

CHAPTER 3: EARLY AFRICAN SOCIETIES AND THE BANTU MIGRATIONS

A. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SYSTEMS

- a. Egypt, prosperous and well located, served as a center of trade between south-west Asia, the eastern mediterranean, and sub-saharan Africa
- b. In Egypt the Pharaoh is the central supreme ruler
- c. No noble Egyptian class, instead relied on professional military forces and elaborate bureaucracy of administrators and tax collectors. Individuals could attain high position through government service.
- d. Egyptian servants and slaves supplied the manual labor necessary for existence of Egypt and Nubia
- e. Both Nubia and Egypt were patriarchal. Upper class women supervised house work servants. Most women routinely performed domestic work; growing vegetables grinding grain and making bread, spinning thread, ect.
- f. Elite men worked as scribes and government officials. Lower class men worked as craftsmen, fishermen, and laborers
- g. Both men and women could own property and slaves, and pass wealth onto their children
- h. Royal women at times used their position to influence policy, and participated in plots to replace the Pharaoh with their own sons
- i. Hatshepsut was the single female pharaoh, while there were many female rulers in Nubian history
- j. Specialized

B. GEOGRAPHICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SETTINGS & THEIR INFLUENCE

- a. CLIMATE (& CLIMATE CHANGE)
 - i. After 10,000 B.C.E (the end of the last ice age), the melted ice provided rich and fertile land to the inhabitants of Africa in the Sudanic region.
 - ii. Savannah-like grasslands with lots of lakes and streams= African agriculture emerges, lots of available cattle and aquatic life to hunt
 - iii. After 5,000 B.C.E. the climate of northern Africa became much hotter and drier= Sahara Desert and uninhabitable lands
 1. People could no longer farm there as the grasslands became dry deserts.
 2. They moved towards the Nile River Valley for more well- watered lands.
- b. THE NILE RIVER VALLEY
 - i. The Nile River greatly affected the societies in Africa who were affected by the drought
 - ii. FLOODED ANNUALLY (“Gifts of the Nile”)- watering the surrounding plains
 1. Most dramatically affected Egypt (ribbon of land surrounding the lower third of the Nile)
 2. Nubia and Egypt depended on the fertile floodplains for agricultural purposes, and trade routes

- iii. Also influenced the names of Egypt-- since it flowed north, the southern part of Egypt was referred to as "Upper Egypt", and the northern region was called "Lower Egypt"

c. ADAPTATIONS THAT SOCIETIES MADE

- i. Egypt and Nubia both adopted agricultural traditions to cater to the fertile lands they were surrounded with.
- ii. Egyptians were able to navigate the Nile for trade, but Nubians were near unnavigable cataracts in the Nile, so they couldn't utilize it.
- iii. When the lands dried out, the societies migrated more closely to the floodplains of the Nile.
- iv. Religion was also an effect of their geographical surroundings...
 - 1. Since they were extremely dependent on the annual floods, it was evident that religion was a result of this "godly" event, which they prayed for annually.

C. RELIGION

Amon and Re:

-Egyptians and Nubians believed deities played roles in the world, and was a community responsibility

-AMON: Associated with the sun, creation, fertility, and reproductive forces

-RE: A sun god worshiped at heliopolis

-Amon-Re were associated together by priests, and honored them as a combined cult.

-Heliopolis: a massive temple, supported by priests of the cult Amon-Re. They studied the heavens for astronomical purposes

Aten and Monotheism:

-Amon-Re was briefly challenged by the monotheistic god Aten, who was also associated with the sun.

-This period was under rule of Akhenaten (reigned 1353-1335 BCE). He built a new capital city that had unobscured visions of the sun. He also ordered for the names Amon and Re, and their depictions to be chiseled out.

-Athens worship flourished while Akhnaten was alive, but after he passed the cult of Amon-Re was restored.

Mummification and Afterlife:

-Egyptians believed death was a transition to a new dimension of existence, therefore mummified the wealthy and ruling elites dead.

-Although mummification did not become an entirely general practice, a variety of religious cults promised to lead all classes to immortality.

Cult of Osiris:

-Osiris was associated with the Nile, immortality, and was honored through a religious cult.

-As lord of the underworld he determined who was blessed with immortality and who was not. Therefore, Osiris's cult held out eternal reward to those who behaved according to high moral standards.

Nubian Religious Beliefs:

-Nubian peoples observed their own religious beliefs which probably stemmed from the early agricultural societies of Sudan.

-Their most prominent deity being the lion god, Apedemak. He served as a war god for the kingdom of Kush.

-Another deity, Sebiuwerker, was a creator god.

-Nubian people did not mummify their dead, though they did build pyramids similar to those in Egypt, and embraced several Egyptian gods.

D. LANGUAGE, MYTHS, LAWS, ART (CULTURE)

Early Writing in The Nile Valley And Meroitic Writing

- a. From Mesopotamian influences writing was created in Egypt in 3200 B.C.E
- b. Egyptians used pictographs as symbols for their representation of sounds and ideas.
- c. Pictographs in Egypt were later considered **hieroglyphics** ("holy inscriptions"), after visitors notice them on temples. Hieroglyphics were made on sheets of papyrus.
- d. Egyptians used **hieratic** ("priestly"), which is a simplified, cursive form of hieroglyphics. Hieratic was created in the early third millennium B.C.E, however Egyptians use of hieratic scripts for formal writing, from about 2600 B.C.E to 600 B.C.E, has made the script have prominence in early development of writing.
- e. After the first millennium C.E, Egyptians adopted Greek alphabetic scripts, which resulted in the creation of **demotic scripts** ("popular") and **Coptic scripts** ("Egyptian") which were made in inscriptions. The popularizations of these adaptations of writings resulted into the decline of the hieratic scripts.

