

Chapter 3

Early Africa and Egypt

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Chapter Chronology

c. 8000–3000 B.C.E.

Food-producing revolution in Africa

c. 4000–3000 B.C.E.

Nile Valley village-based civilizations

c. 3100–2200 B.C.E.

Egypt's Old Kingdom

2500–1000 B.C.E.

Desiccation of the Sahara begins; first permanent settlements south of the Sahara

c. 2600–2100 B.C.E.

Pyramid-building age

c. 2200–2100 B.C.E.

First Intermediate Period

c. 2100–1650 B.C.E.

Middle Kingdom

c. 1650–1570 B.C.E.

Second Intermediate Period

1500s B.C.E.

Hyksos invasion

c. 1550–770 B.C.E.

New Kingdom

c. 1550–1250 B.C.E.

The Empire

1300s B.C.E.

Akhnaton's monotheist experiment Tutankhamen

c. 1050 B.C.E.–350 C.E.

Kingdom of Kush

525 B.C.E.

Egypt's conquest by Persia

c. 500 B.C.E.

Iron making at Meroe and Nok, beginnings of sub-Saharan urbanization



African Geography

Topography varies greatly:

- Coastal lowlands, deserts, inland plateaus, highlands, mountains, grasslands, rainforests
- Sahara Desert divides continent
- Great rivers, made impassable by giant waterfalls
- Atlantic coast has heavy surf, lacks good harbors
- Indian Ocean coast has good harbors, facilitating extensive trade



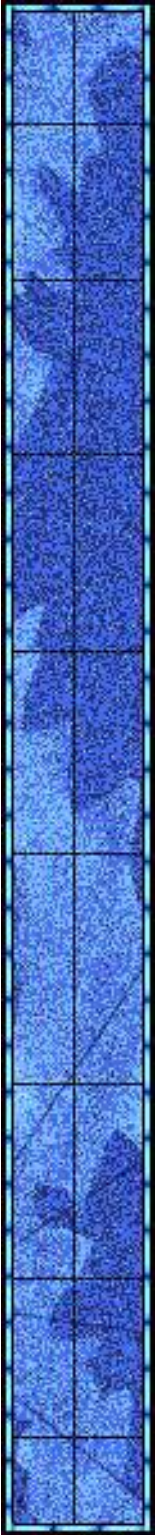
African Climates

- Interior generally isolated from coastal areas, lowlands
- Five climatic, vegetative zones
 - **Coastal** – temperate weather, good soils
 - **Sahelian** – steppes between the desert and the savanna
 - **Desert** – Sahara, Namib, Kalahari
 - **Rain Forest** – near the equator
 - **Savanna** – grasslands north of the rainforest



Africa's Neolithic Revolution

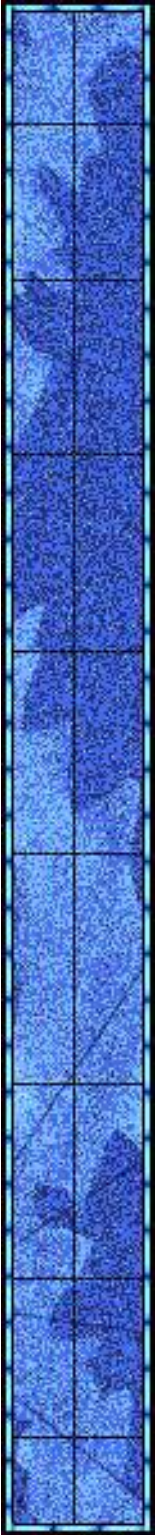
- In the period 11,000-3000 B.C.E., Africa had higher rainfall than today
 - More grassy steppes, woodlands
 - Lakes and rivers covered the “wet” Sahara
 - Supported a variety of foods
- Four groups (identified linguistically) produced food in the region
 - Khoisan speakers
 - Nilo-Saharan speakers
 - Afro-Asiatic speakers
 - Niger-Congo speakers



Early African People (Slide 1 of 3)

Khoisan Speakers

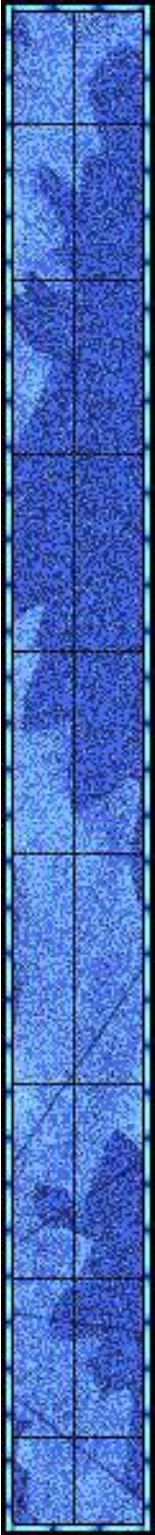
- Originally inhabited East Africa
- Remained hunters and gatherers
- Used microlithic stone tools
- Crafted stone bowls and net bags
- Forced into drier regions of South Africa by farming peoples



Early African People (Slide 2 of 3)

Nilo-Saharan and Afro-Asiatic Speakers

- Originally hunters and gatherers from southern Nile region
- Spread across the Sahara during the 'wet period'
- Reached to Sinai Peninsula around 10,000-11,000 B.C.E.
 - Migrated into Near East
 - Became known as the Semites
 - Domesticated cattle in the 8000s B.C.E.
 - Crafted stone pottery
 - Cultivated indigenous seeds (sorghum, pearl millet, fonio)
 - Grew watermelon, gourds, calabashes and cotton, 5500 B.C.E.



