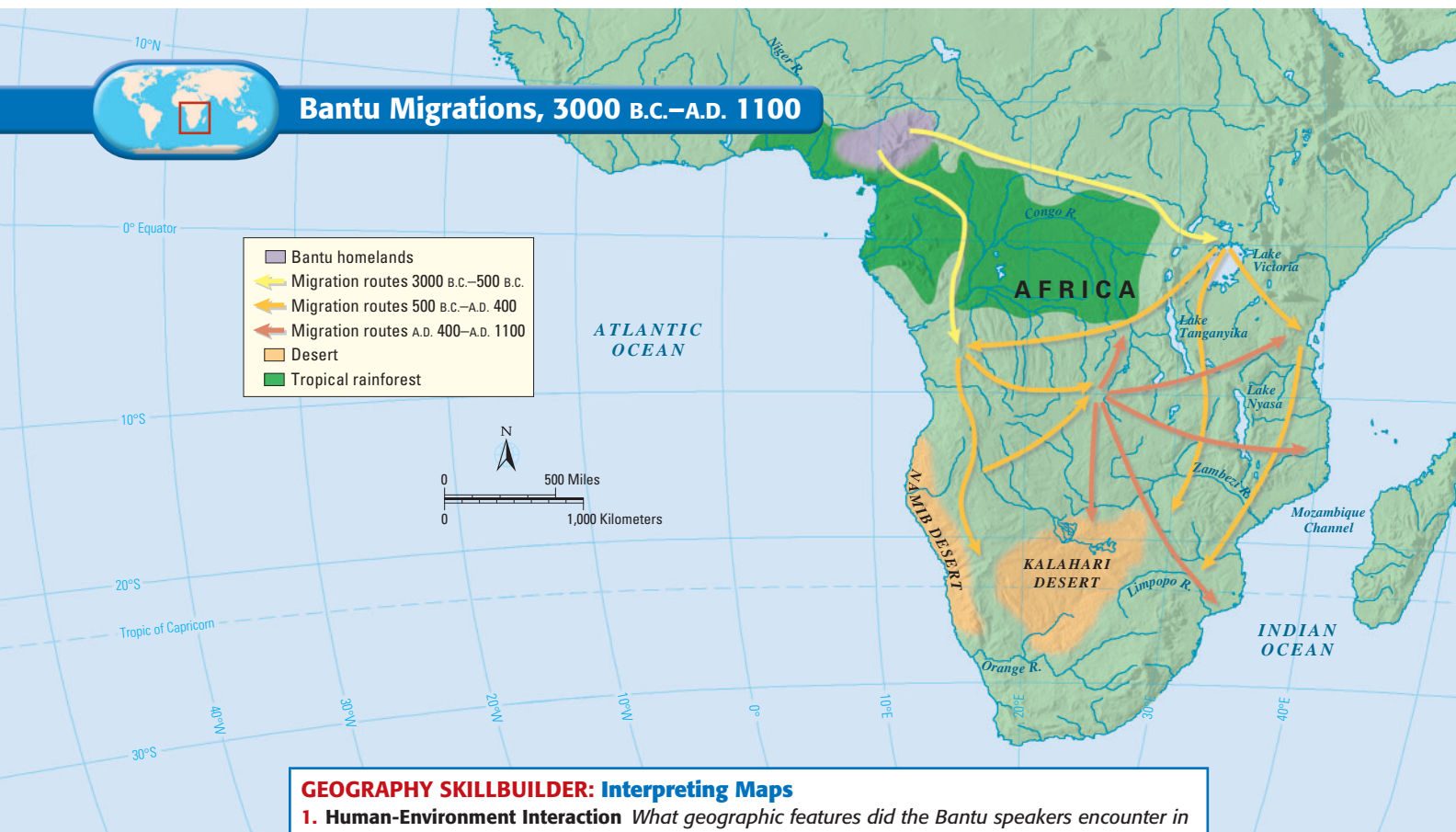
**MAIN IDEA**

**Forming Opinions**

**A** Which of the effects of migration do you think are most negative? Explain.

**Tracing Migration Through Language** One way experts can trace the patterns of movement of people over time is by studying the spread of languages. People bring their languages with them when they move to new places. And languages, like the people who speak them, are living things that evolve and change in predictable ways. If two languages have similar words for a particular object or idea, for example, it is likely that the people who spoke those languages probably had close contact at one time.

Experts have studied languages in Africa. One group of African languages, the Niger-Congo, includes over 900 individual languages. A family of languages in this group developed from a single parent tongue, Proto-Bantu. Many anthropologists believe that the language spread across Africa as a result of migration. Today in Africa, Bantu speakers live in a region from south of the Sahara to the tip of Africa. A Bantu language is the first language of nearly one-third of all Africans.



**GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Maps**

- 1. Human-Environment Interaction** *What geographic features did the Bantu speakers encounter in the course of their migrations?*
- 2. Movement** *Why didn't the Bantu speakers migrate northward?*

**CASE STUDY: Bantu-speaking Peoples**

**Massive Migrations**

Early Africans made some of the greatest migrations in history. When the migrations were over they or their descendants populated the southern third of the continent. Starting in the first few centuries A.D. and continuing over 1,500 years, small groups moved southward throughout Africa, spreading their language and culture. Historians refer to these people as the **Bantu-speaking peoples**. (The word Bantu itself means “the people.”) The Bantu-speaking peoples originally lived in the savanna south of the Sahara, in the area that is now southeastern Nigeria.

**Migration Begins** Bantu speakers were not one people, but rather a group of people who shared certain cultural characteristics. They were farmers and nomadic herders who developed and passed along the skill of ironworking. Many experts believe they were related to the Nok peoples.