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- a. Meroitic alphabetic script, was derived from the Nubian scribes after the transfer of the Kutshite capital from Nubia to Meroe.
- b. Today, unlike most ancient languages, Meroitic language is non-comprehending to many historians because of the inability to decipher its text.
- c. The cult of Osiris attracted popularity within Egyptian culture
- d. The Bantu language was a more popular language in West Africa.
- e. The earliest Bantu speakers inhabited an eastern part of Nigeria and southern

Cameroon

- g. Bantu means person and people.

Myths The cult of Osiris, tells about the death of Osiris on hands of his brother Seth who dismembered him and separated his parts throughout Egypt's land.

E. RELATIONS BETWEEN SOCIETIES

- a. Egypt and Nubia were two of the most prominent societies in the area.
- b. They both desired what one another had.
- c. Egyptians were strongly interested in the Nubian Kingdoms political positions, concerned of their threat on Upper Egypt and they were strongly interested in the southern lands possessions that were specific to that area, such as: gold, ivory, and ebony.
- d. The Nubians desired Egypt's strength, they sought to keep their independence and wanted to control trade down the Nile.
- e. Continued violence and tension between Egypt and Nubia throughout the Archaic Period (3100-2660 B.C.E.) and the Old Kingdom (2660-2160)
- f. Pharaohs organized five military campaigns destroying Nubian Kingdom of Te-Seti.
- g. Egyptian dominance in Lower Nubia from 3000 to 2400 B.C.E.
- h. Upper Nubia gained strength and became Kingdom Kush, capital at Kerma, south of Aswan.
- i. Nearing the end of the Old Kingdom Nubia and Egypt were somewhat intertwined, Nubian mercenaries were dispersed in Egyptian armies and some even married Egyptian women.
- j. After the Old Kingdom Egyptians struggled with Semitic persons, Hyksos ("foreign rulers") Horse-riding nomads.
- k. Organized revolts against Hyksos and forced them out of the Nile.
- l. New Kingdom (1550-1070 B.C.E.)
- m. Egypt thrived again in Tuthmosis III's rule (1479-1425 B.C.E.) conquered Kingdom Kush, dominance in Nubia.
- n. Egypt was once again imperial power in Mediterranean basin, southwest Asia and Nile River Valley.
- o. After this rise Egypt fell and lost most of those conquests.
- p. Kingdom Kush was prominent again.
- q. Egypt fell to Assyrian rule.
- r. Trade commenced between Nubia and Egypt and generally between all of Mesopotamia and beyond.

E. MIGRATIONS

- The Bantu were people who spoke Bantu languages, the original language branched off and was spoken differently in different groups of migrating Bantu.
- Inhabited a region in the eastern part of modern Nigeria and the southern part of modern Cameroon.
- The migrations were most likely a result of overpopulation and lack of resources.
- They were very good at traveling the river's, and used this as a main source of travel.

- Not massive groups of people moving at once, instead they moved in small groups. Some people settled where they were while others decided to stay moving. Causing their language to shift into over five hundred different dialects.
- By 3000 B.C.E they were spreading to the west African forest.
- After 2000 B.C.E they spread towards the Congo River and then east toward the Great Lakes.
- They learned hunting gathering and fishing from the societies they saw while migrating.
- By 1000 C.E the Bantu speaking people occupied most of Africa south of the equator.
- After 1000 B.C.E, they started to make iron tools and weapons. This made the Bantu stronger and more able to defend themselves, as well as make them more effective agriculturists.
- Between 3500 and 1000 B.C.E southern Kushite herders went to east Africa, while the Sudanese cultivators moved toward the upper Nile.
- Mande-speaking people who cultivated rice established communities in west Africa along the Atlantic.
- People who spoke Niger-Congo languages spread the cultivation of okra throughout west Africa.
- The Bantu and Niger-Congo speaking people spread the cultivation of yams, millet, oil palms, and sorghum, as well as introducing cattle, sheep, and pigs to west and central Africa.
- Overall, migration spread culture, animals, trade, and agriculture throughout Africa. It also made travel by boats more common and helped populate more and more areas over time.

CHRONOLOGY:

9000 BCE-	Origins of Sudanic herding
7500 BCE-	Origins of Sudanic cultivation
3100 BCE-	Unification of Egypt
3100-2660 BCE-	Archaic Period of Egyptian history
2600-2500 BCE-	Era of Pyramid building in Egypt
2500-1400 BCE-	Early kingdom of Kush w/ Capital of Kerma
2000 BCE-	Beginnings of Bantu Migrations
1550-1070 BCE-	Egyptian New Kingdom
1479-1425 BCE-	Reign of Pharaoh Tuthmosis III
1473-1458 BCE-	Reign of Queen Hatshepsut (co-ruler with Tuthmosis III)
1353-1335 BCE-	Reign of Pharaoh Amenhotep IV (Akhenaten)
900 BCE-	Invention of Iron metallurgy in sub-Saharan Africa
760 BCE-	Conquest of Egypt by King Kashta of Kush