

Chapter 3: Early Africa and Egypt: 3-2b Early Civilizations of the Nile Valley

Book Title: World Civilizations

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3-2b Early Civilizations of the Nile Valley

After 5500 B.C.E., the Afro-Asians who migrated farther down the Nile Valley (that is, toward the Mediterranean Sea) settled as farmers along its floodplain. It was they who were the ancestors of the ancient Egyptians. In time, they abandoned growing native African sorghum and millets in favor of wheat and barley, which they obtained from their Semitic-speaking relatives in Palestine and Mesopotamia. By 5000 B.C.E. the first villages appeared along the Nile's banks, and initially these first Afro-Asiatic-speaking settlers lived by a combination of river fishing and growing wheat and barley. A thousand years later their descendants had cleared the Nile floodplain, and several late Neolithic states competed for control over a region that stretched from the delta in the north (called Lower Egypt) southward to the first cataract (called Upper Egypt). Later still, the southern borders were extended to the third cataract, into Nubia.

Much like Mesopotamia, Egypt was unified only gradually. By the middle of the fourth millennium B.C.E., three kingdoms had emerged as the main players for political leadership in the Upper Nile Valley: Nekhen, Naqada, and This. Around 3100 B.C.E., after a centuries-long effort at unification through diplomacy and conquest, these tiny Nilotic states came under the control of the king of This, a [pharaoh \(\(FAYR-oh\) The title of the god-king of ancient Egypt.\)](#) (FAYR-oh, meaning "from the great house"). He ruled in the name of the falcon god, [Horus \(\(HOH-ruhs\) The falcon-headed god whose earthly, visible form was the reigning pharaoh in ancient Egypt.\)](#) (HOH-ruhs), who symbolized the forces of order. Egyptian traditions claimed that this first pharaoh was named Horus-Aha or Menes.

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