Early African People (Slide 3 of 3)

Niger-Congo Speakers

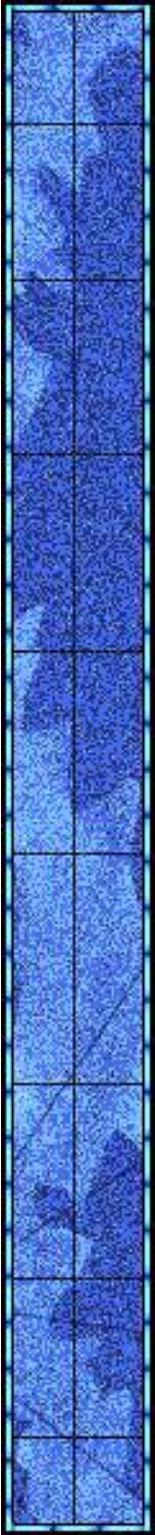
- Southern Sahara wetlands of West Africa
- Began farming of yams, rice, 5000s B.C.E.,
 - Later Guinea fowl, oil palm for palm wine, raffia palm for textiles
 - Later still, black-eyed peas, okra, ground nuts and kola
 - Movement southward into Savana
 - Skilled boat-builders
 - Cleared forests with stone axes, formed large communities based on yam gardens



Bantu Expansion

Bantu Speakers (Niger-Congo sub-group)

- Spread south and east from West Africa to the Congo Basin
 - Began to breed cattle, grow grain, use iron
 - Established small kingdoms as they spread east, west, and south
- Left few monuments, no writing until they reached the Swahili coast of East Africa
 - Knowledge of the early Bantu comes from linguistic analysis, archaeology, and Portuguese writings from the 1500s C.E.



Early Civilizations of the Nile Valley

- 5500 B.C.E. – Afro-Asians migrated down the Nile Valley
 - Settled as farmers along floodplains
 - Gave up native sorghum, millets for wheat & barley
 - Obtained these from Semitic relatives of Palestine, Mesopotamia
- 5000 B.C.E. – First villages appeared along the Nile
- 4000 B.C.E. – Floodplain cleared; competing states arose
- 3500 B.C.E. – Three rival states (**Nekhen, Naqada, This**)
- 3100 B.C.E. – Pharaoh of **This** unites the Nilotic states
 - Pharaoh ruled in name of falcon god Horus, symbolized forces of order
 - Tradition says his name was Horus-Aha or Menes



Land and People of Egypt

- Like Mesopotamia, Egypt dependent on river system
 - 30-mile wide green strip, desert hills on either side of the Nile
 - Unlike Tigris and Euphrates, Nile flooding was predictable
- Population overwhelmingly peasants
 - Most free tenant farmers working estates of large landowners, government officials
 - Little mechanization, work performed by humans or animals
 - Intimate knowledge of nature, environment
 - Dependent on strong government for protection & regularity of seasons
 - Maat: a Goddess who personified the principle of order



The Pharaoh: Egypt's God-King

- 3100-1000 B.C.E. was Egypt's foundation period
- Pharaoh was a reincarnation of Horus, who chose to live on Earth
- Government under the Pharaoh
 - **Nomes** – administrative districts
 - Governors were noble landlords and temple priests with local power
 - Pharaoh directly responsible for welfare of Egypt



Reign of the Pharaohs

Pharaohs in power for 2000 years because:

- Belief in divinity of kings and queens (3 female pharaohs)
- Conviction that Egypt was specially favored and protected by the gods, assured by pharaohs and priests
- Climate and geography resulted in agricultural abundance
- Egypt only rarely touched by war or foreign invasion prior to 1000 B.C.E.

Egypt's Kingdoms (Slide 1 of 4)

- Customary to divide Egypt's history into **dynasties** (rule by one family)
- 31 Dynasties, from Menes until the Persian invasion in 525 B.C.E.
- Dynasties grouped under three “kingdoms”:
 - Old Kingdom (3100-2200 B.C.E.)
 - Middle Kingdom (2100-1650 B.C.E.)
 - New Kingdom (1550-770 B.C.E.)

Egypt's Kingdoms (Slide 2 of 4)

Old Kingdom (3100-2200 B.C.E.)

- From Menes to the First Intermediate Period
- Governed from Memphis
- Most successful period
- Art, architecture, religion, stability, prosperity
- Construction of Giza pyramids

Egypt's Kingdoms (Slide 3 of 4)

Middle Kingdom (2100-1650 B.C.E.)

