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LESSON 1: The Horn of Africa

DID YOU KNOW?

- Ethiopia is the oldest independent country in Africa and one of the oldest in the world—at least 2,000 years (it may be traced to Aksum). It is the only country in Africa that was not colonized by foreigners, although it was briefly occupied by Italy from 1936-1941.
- Somalia has no permanent national government. Although a transitional government was created in 2004, other regional and local governing bodies continue to control various regions of the country. Two of these are the Republic of Somaliland and the semi-autonomous State of Puntland.
- Piracy is a problem in the Gulf of Aden and off the coast of Somalia. As of July 2012, Somali pirates were holding 11 vessels and 174 hostages.
- The equator runs through Somalia.

AKSUM

Aksum (also spelled Axum) was an African kingdom that emerged around the time of the birth of Christ and flourished for the next six or seven centuries. Its core area lay in the highlands of what is today southern Eritrea. At the kingdom's height, its rulers held sway over the Red Sea and inland as far as the Nile Valley in modern Sudan. At times, Aksum controlled the coast of Arabia and much of the interior of modern Yemen.

The title of Aksumite kings was "negusa nagast" (king of kings). King Zoskales, who ruled at the end of the second century A.D., is mentioned by name in an ancient Greek shipping guide. The guide says he promoted commerce with Rome, Arabia, and India. Among the African commodities that Aksum exported were gold, rhinoceros horn, ivory, incense, and obsidian.

The people of Aksum created a civilization of considerable distinction. They devised an original architectural style and employed it in stone palaces and other public buildings. They

ETHIOPIA

Capital City	Addis Ababa
Languages	Amharic, English, Arabic
Population	93.8 million (July 2012 est.)
Terrain	high plateau & mountains

SOMALIA

Capital City	Mogadishu
Languages	Somali
Population	10.1 million (July 2012 est.)
Terrain	mostly plateau rising to hills in north



Lake Assal, Djibouti.

also erected a series of carved stone stelae at Aksum as monuments to their deceased rulers. Some of these stelae are among the largest known from the ancient world.

GEOGRAPHY

- **Look at this lesson's map.** Notice the large piece of land jutting out into the Indian Ocean. It is called the Horn of Africa.
- **Lake Tana** (Ethiopia) is the source of the Blue Nile, which merges with the White Nile in Sudan. Together they form the Nile, the world's longest river.
- **Lake Assal** is the lowest point in Africa (about 508 ft. below sea level). Can you imagine being that far below sea level in a country so close to the ocean?



LESSON 2: African Great Lakes

DID YOU KNOW?

- *Swahili* is the mother tongue of the Bantu people (a native African people) living in Zanzibar and nearby coastal Tanzania. Although Swahili is Bantu in origin, its vocabulary draws on a variety of sources, including Arabic and English. It has become the *lingua franca* of central and eastern Africa, though the first language of most people is one of the local languages.
- The unique physiography of Kenya supports abundant and varied wildlife. The Kenyan Highlands are one of the most successful agricultural regions in Africa.

THE RWANDAN GENOCIDE

One of the worst genocides in modern history occurred in Rwanda in 1994. Genocide is an attempt to wipe out an entire ethnic group or people. In Rwanda the Hutu, one of the two main ethnic groups, tried to wipe out the Tutsi, the other main ethnic group.

Unlike the Holocaust, which was a secret from the world until around the end of World War II, people knew what was happening in Rwanda, yet nothing was done. Even the United Nations did essentially nothing. The genocide ended later that year, but not before Rwandans killed up to a million of their fellow citizens, including approximately three-quarters of the Tutsi population. Rwanda has had relative peace since then. It held its first local elections in 1999 and its first post-genocide presidential and legislative elections in 2003.

GEOGRAPHY

Similar to the great lakes of North America, Africa has its own great lakes. Most famous is Lake Victoria, Africa's largest lake and the world's second-largest. It is the source* of the White Nile.

*Technically the Kagera River, which drains into Lake Victoria, is the most remote source of the White Nile.

KENYA	
Capital City	Nairobi
Languages	English, Swahili
Population	43 million (July 2012 est.)
Terrain	low plains rising to central highlands; fertile plateau in west

TANZANIA	
Capital City	Dodoma (Legislative capital)
Languages	Swahili, English, Arabic
Population	43.6 million (July 2012 est.)
Terrain	a central plateau with highlands in north and south and plains along coast

RWANDA	
Capital City	Kigali
Languages	Kinyarwanda, French, English
Population	11.7 million (July 2012 est.)
Terrain	mostly grassy uplands and hills



Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania is the highest point in Africa (19,340 ft.) and one of only two mountains in Africa to have glaciers.



An elephant in Masai Mara National Reserve, Kenya.