Beginning at least 2,000 years ago or earlier, small groups of Bantu speakers began moving to the south and east. The farming techniques used by these people forced them to move every few years. The technique is called slash and burn. A patch of the forest is cut down and burned. The ashes are mixed into the soil creating a fertile garden area. However, the land loses its fertility quickly and is abandoned for another plot in a new location. When they moved, the Bantu speakers shared their skills with the people they met, adapted their methods to suit each new environment, and learned new customs. They followed the Congo River through the rain forests. There they farmed the riverbanks—the only place that received enough sunlight to support agriculture.

As they moved eastward into the savannas, they adapted their techniques for herding goats and sheep to raising cattle. Passing through what is now Kenya and



Tanzania, they learned to cultivate new crops. One such crop was the banana, which came from Southeast Asia via Indonesian travelers.

**Causes of Migration** Although it is impossible to know exactly what caused the Bantu-speaking peoples to migrate, anthropologists have proposed a logical explanation. These experts suggest that once these peoples developed agriculture, they were able to produce more food than they could obtain by hunting and gathering. As a result, the population of West Africa increased. Because this enlarged population required more food, the earliest Bantu speakers planted more land. Soon there wasn't enough land to go around. They couldn't go north in search of land, because the area was densely populated. The areas that once had been savanna were becoming more desertlike. The Sahara was slowly advancing toward them. So the people moved southward.

The Bantu people probably brought with them the technology of iron smelting. As they moved southward, they were searching for locations with iron ore resources and hardwood forests. They needed the hardwood to make charcoal to fuel the smelting furnaces. (See the Science & Technology feature on page 218.)

As you can see from the map, the migrations split into eastern and western streams. Eventually, the Bantu speakers worked their way around the geographical barriers of the Kalahari and Namib deserts. Within 1,500 years or so—a short time in the span of history—they reached the southern tip of Africa. The Bantu speakers now populated much of the southern half of Africa. **B**

**Effects of the Migration** When the Bantu speakers settled into an area, changes occurred. The lands they occupied were not always unpopulated. Some areas into

#### MAIN IDEA

#### Clarifying

**B** How did the Bantu deal with the problems they encountered in their migrations?

## Connect to Today

### Bantu Languages: Swahili

An estimated 240 million people in Africa speak one of the Bantu languages as their first language. Of that number, about 50 million people in central and east Africa speak Swahili (also known as Kiswahili). The word swahili means “the coast.” Swahili is widely used on the east coast of Africa, but is found elsewhere, too. It is the official language of Kenya and Tanzania.

In fact, after Arabic, Swahili is the most commonly spoken language in Africa. Swahili uses Bantu basics along with Arabic and Persian words. It probably developed as people of East Africa interacted with traders from the Indian Ocean trade networks and with Arabic traders.

The greeting “*Jambo. U mzima?*” (Hello. How are you?) and the answer “*U hali gani?*” (The health is good.) can be understood by modern-day Swahili speakers from East Africa.





▲ This Kuba mask represents the sister of the founding ancestor of the Kuba culture group, a Bantu-speaking people.

which the Bantu moved were sparsely populated with peoples like the BaMbuti and the San. These Africans were not Bantu speakers. They were not engaged in agriculture but were instead hunter-gatherers. They had to find ways to get along with the Bantu, get out of their way, or defend their lands and way of life.

As the Bantu speakers spread south into hunter-gatherers' lands, territorial wars often broke out. Fighting with iron-tipped spears, the newcomers easily drove off the BaMbuti and the San, who were armed only with stone weapons. Today, the BaMbuti are confined to a corner of the Congo Basin. The San live only around the Kalahari Desert in northwestern South Africa, Namibia, and Botswana. Both groups live a very simple life. They do not speak a Bantu language, and their culture does not reflect the influence of the Bantu-speaking peoples.

The Bantu speakers exchanged ideas and intermarried with the people they joined. This intermingling created new cultures with unique customs and traditions. The Bantu speakers brought new techniques of agriculture to the lands they occupied. They passed on the technology of ironworking to forge tools and weapons from copper, bronze, and iron.

They also shared ideas about social and political organization. Some of these ideas still influence the political scene in eastern and southern Africa. Although the Bantu migrations produced a great diversity of cultures, language had a unifying influence on the continent. **C**

In the next section, you will see how cultures on the east coast of Africa experienced growth and change. These changes came about as a result of human migrations from Arabia and cultural interaction with traders from North Africa and the Indian Ocean trade routes.

**MAIN IDEA**

**Analyzing Effects**  
**C** How did the Bantu migrations change the history of Africa?

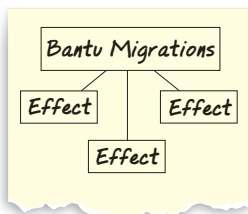
**SECTION 2 ASSESSMENT**

**TERMS & NAMES** 1. For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- migration
- push-pull factors
- Bantu-speaking peoples

**USING YOUR NOTES**

2. Which effects of the Bantu-speaking migrations do you think had the most long-term impact? Explain.



**MAIN IDEAS**

3. What are push-pull factors in migration?
4. What are three effects of migration?
5. Into which regions of Africa did the Bantu-speaking migration move?

**CRITICAL THINKING & WRITING**

6. **MAKING INFERENCES** How can the effects of one migration become a cause of another migration?
7. **RECOGNIZING EFFECTS** How does migration shape the modern world?
8. **HYPOTHESIZING** How might the population of Africa be different today if the Bantu-speaking migrations had not taken place?
9. **WRITING ACTIVITY** **CULTURAL INTERACTION** Write a **compare-and-contrast essay** addressing how migrating Bantu speakers and the peoples they encountered may have reacted to each other.

**CONNECT TO TODAY** CREATING A DATABASE

Use online or library resources to find information on Bantu languages and the countries in which they are spoken. Build a **database** using the information.