- Restored central power after First Intermediate Period
- Provided 500 years of stability
- Extended Egyptian rule further south (up the Nile)
- Conditions of laboring people steadily worsened
- Refinement of arts and crafts
- Increased trade
- Religion more democratic, more could gain afterlife
- Small middle class appeared (merchants, officials)

Egypt's Kingdoms (Slide 4 of 4)

New Kingdom (Empire) (1550-770 B.C.E.)

- Restored central power after Hyksos invasion and Second Intermediate Period
- Expanded eastward as Egypt fought Hittites and others for dominance in Mesopotamia
- Empire declined due to military losses and internal discontent
- Kushites, Assyrians, Persians invaded Egypt

Cultural Achievements (Slide 1 of 2)

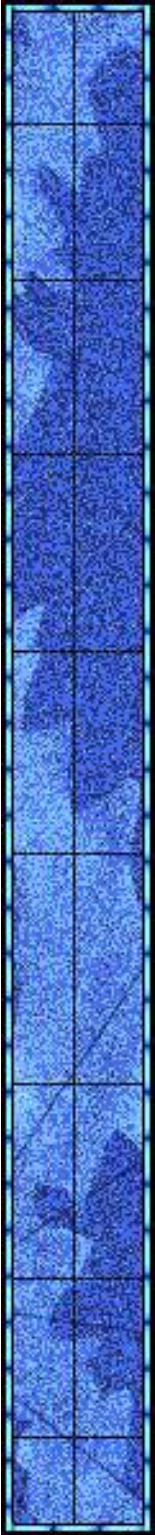
- Pyramids
 - Largest – Khufu's – outside modern-day Cairo
 - Tombs were built while pharaoh was alive
 - Built during the Old Kingdom
- Statues, Temples, smaller tombs around 1300 B.C.E.
 - Temples Karnak, Tel el Amarna
 - Tomb of **Tutankhamen**
 - Ruled 1347-1339 B.C.E. Died at age 18
 - Only one discovered to date NOT completely looted
 - Statues have graceful lines, great dignity

Cultural Achievements (Slide 2 of 2)

- **Hieroglyphics** (“sacred carvings”)
 - Pictographs representing ideas, phonetic sounds
 - Used objects beginning with a strong consonant sound
 - Never developed into an alphabet
 - Dated use as far back as circa 3000 B.C.E.
 - Their use confined to small groups of educated people
 - Faded out of use after Persian invasion
 - 604 symbols have been deciphered

Religion, Philosophy, and Eternal Life (Slide 1 of 2)

- Polytheistic religion – at least 3000 names of gods
 - **Amun and Ra** – joined, came to represent embodiment of all gods, Sun God
 - **Osiris** – God of plants and afterlife
 - **Isis** – Goddess of mothers and wives
 - **Horus** – God of order, son of Osiris, made visible as Pharaoh
 - **Ptah** – God of rebirth, renewal of life
- Belief in afterlife
 - Originally only for upper classes
 - Gradually democratized
 - Eternal reward/punishment for their **ka**, or life essence which had to submit to the moral Last Judgment by Osiris
 - Afterlife benevolent, surrounded by family, friends, protective gods, no need to work, no suffering



Religion, Philosophy, and Eternal Life

(Slide 2 of 2)

- Gods reflected forces of nature
- Gods of Mesopotamia – capricious, angry
 - Why? Tigris, Euphrates unpredictable and destructive
- Egyptian religion different – “The Gift of the Nile”
 - Ra, sun god, shined year, year out
 - Rhythms of the Nile were stable and orderly, thus the gods and cosmos were as well
 - These ideas were represented in Maat, universal order and “rightness”

Attempt at Monotheism

Akhnaton, with wife Nefertiti, introduced **monotheism**

- Cult of sun god, newly renamed Aton
- Heavenly father worshiped as single and universal god of all creation
- Monotheism unsuccessful, not seen again until appearance of Judaism
- Priests opposed these changes
 - Death of Akhnaton brought return to old faith under Tutankhamen



Trade and Egypt's Influence on Africa

- Imported wood from Byblos in Phoenicia
- Sought ivory, gold, slaves from Nubia
- Conquered Sinai Peninsula for copper and gold mines following rise of Bronze Age
- Trade routes with eastern Mediterranean
- Naval expeditions to the Land of **Punt** to obtain luxuries from India, southern Arabia, and eastern Africa
 - Spices, frankincense, myrrh, and gold
- Pushed south to Nubian land of Kush



Kush and Meroe

Kush (15th c. B.C.E. – 4th c. C.E.)

- Located in Nubia (s. Egypt / n. Sudan)
- Had written language; built stone monuments
- Engaged in maritime trade (Mediterranean – s. Asia)
- Influenced by Egyptian culture and religion
- Became more African after 6th c. B.C.E.
- **Meroe** – major industrial center, smelted iron
- Important link in trade between African interior-s. Arabia (gold, slaves, hides, spices, ebony, ivory)